

Statement from the Indigenous Peoples' Youth Pre-Conference

We, the Indigenous Youth Representatives of the WCC, have gathered in Trondheim, on the ancestral homelands of the Saami, to create a network to bring indigenous youths together, share stories and act together with the goal in mind to create a movement for justice and reconciliation. We are here to stay, and we will take our rightful place in the Body of Jesus Christ that we are. Our voices will no longer be silenced.

Honouring our ancestors, we pay the utmost respect to the countless spirits that came before us. Thanks to their resilience, we are still here, as a stark reminder of how despite centuries of genocide, linguistic poverty, and spiritual oppression, we walk in the footsteps of our foremothers and forefathers towards a brighter, more positive future. As young Indigenous members of a globalised, westernised, and ultimately colonised world, we are aware of and wish to see a movement towards a decolonised way of thinking with regards to how we communicate across borders and between generations.

As Indigenous Youth, we need to reclaim our identities, and learn our histories; through a system that pays respect to our Elders and simultaneously gives a space to younger voices, we strengthen our communities from within. Acknowledging the ambivalent relationship between the Church and Indigenous Peoples, we assert that we are indeed the Church, and look to you, as our leaders to assist us in creating spaces where this intra-generational transmission of culture, spirituality and history is allowed to take place. We acknowledge that the colonial actions of the Church and States have turned us against ourselves. We also acknowledge the fact that the Church can change its legacy by supporting the actions that we as Indigenous Youths are trying to implement spaces for reconciliation need to challenge colonial practices that force generations apart, and acknowledge that despite inherited wounds that complicate our relationships with each other, we are the only ones who can truly love ourselves.

We need the Church to stand with us as we work towards reconciliation and healing. At the same time we affirm the need for collective action towards reconciliation; in order to heal, we need ourselves and the Church to listen to our stories, and allow ourselves to mourn, grieve and feel the pain inflicted by the Church upon our communities.

Furthermore, we need the Church to publically address and recognise the ongoing great injustices inflicted upon our peoples around the world. The Church has to play an active part in ending the genocide that our peoples are still facing for so-called "development". Too many of our Indigenous brothers and sisters continue to face discrimination, marginalisation, loss of land, identity, languages and traditional knowledge. Our holistic worldviews challenge a Westernised focus on the individual, and centre a life-giving interconnectedness with the Earth, and all of God's Creation. Our collective responsibility for the Environment is what defines us as Indigenous Peoples. To us, neglecting the Environment equals an active attack on our Indigenous understanding of our spirituality. Finally, we need the Church to actively combat the continued lack of culturally sensitive education as it leads to further colonisation, which has a detrimental effect upon our societies, thereby allowing intergenerational traumas to be passed on for centuries to come.