# The Sacred Drum: Celebrating Indigenous Spirituality and Strength

# 2023 Indigenous Day of Prayer Service

—*by Shane Goldie*

Note: Please feel free to adapt the service to fit your community's context and preferences.

In the creation of this content, I have drawn upon general knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures, spirituality, and history, as well as Christian scripture and theology. No specific sources were used or quoted directly. However, the content is inspired by the themes and values commonly found in Indigenous and Christian spiritual teachings and practices, as well as the broader context of reconciliation and healing in Canada.

## We Gather to Worship in Community

### Welcome to Worship

Dear friends and members of our beloved community, we extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to each of you as we gather on this special day to celebrate the Indigenous Day of Prayer. In our worship today, we come together to honour and appreciate the rich heritage, wisdom, and spirituality of the Indigenous Peoples who have been the stewards of this land since time immemorial.

We recognize the significance of the Sacred Drum, the heartbeat of Mother Earth, which connects us to the voices of our ancestors and unites us on this journey towards healing, reconciliation, and unity. In this sacred space, we are called to open our hearts and minds, to listen with compassion, and to learn from the teachings of Indigenous siblings.

Whether you have come seeking solace, inspiration, or community, we invite you to be present in this moment, to connect with the Great Spirit and with one another, and to embrace the spirit of unity and love. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, know that you are welcome here.

Together, let us celebrate the beauty of diversity, the strength of resilience, and the power of unity as we worship the Creator, the Great Spirit, who weaves us all together in a tapestry of love and grace. Welcome to worship.

### Recognition of the Land and Indigenous People

As we gather here today, let us take a moment to acknowledge the land upon which we stand and the Indigenous Peoples who have stewarded this land since time immemorial. We recognize that our worship space is situated on the traditional territories of the (*specific Indigenous Nations—e.g., Anishinaabe, Cree, Haudenosaunee*), and we extend our gratitude and respect to the (*specific Indigenous Nations*) for their enduring presence and care for this land.

In this moment of recognition, we honour the diverse histories, cultures, and spiritualities of the Indigenous Peoples who continue to shape and enrich our communities. We commit ourselves to the ongoing work of reconciliation, healing, and justice, walking alongside Indigenous Peoples with humility, empathy, and open hearts.

As we worship and celebrate together, let us be mindful of our shared responsibility to protect and nurture the land, to honour the wisdom and resilience of Indigenous Peoples, and to cultivate relationships rooted in respect, understanding, and unity. In doing so, we contribute to a more inclusive, equitable, and compassionate world for all.

### The Announcements

*We share community plans, celebrations, and anything on our hearts.*

### Prelude

*A time to centre ourselves on worship.*

## We Welcome One Another in Peace

### Passing the Peace

(If your community of faith is open, comfortable, and willing, invite them to shake hands for passing the peace. This can be adapted to each individual context and preference.)

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.

**All: And also with you. Amen**

### Opening Prayer

**Creator, Great Spirit, we thank you for gathering us today to celebrate and honour the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. We recognize the sacredness of the drum, the powerful symbol of unity, healing, and connection to the earth. As we worship, guide us to listen deeply, embrace compassion, and seek understanding. May our journey together strengthen the bonds of unity and foster the spirit of reconciliation. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.**

### The Lighting of the Christ Candle

O Great Spirit, Creator of all light and life, as we gather in this sacred space to celebrate the Indigenous Day of Prayer, we now light the Christ candle as a symbol of your divine presence among us. We remember the words of Christ, the Light of the World, who calls us to be beacons of hope, healing, and reconciliation.

As we kindle this flame, may it remind us of the wisdom and resilience of the Indigenous Peoples who have cherished and nurtured the land we share. May it also represent the Sacred Drum, whose rhythm resonates with the heartbeat of Mother Earth and unites us in our common journey towards understanding, unity, and love.

We pray that the light of this candle will guide us in our worship, illuminate our hearts, and inspire us to walk together in the footsteps of Christ. May we be bearers of this light in a world yearning for peace, justice, and reconciliation.

In the name of the Creator, the Great Spirit, we pray. Amen.

### Opening Hymn

“Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works” (*Voices United* 308)

### Call to worship

One: On this Indigenous Day of Prayer, we gather in solidarity with the First Peoples of this land.

**All: We celebrate their wisdom, culture, and spirituality.**

One: We honour the sacred drum, the heartbeat of Mother Earth, echoing the voice of our ancestors.

**All: May our hearts beat in harmony with the rhythm of Creation.**

One: Come, let us join in worship, embracing the beauty of Indigenous heritage and strength.

**All: With open hearts, we seek to journey together on the path of healing and reconciliation.**

### A Time for the Young and the Young at Heart (Children’s Time)

 *Rainbow Crow* retold by Nancy Van Laan (Toronto: Random House, 1991).

