

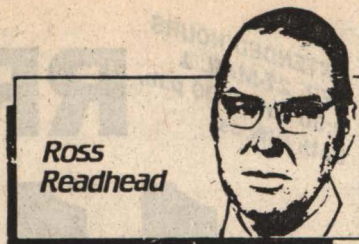
Native churches find acceptance

A standing ovation welcomed the action of the last General Council of the United Church of Canada in inaugurating the All Native Circle Conference of the church to be its 13th Conference. The conferences are rather large areas of congregations, with responsibility to assist their churches and presbyteries.

The United Church has made an effort over the past several decades to learn more about the richness of native religion — religion which was often destroyed by their own missionaries. Now the native community within Canada is being given a place in the church's organization and councils.

Like the other conferences of the church, this new conference will have equal responsibility and authority. It will give the native section of the church independence and a greater voice in the development and life of the United Church.

However, self-government does not mean self-sufficiency and



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the Canadian native congregations will need greater support and more resources with which to survive, many of their leaders claim. In time, they will become strong in their own right. In the meantime, the rest of the church must be prepared to assist them when the All Native Circle Conference sees its needs and requests help.

The acceptance of the native churches with their own independent conference within the United Church has been warmly received by the rest of the church. It shows an acceptance of the native people's views, culture and rights. The dream of those in both the established church and the native

churches is that this native conference will better enable the church as a whole to share and appreciate each's unique contributions.

The native people's priorities are not always the same as those of the rest of the church. As well, they have needs and problems unique to themselves which need to be addressed.

There are some 55 native congregations with an estimated 7,000 supporters in the United Church. Survival is a real concern to them. Therefore, they welcome this move to make them an integral part of the church as a whole.