# Additional Questions about Remit 1: Creating an Autonomous National Indigenous Organization

# Video Transcript

## Does the Indigenous church really want to separate from the United Church?

Rev. Daniel Reed, Kimbourne Park United Church, Toronto (Member of the Indigenous Justice Advisory Circle): The sense that I get is that it isn’t about separation, but creating the conditions for the Indigenous church to be in partnership with The United Church of Canada in a good way and in the way that we ought to have been in partnership with one another from the beginning.

Debbie Hubbard, Central Okanagan United Church, Kelowna (Member of the Indigenous Justice Advisory Circle): This means a change in structure for us as the United Church. And they’re asking really, I understand, to be partners with us, to row down in a canoe the same direction, but in different canoes, supporting each other as we paddle.

Daniel: The themes that I think about are those of partnership, of mutual support. And those are the themes that I hear articulated in the words of the National Indigenous Council in its proposal to General Council 44. It’s time for us to move towards a different relationship. It’s time to set aside the notion of missions to Indigenous peoples, truly move towards being partners in God’s call to all the Earth.

## What does the proposed structure look like?

Rev. Samuel Vauvert Dansokho, Plymouth-Trinity United Church, Sherbrooke (Member of the Executive of the General Council): [Spoken French] Some people are wondering what the coming structure will look like. A few things must be said. First, there is currently no defined structure. And when this remit will pass—because I hope it will pass—we will begin to put things together.

Debbie: There is no new proposed structure figured out yet. If the remit passes, the Indigenous Church will begin their work. It’s very similar to what happened to us as a non-Indigenous church when we moved from a four-court structure to a three-court structure. We knew we were going to have regional councils. We weren’t really sure what each of those regional councils would look like, and we figured it out as we moved along on the way.

Rev. Ibi Soqluman (Chuan), Cranbrooke United Church, Cranbrooke (Member of the Anti-Racism Common Table): Similarly, the structure of the autonomous National Indigenous organization will be worked out over time. The Indigenous Church does not yet have all the answers for what the structure will look like, but they wanted the time and space to do this work and their own, while being in relationship with the rest of the church.

Samuel: [Spoken French]: So, we don’t know exactly what the coming structure will look like. But we are confident, that with time, and through conversing together, we will arrive at something.

## What are the financial implications if the remit passes?

Rev. Robin McGauley (Member of the Indigenous Justice Advisory Group): An Indigenous church has existed and been funded as a part of The United Church of Canada for many years. This has included funding for staff at former conferences, like the All Native Circle Conference and B.C. Native Ministries, as well as to local communities of faith, and funding for the Indigenous Ministries and Justice Unit at the General Council Office. So as the Indigenous Church continues to be a part of the United Church of Canada, this funding will continue.

Samuel: [Spoken French]: Regarding the question of local contributions, that are called “assessments” in English, we must remember that until now, Indigenous communities were historically not called upon to contribute, for the simple reason that they lacked resources locally. But now, through dialogue and discussing these issues together, it will be possible for us to look at these things again and see which attitude we should adopt concerning local contributions.

## Will the Indigenous Church still accept United Church policy?

Ibi: Policies outlined in the manual apply to all bodies of the United Church, including the Indigenous Church in areas of social policy. And hope is that moving forward, the Indigenous and non-Indigenous Church will work together to fill the policy positions.

## Will the Indigenous Church practice United Church theology?

Ibi: The United Church of Canada is a broad theological spectrum. Not all people in the United Church share the same theological positions. However, we do share a commitment to scripture as foundational, and to our doctrine and theology, as expressed in our Statement of Faith. For example, the Twenty Articles of Doctrine from 1925 and a Statement of Faith from 1940, and A New Creed from 1968 and A Song of Faith from 2006. This includes the Indigenous church, and the remit does not change that. The caretakers of our Indigenous Circle in their foundational document, “Calls to the Church,” say that Indigenous people will continue to practice their own spirituality alongside the teaching of Jesus. Respecting Indigenous spirituality is a part of healing, of reconciliation for the church.

## Are we forcing something on the Indigenous church that they are not capable of handling?

Daniel: I would like to be really cautious and really critical of any narrative that includes doubting the capacities of Indigenous peoples. Historically those narratives have been used to infantilize and to delegitimize the agency of Indigenous Peoples, nations, and governance structures, and used to justify the colonial project. And they’re discourses that have become prevalent and embedded in our society, and in our patterns of thought around Indigenous people. I feel like those are racist assumptions that need to be refuted, that are dangerous, and have had a violent impact over the course of our history. In this case, it is also the case that we’re not forcing anything on the Indigenous church. This is a request that has come explicitly, intentionally, thoughtfully, and with discernment from the Indigenous church itself.

Robin: This change is the expressed wish of the Indigenous church. The background on this is that in 2015, when the church made the decision to move from a four-court to a three-court model, the Indigenous church made clear that it had not been fully included in the processes that led to this change, and so they called for more time to determine their vision for the future, which they did in a document called the “Calls to the Church,” which was accepted in 2018. And so, the remit is a direct product of the structures and processes articulated in that prophetic document that the Indigenous church wrote.

Daniel: I think we should be receiving this this proposal and this remit with celebration and enthusiasm and recognize it as the movement of the Spirit within the community.

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