The Rainbow Crow is a beautiful and colourful bird that lives in a time when the world is always warm and bright. One day, winter arrives, bringing snow and cold with it. The animals in the forest are suffering, and they decide to send a messenger to the Great Spirit to ask for help. The animals choose the Rainbow Crow because of its beautiful feathers and sweet voice.

The Rainbow Crow sets off on its long journey to the Great Spirit. It pleads for help, explaining how the animals are suffering in the cold. The Great Spirit listens and gives the Rainbow Crow a stick with fire on the end. The Rainbow Crow thanks the Great Spirit and returns to the forest.

As the Rainbow Crow flies back, the heat from the fire stick causes its beautiful feathers to turn black, and its sweet voice becomes hoarse from the smoke. Despite these changes, the Rainbow Crow completes its journey and brings fire to the animals, saving them from the cold.

The animals are grateful for the Rainbow Crow's sacrifice, and they learn the importance of selflessness, courage, and helping one another.

This story is suitable for Children’s Time, as it highlights Indigenous wisdom and values. The Rainbow Crow’s selflessness and determination to help the other animals reflect the importance of unity, sacrifice, and community support. It serves as an excellent starting point for discussing the themes of the day, such as reconciliation, healing, and learning from Indigenous spirituality and wisdom.

#### Craft: Rainbow Crow Collage

* construction paper (various colours, including black)
* scissors, glue, markers or crayons, googly eyes (optional)

Begin by giving each child a piece of black construction paper as the background for their collage. Explain that this represents the Rainbow Crow after its journey to bring fire to the animals.

Provide the children with various colours of construction paper. Ask them to cut out small feather shapes from each colour. These colourful feathers symbolize the Rainbow Crow before its journey, when it had beautiful and colourful feathers.

Have the children glue the colourful feathers onto the black construction paper, creating a collage of the Rainbow Crow's original appearance. They can arrange the feathers in any pattern they like, encouraging creativity and self-expression.

Once the feathers are glued onto the black paper, the children can add details to their Rainbow Crow collage, such as drawing or gluing on a beak, feet, and googly eyes.

As the children work on their craft, engage them in a conversation about the story's themes, such as selflessness, courage, and helping one another. Discuss the importance of learning from Indigenous wisdom and values, as well as our shared responsibility to work towards healing, reconciliation, and unity.

When the craft is completed, encourage the children to take their Rainbow Crow collage home as a reminder of the story and the themes discussed during the Indigenous Day of Prayer.

### Prayer of Approach

**Great Spirit, Creator of all, as we come before you in humility and reverence, we give thanks for your loving presence. You have brought us together on this Indigenous Day of Prayer, uniting us in our shared journey of healing, reconciliation, and celebration.**

**As we approach you, O God, we seek to honour the wisdom, spirituality, and strength of the Indigenous Peoples of this land. We acknowledge the power of the Sacred Drum, its rhythm echoing the heartbeat of Mother Earth and connecting us to the voices of our ancestors.**

**Open our hearts, Great Spirit, to receive your guidance and grace. Help us to embrace the beauty of diversity, to listen with respect and compassion, and to learn from the teachings of Indigenous peoples.**

**In this sacred time of worship, may we be filled with your Spirit, that we might journey together on the path of understanding and love. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.**

## The Time of Giving

### Minute for Mission

(*See* [*Stories of Our Mission*](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/generosity-through-mission-and-service/stories-our-mission) *for ideas.*)

Our sense of community expands in the stories we hear.

### Invitation to Give

Beloved community, as we gather on this Indigenous Day of Prayer, let us reflect on the abundant blessings and gifts the Creator has generously bestowed upon us. We are invited to share these blessings with others.

The act of giving is not only about financial resources but also about sharing our time, talents, and heart. In this spirit of generosity, let us open ourselves to the call of the Great Spirit to support the work of reconciliation.

As we prepare to give, may we remember the power of the Sacred Drum, uniting us with the heartbeat of Mother Earth and the voices of our ancestors. Through our offerings, may we contribute to building a world where love, justice, and compassion flourish.

Let us give with joyful and grateful hearts.

### Hymn

“Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works” (*Voices United* 308)

This hymn acknowledges the greatness of the Creator and the beauty of creation, reflecting themes of gratitude and interconnectedness that resonate with Indigenous spirituality and values.

### The Prayer of Dedication

Gracious Creator, source of all blessings and gifts, we come before you with gratitude for the abundance you have bestowed upon us. As we gather on this Indigenous Day of Prayer, we dedicate our lives, our gifts, and our resources to the ongoing work of healing, reconciliation, and unity.

We acknowledge, O God, the sacredness of the drum, symbolizing our interconnectedness with the Earth and one another. In this spirit of unity, we offer our time, talents, and treasures to support and uplift Indigenous communities, to celebrate their rich heritage, and to foster understanding and mutual respect among all peoples.

