

## **The Walk for Common Ground 2019**

*Organized by Dr. Pat Makokis (Saddle Lake Cree Nation), Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA), and Mennonite Church Canada.*

- **What**

A 15-day, 340 km walk from Edmonton to Calgary (May 31—June 14), engaging diverse communities in public conversations about the gift of Treaty relationships—exploring why treaties matter and how we can collectively benefit from honouring the original covenant.

- **Why**

**Fostering Awareness & Conversation on Treaty Relationships**—The Treaties are sacred agreements between nations inviting Indigenous and Settler peoples to live in peace, friendship, and respect. Unfortunately, most Canadians do not know much about these covenants, and the government has failed to honour their spirit and intent. Policies of assimilation and postures of paternalism have fundamentally impacted Indigenous peoples, undermined their traditional ways of living, and produced significant socio-economic disparity that continues to this day. But together, we can do otherwise. Together, we can find ways to walk in kindness and understanding toward a just and shared future. And to do so, we need to understand what our Treaties are all about.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has specifically called all Canadians, as Treaty peoples, to grow in our understanding of the Treaties through “sustained education and public dialogue” (TRC, principle #6). Moreover, the Federal government has been called to renew “Treaty relationships based on principles of mutual recognition, mutual respect, and shared responsibility” (Call to Action 45.3). We have been invited to take up this work, not only for the healing of Indigenous nations, but for the healing of Settler peoples too. We all will benefit by knowing and living our Treaty relationships.

**Embodied Witness**—As unions and churches we are called to walk with the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed. In Canada, the concerns and priorities voiced by Indigenous peoples need to be listened to and acted upon. We want to encourage one another and our governments to act in ways that are consistent with Treaty commitments and the TRC’s Calls to Action. The Walk for Common Ground is a small but real way to witness that we care, and we want to be a positive force for life-giving change.

- **Who**

**Union members, Church members, and Indigenous peoples** from a variety of communities are all welcome to join the journey. Union, church, and college spaces will be generously hosting walkers, providing meals, and hosting public circle conversations on Treaties.

**Intergenerational and Inclusive**—The Walk for Common Ground will include people across generations, cultures and belief systems . We believe each participant brings a valuable

perspective to this conversation as we seek to learn from one another and to nurture further efforts towards positive social change.

- **How**

**Shared Values & Principles**—We will seek to uphold the values of love, respect, courage, honesty, wisdom, humility and truth in this journey. With gentleness, we are looking to nurture courageous conversations around Treaty and to walk in solidarity with Indigenous peoples. We long to honour the sacredness of contract and to channel our privilege in ways that benefit others, and in so doing, build relationships across differences.

**Teaching Circles**— Many of us lack a basic awareness of the Treaties. We want to explore our history, the covenants made by our ancestors, and the ways we can honour these commitments in the present. We want to discuss why Treaty rights and responsibilities are a blueprint for reconciliation, and how we might live into this joyful reality together.

**Walking** —Through the act of collective walking, we will seek to embody, even in a small way, something of the spirit and intent of Treaty. We are in this together. These are our Treaties.