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**A Brief to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs Concerning Bill C-15
From the National Indigenous Council of The United Church of Canada**

07 April 2021

Sekon, Bozhoo, Tansi.

We, the National Indigenous Council of The United Church of Canada are praying, as you take the time to study Bill C-15, *An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, that you are doing so in a good way.

We have followed and supported the development of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In 2016, responding to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the United Church of Canada adopted the Declaration as the framework of reconciliation.

As Indigenous people in the church, when we make decisions we take the time necessary to seek the wisdom and counsel of our communities. We are following the ways that have guided our people for time immemorial.

This is also our hope for Canada: that, in adopting the UN Declaration and beginning the work that this Bill lays out, it will say that colonial systems are coming to an end; and that our relationships will be guided by the spirit and intent of the Treaties, not by the Indian Act.

We were disappointed to see that in the process that led to Bill C-15 there was not broad or deep community consultation. Because of that, and because of our own inability to consult within our communities, we have decided that we as the National Indigenous Council of the United Church cannot at this time make an informed statement either in support of or against Bill C-15.

We see that the Bill refers to Canada working “in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples” to achieve the objectives of the Declaration; to monitor, oversee and provide accountability; to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the Declaration; and to create a national action plan on the Declaration.

We believe that the only way this can be done is through a conversation between Canada and our peoples – between Canada and Indigenous Nations – that is deep, broad, and honest.

Our recommendation to you is similar to what we said to the United Church as we continued our journey of self-determination, rooted in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

We are Indigenous Peoples and Nations, not a single group nor a select organization. We must all be present in the process of consultation and cooperation that the Bill foresees. We hope that you will respect our ways of decision-making.

As Indigenous peoples, we have waited a long time for Canada to commit to building a new relationship with us. We are glad you are here now, and as this Bill moves forward we hope that you will work with us, respecting our ways, to build that relationship.

All My Relations.

The National Indigenous Council of The United Church of Canada

The National Indigenous Council is the elected, self-determining governance structure of Indigenous peoples and communities of faith in The United Church of Canada.