As we dedicate these offerings, Great Spirit, we also dedicate our hearts and minds to the journey of reconciliation. Empower us to be instruments of your peace, your love, and your justice, as we work together to build a more inclusive, equitable, and compassionate world.

In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

## We Listen

### A Prayer of Confession

Great Spirit, Creator of all, we come before you with humble hearts, acknowledging our shortcomings and the ways in which we have failed to honour the wisdom and dignity of the Indigenous Peoples of these lands. We confess that we have too often remained silent in the face of injustice and have not always taken the necessary steps towards healing and reconciliation.

We admit that we have sometimes perpetuated harmful stereotypes, neglected to listen to the voices of Indigenous communities, and been slow to confront our own biases and prejudices. Forgive us, O God, for the times when our actions and inactions have contributed to the pain and suffering of Indigenous Peoples.

### Words of Assurance

Beloved community, receive these words of assurance: The Great Spirit, our Creator, is a God of mercy, compassion, and unconditional love. As we come before the Creator with sincere hearts, seeking forgiveness and transformation, know that we are embraced by divine grace and offered the opportunity to begin anew.

In this sacred space, let us find strength and courage to journey together on the path of healing, reconciliation, and unity, guided by the wisdom of Indigenous Peoples and the rhythm of the sacred crum. As we journey together, may we become agents of hope, love, and justice, embodying the spirit of Christ, who calls us to break down the walls that divide and to build bridges of understanding and compassion.

In the name of the Creator, the Great Spirit, we are forgiven, renewed, and empowered. Amen.

## Word of God for the People of God

### The Responsive Psalm (*Voices United* 818) or Just Read

**Psalm 98**

O sing to the Lord a new song,
 for he has done marvelous things.
His right hand and his holy arm
 have gotten him victory.
The Lord has made known his victory;
 he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.
He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness
 to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
 the victory of our God.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
 break forth into joyous song and sing praises.
Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,
 with the lyre and the sound of melody.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
 make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
 the world and those who live in it.
Let the floods clap their hands;
 let the hills sing together for joy
at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming
 to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
 and the peoples with equity.

**Ephesians 2:14‒22**

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone;in him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

### Message/Sermon

Dear friends, today we gather to celebrate the Indigenous Day of Prayer, a day of great significance for Indigenous Peopless across the country. This day is a reminder of the deep spiritual traditions that have been passed down through generations, and the importance of honouring and respecting them.

One of the most important symbols of Indigenous spirituality is the Sacred Drum. The drum has been used in Indigenous ceremonies and rituals for centuries, and its sound is believed to connect us to the Creator, to our ancestors, and to the natural world. The drum is a powerful tool for prayer and meditation. Its rhythmic beat creates a sacred space, a space in which we can connect with the spiritual world and seek guidance and strength. The drum reminds us of the importance of unity, of coming together as a community to honour our traditions and our shared history. But the drum is not just a symbol of Indigenous spirituality. It is also a symbol of resilience and resistance.

Throughout history, Indigenous Peoples have faced great challenges and adversity, including the forced removal of children from families, the loss of land and resources, and the suppression of languages and cultures. Through it all, the drum has remained a constant source of strength and hope. As we celebrate the Indigenous Day of Prayer, let us honour the Sacred Drum and all that it represents. Let us remember the resilience and strength of Indigenous peoples, and their deep connection to the land and to the spiritual world. Let us commit ourselves to working towards reconciliation and healing, and to creating a future where the drum can continue to be honoured for generations to come. May the sound of the Sacred Drum fill our hearts with hope and our spirits with strength. And may we all walk together in a spirit of unity, respect, and love As we reflect on the meaning of the Sacred Drum, let us also remember the importance of listening. The drum teaches us to listen to the rhythms of the natural world, to the voices of our ancestors, and to the whispers of the Creator. It reminds us that listening is an essential part of prayer and of building relationships.

In Ephesians 2:14‒22, we learn of Christ’s mission to break down the walls that divide us, creating a new humanity in which all people are united in peace and love. As followers of Christ, we are called to emulate this spirit of unity, seeking to build bridges of understanding and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The Sacred Drum, with its power to unite and connect, is a symbol of the kind of unity that Christ seeks to bring about in the world. Just as the drum brings people together in a shared experience of prayer and celebration, Christ's love breaks down the barriers of race, ethnicity, and culture that separate us from one another. As we reflect on the meaning of the Sacred Drum and Christ's message of unity, we are reminded of the importance of breaking down the walls of division that exist in our society. For too long, Indigenous peoples have been marginalized and oppressed, their voices silenced and their rights ignored. It is time for us to listen, to learn, and to take action towards reconciliation and healing. In this mission, we can draw inspiration from the drum and the way it brings people together. By seeking to understand the traditions and cultures of Indigenous peoples, we can begin to build bridges of understanding and respect. By acknowledging the harm that has been done and working towards restitution, we can begin to break down the walls of division that have separated us for too long. Through Christ's message of love and unity, we can create a new humanity, one in which all people are valued and respected, and in which the Sacred Drum can continue to be heard, as a symbol of the power of unity, healing, and hope.

