

Steps toward Right Relationships (1980–2022)

- 1947 United Church Brief to the Parliamentary Committee on Reform of the Indian Act: “That Residential Schools should be closed in favour of non-denominational schools on Indian Reserves.”
- 1969 (Apr) End of United Church role in residential schools.
- 1975 The United Church of Canada becomes an active member of the ecumenically-organized Project North and its successor, the Aboriginal Rights Coalition (ARC).
- 1977 27th General Council decides to review United Church work with Native people.
- 1978 Saskatchewan Conference approves “Call for a Year of Repentance,” with the program throughout 1979.
- 1980 First National Aboriginal Consultations held (June and October), and others follow every one to three years; last one in July 2005.
- 1984 Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Centre established.
- 1980s BC Native Ministries Consortium established, including community-based theological education in partnership with Anglican organizations.
- 1986 (Aug) United Church issues a formal apology to First Nations Peoples within the church; acknowledged but not accepted.
- 1987 Francis Sandy Theological Centre is established.
- 1987 (Mar) Signatory to “A New Covenant: Towards the Constitutional Recognition and Projection of Aboriginal Self Government in Canada,” A Pastoral Statement by the Leaders of the Christian Churches on Aboriginal Rights and the Canadian Constitution.
- 1988 All Native Circle Conference established.
- 1992 (Aug) Stan McKay elected first Aboriginal Moderator.
- 1993 (Nov) United Church brief to Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.
- 1994 (Aug) The Healing Fund established with goal of \$1 million.
- 1996 27 former Alberni Indian Residential School students launch lawsuit against United Church and Government of Canada seeking compensation and

- damages for abuses committed by Arthur Plint, a dormitory supervisor. Known as Blackwater case.
- 1997 (May) St. Andrew's United makes apology to former students of Alberni Indian Residential School.
- 1997 (Aug) 36th General Council makes Statement of Repentance re: residential schools.
- 1998 (Feb) Blackwater trial begins: plaintiffs remain. Settled with 20 plaintiffs before trial.
- 1998 (Jun) Justice Brenner rules on vicarious liability in Blackwater trial. Both church and government are liable. Appealed by United Church. Moderator sends pastoral letter over painful and difficult decision. See July 2001, December 2003, October 2005.
- General Council Executive strikes Residential Schools Steering Committee, establishes staff position, and instructs Division of Mission in Canada (now Church in Mission) to prepare educational resources.
- 1998 (Oct) General Council Executive issues a formal apology to residential school students, their families, and communities.
- 2000 Justice and Reconciliation Fund established.
- 2000 (Mar) Gathering of former staff of the 13 United Church-associated schools.
- 2000 (Aug) General Council creates portfolios for a stronger capacity for racial justice and for enhanced, vital relationships between the regions of the church and General Council.
- 2000 (Sep) Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, including the Aboriginal Rights Coalition, launches a national campaign in support of Aboriginal land rights.
- 2000 (Oct) Reconciliation and Justice Leadership Support Gathering—90 people from every Conference meet at Cedar Glen.
- 2001 (Jul) Judge Brenner rules that United Church is 25 percent liable in case of six remaining Blackwater plaintiffs.
- News release: United Church says cultural loss must be included in negotiations with Ottawa; says no to bilateral deal with Canada.
- 2001 (Fall) Federal government says it will pay only 70 percent in cases not under Brenner ruling.
- 2001 (Nov) Future Directions Report names four mission directions:

- Following God in Mission: Fostering Faith in a Changing Culture
 - Participating in God’s Shalom and Justice-seeking
 - Repentance, Justice, and the Seeking of Right Relations with Aboriginal Peoples
 - Ministry in the 21st Century: Supporting Leadership for Ministry and Mission
- 2002 Staff position for Aboriginal Ministries created.
- 2003 Church and others successfully urge abandonment of Bill C-7 regarding First Nations governance.
- 2003 (May) United Church participates in pilot project of an alternative settlement process with Gitksan survivors.
- 2003 (Aug) General Council accepts challenge to push for a public inquiry into residential schools as recommended by RCAP. Initiates roundtable process in 2004 with churches, Assembly of First Nations, and government. Pre-empted by appointment and mandate of Judge Iacobucci in May 2005.
GC also commissions Circle and Cross dialogues.
GC commits to ongoing funding for The Healing Fund.
- 2003 (Oct) GCE adopts six principles for guiding right relations work
- 2003 (Nov) Canada launches Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process United Church commits to attend every hearing unless claimant declines. Church trains volunteers for this role.
- 2003 (Dec) BC Court of Appeal says Canada is 100 percent liable.
- 2004 (Feb) Government files appeal of BC ruling with Supreme Court. United Church continues to pay 30 percent except in Alberni cases, where it pays 25 percent.
- 2004 Launch of Sisters in Spirit campaign with Native Women’s Association, the Anglican Church, and Women’s Inter-Church Council of Canada.
- 2004 (May) First National Day of Healing and Reconciliation.
- 2004 The Healing Fund remanded, new staff position created.
- 2005 (Apr) United Church supports Assembly of First Nations Review Report on ADR process. Calls for a holistic response to legacy of residential schools with seven elements.

- 2005 (May) Justice Iacobucci appoints federal representative to negotiate and make recommendations on lump sum payments, ADR, commemoration, community healing, and Truth and Reconciliation process. Working groups formed, which involve United Church representation.
- 2005 (Oct) Supreme Court reinstates 75/25 percent liability decision.
- 2005 (Nov) Canada announces Agreement in Principle on resolution package negotiated by Justice Iacobucci.
- 2006 (Feb) United Church leads workshop, “Decolonizing Ourselves; Transforming Ourselves,” at World Council of Churches Assembly in Brazil.
Special Infopac mailing to commemorate 20th anniversary of apology to First Nations Peoples.
- 2006 (Mar) To date, some 800 claims from former Indian Residential School students are filed naming United Church; 360 settled out of court, 6 court decisions. Received 280 ADR applications.
- 2006 (May) Settlement Agreement is finalized. United Church approves Agreement on April 30 and federal Cabinet approves it on May 10.
- 2007 (Mar) On its 20th anniversary, the United Church re-signs “A New Covenant: Towards the Constitutional Recognition and Projection of Aboriginal Self Government in Canada.”
- 2007 (Sep) Settlement Agreement implemented on September 19.
- 2008 (May) Living into Right Relations groups covenant at Pinawa.
- 2008 (Jun) Truth and Reconciliation Commission launches.
- 2009 (Jan) Aboriginal Ministries Circle inaugurated.
- 2009 (May) Aboriginal Justice Program Co-ordinator position begins.
- 2009 (Jun) Joint Grand Council and National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering.
- 2009 (Aug) Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner Wilson and three survivors speak at 40th General Council.
40th General Council approves a motion to acknowledge the presence and spirituality of Aboriginal people as a significant component to the Basis of Union and directs that they become signatories. It also directs that a new United Church crest be developed that acknowledges the presence and spirituality of Aboriginal people in the United Church.

- 2009 (Sep) Aboriginal Ministries Council holds their first meeting.
- 2010 (Jun) United Church participates in first Truth and Reconciliation Commission national event and Remembering the Children ceremony regarding Red Deer Industrial School.
- 2010 (Nov) Re-mandating/renaming of Residential School Committee, now Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools.
General Council Executive passes a motion initiated by Saskatchewan Conference to urge federal and provincial governments to recognize National Aboriginal Day, June 21, as a statutory holiday. Recognizing the holiday begins in 2011.
- 2011 (Aug) National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering is held in Tsimshaim Nation, Prince Rupert, BC, with the theme of Honouring Spiritual Diversity.
- 2011 (Nov) Francis Sandy Theological Centre and Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre are amalgamated to respond to budget concerns identified by the General Council Office.
- 2012 (Spring) General Council Executive agrees unanimously to disown the Doctrine of Discovery.
- 2012 (Jun) Aboriginal Ministries Circle hires final staff member. Full complement of staff includes Executive Minister, Healing Programs Coordinator, two Community Capacity Development Coordinators, Youth Development Coordinator, Program Assistant, and Administrative Assistant.
- 2012 (Aug) Ray Jones, chair of Aboriginal Ministries Council, and Mardi Tindal, Moderator of The United Church of Canada, sign a covenant acknowledging the need for an ongoing relationship rejecting historical attitudes and affirming the commitment to move forward in right relations.
United Church crest is changed to acknowledge the presence of Aboriginal people as integral companions from the time of establishing the church.
- 2013 (Jun) Aboriginal Ministries Circle calls for congregations to support an Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Aboriginal Women and Girls through signing a petition.
United Church writes to the provincial Ministers of Education regarding mandatory inclusion of residential school history in the curricula.
- 2014 (Mar) United Church makes a statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at the Edmonton National Event.