Listening also plays a crucial role in reconciliation. As we work towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, we must be willing to listen to their stories, their perspectives, and their experiences. We must be willing to acknowledge the harm that has been done and to work towards healing and reconciliation. At the same time, we must also be willing to listen to the land, to the animals, and to the natural world. Indigenous Peoples have always recognized the interconnectedness of all things and the importance of living in harmony with the natural world. As we continue to face environmental challenges, we must learn to listen to the wisdom of Indigenous Peoples and to work towards a more sustainable and respectful relationship with the land. In conclusion, let us celebrate the Indigenous Day of Prayer with a deep sense of gratitude and humility. Let us honour the Sacred Drum and all that it represents, and let us commit ourselves to listening to the voices of Indigenous Peoples, to the land, and to the Creator. May we journey together in a spirit of reconciliation, healing, and love. May we go forth from this day with a renewed commitment to building bridges of understanding and reconciliation, to listening to the voices of Indigenous Peoples, and to working towards a future of peace and love for all. Amen.

## We Respond

## Gifts for Gratitude

### A Song of the People: Love and Blessings

Love and blessings we bring you, love and blessings today. May our Creator in heaven bless and keep you always.

### Invitation to Share

(*News, celebrations, or any of that which weighs on our hearts in community.*)

### Prayers of the People/Pastoral Prayers

Great Spirit, Creator of all, we come before you in gratitude and reverence, lifting up the prayers of our hearts. We join our voices in this sacred space with humility and love, seeking your guidance, wisdom, and strength.

For the healing of the land and the renewal of our relationship with Mother Earth, we pray:
**All: Great Spirit, receive our prayer.**

For the wisdom of Indigenous leaders and Elders, that their teachings may inspire us to travel together in unity and respect, we pray:
**All: Great Spirit, receive our prayer.**

For the survivors of residential schools and their families, that they may find healing, comfort, and justice, we pray:
**All: Great Spirit, receive our prayer.**

For the ongoing work of reconciliation and the building of strong, respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, we pray:
**All: Great Spirit, receive our prayer.**

For the courage to confront and dismantle systemic racism, colonialism, and injustice, and for the wisdom to create a more equitable and compassionate society, we pray:
**All: Great Spirit, hear our prayer.**

For the Sacred Drum, that its rhythm may continue to unite us in harmony with the heartbeat of Mother Earth and the voices of our ancestors, we pray:
**All: Great Spirit, receive our prayer.**

For the churches and faith communities seeking to be instruments of peace, justice, and reconciliation, that they may be guided by your Spirit and sustained by your grace, we pray:
**All: Great Spirit, receive our prayer.**

In the silence of our hearts, we lift up our personal prayers and petitions, trusting in your loving presence and care (*a moment of silence is observed*)...

Great Spirit, hear the prayers of your people, spoken and unspoken. May we be bearers of your love, justice, and compassion as we travel together on this journey of healing and reconciliation. In your holy name, we pray. **Amen.**

### The Lord’s Prayer or Alternate: An Indigenous Lord’s Prayer

Great Spirit, our Creator, who is in all places,
Sacred is your name.

May your wisdom guide us,
Your will be done in our lives, as it is throughout Creation.

Provide for us today the nourishment we need,
And forgive us our wrongs, as we forgive those who have wronged us.

Lead us on the path of understanding and respect,
And protect us from ignorance and harm.

For you are the source of all power, beauty, and love,
From generation to generation, forever and always.

Amen.

## We Go Forth to Serve Our Community

### Closing Hymn

“One More Step Along the World I Go” (*Voices United* 639)

### The Commissioning

May the Creator, the Great Spirit, fill your hearts with love, your minds with wisdom, and your spirits with courage. As you leave this sacred space, carry the heartbeat of the Sacred Drum within you. May you be inspired to unite, celebrate Indigenous cultures’ richness, and seek healing and reconciliation for all. Amen.

### The Benediction

Sing “Go now in peace” (*Voices United* 964)

### Postlude

(*Invite people to sit for a moment while the Postlude plays, instead of getting up to leave. Invite them to sit with the Spirit, to reflect on the meaning, importance, and beauty that the Indigenous Day of Prayer uplifts and holds not only for Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island but for all of us who call this land home.*)

—*Shane Goldie is the student minister at Knox and St. Paul’s United Churches, Taber and Milk River, Alberta.*