- 2014 (Fall) Church launches Take Actions on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls to call for public inquiry, and to support BC First Nations in the Pull Together campaign.
- Adopts final report of the National Task Group on Living into Right Relations (May 2008–Nov. 2013).
- 2015 (Feb) Adopts statement valuing Aboriginal spirituality.
- 2015 (Jun) Participates in joint church response to the Final Report and Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- 2016 The Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle, a group of representatives from across the Indigenous church, begin work to envision a new model of Indigenous church within The United Church of Canada.
- 2016 (Mar) Church issues statement on implementation of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- 2017 (Jul) The United Church of Canada and the Uniting Church in Australia initiate a two-part reconciliation dialogue and exchange. An Australian delegation travels to Canada in 2017, with a return Canadian visit to Australia in 2018.
- 2017 (Jul) The Caretakers' Report, "Calls to the Church," is approved at the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering in Pinawa, MB.
- 2018 (Jul) 43rd General Council receives the Calls to the Church from Indigenous United Church communities, and a process of community consultations in Indigenous communities of faith is initiated.
- 2018 (Nov) United Church participates in a "lessons learned" analysis of the Settlement Agreement to help inform similar agreements in the future. A major finding is to focus on culturally appropriate ongoing healing initiatives alongside legal "remedies."
- 2019 (Aug) The new self-determining Indigenous church within The United Church of Canada launches at the National Indigenous Spiritual gathering in Rama, ON. This includes the creation of a National Indigenous Council (NIC) and a National Indigenous Elders Council (NIEC).
- 2020 (Feb) United Church, with other parties to the Settlement Agreement, begins a process of envisioning a Covenant of Reconciliation (responding to TRC Call to Action 46). The process is delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Broad consultation is expected in 2022.

- 2020 (Oct) United Church commits to becoming an actively anti-racist institution, stating that “The current context of anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Asian racism that manifests itself against Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour requires the followers of Jesus to make clear commitments to contribute to a just and equitable church and world.”
- 2021 (May–Jun) The unmarked burial sites of 215 children are located on the grounds of the former Kamloops residential institution. The United Church initially responds with a time of prayer and mourning, followed by a statement that the church’s actions will be guided by the wishes of survivors and community.
- 2021 (July) Moderator Richard Bott responds to survivors and Indigenous community leadership, acknowledging that “that our role in the residential school system and colonization is an abuse of power through our Christian faith.”
- United Church establishes [Bringing the Children Home](#), an initiative to support communities, should they wish it, in the work of identifying unmarked graves, knowledge gathering, commemoration, and ceremony to honour the children who did not return home from United Church residential institutions. There is also commitment to directly provide communities with all United Church archival records related to residential institutions.
- 2022 (July) General Council 44 passes the National Indigenous Council’s proposal on the autonomy of the Indigenous Church. This directs the General Secretary to identify and remove all structural barriers to developing and sustaining an autonomous Indigenous Church within The United Church of Canada, consistent with the Calls to the Church and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- General Council 44 elects its first female Indigenous (and second Indigenous) Moderator, the Right Reverend Dr. Carmen Lansdowne, Kwisa'lakw.