

## **#012**

### The Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples Report

We respectfully submit this report to the 35th Session of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada and provide you with a review of our history and ministry, the work of the past triennium and what our priorities are for the next triennium. Included here is the Council's philosophy and the theology in which the work is grounded. The Council continues in its commitment to assist the church in understanding the vision of the 'Covenant' and 'Our Journey of Spiritual Renewal'. Underlying this is the commitment to healing and reconciliation as we move forward, in control of our destiny and redefining our roles. This means education and awareness is a priority for the church at the grassroots

Indigenous people represent four per cent of the Canadian Anglican population worshipping in 225 Anglican congregations whose membership are all or have a significant number of Indigenous people.

The diversity of indigenous peoples in our church is representative in the Council's membership of 20 lay and ordained people who come from sixteen dioceses having at least one Native Anglican congregation.

For over two-and-a-half decades it has been the **philosophy** and **spirituality** of indigenous ministry with the Anglican Church of Canada *"to strengthen and support the indigenous peoples of Canada, (Aboriginal, Inuit and Metis) spiritually, socially, economically and politically in line with our needs and aspirations by recognizing that the purity of the land base provides for all our needs; and that as active participants in the life of the Church, the indigenous peoples will strive for reconciliation with the Anglican Communion towards the common objective that indigenous people have the right to self-determination."*

In 1969, the church ended a century of running Indian Residential Schools. It also committed to a new relationship with Indigenous peoples, heeding Charles Hendry's call in his 1969 Report to General Synod ***Beyond Traplines***, for a partnership based on solidarity, equality and mutual respect.

In 1993 we accepted from the Primate, Archbishop Michael Peers, an **apology** from the church for the Indian residential school system that the church administered for over a century and ended in 1969. An excerpt from the full apology states: *I am sorry, more than I can say, that we were part of a system which took you and your children from home and family I am sorry, more than I can say, that we tried to remake you in our image, taking from you your language and the signs of your identity I am sorry, more than I can say, that in our schools so many were abused physically, sexually, culturally and emotionally. On behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, I offer our apology.* During

the century following Confederation, the Anglican Church ran 26 of the 80 church-run, government-funded “Indian Residential Schools.” Between 50 and 100 thousand Aboriginal children attended those Anglican schools.

In Ottawa, November 1993, the Anglican Church of Canada submitted a brief to the Royal Commission On Aboriginal Peoples at a special consultation between the members of the commission and representatives of the historic mission churches. This 105 page brief recounted the church’s historical relationship, the change in direction set out since the ‘69 Hendry Report, the ecumenical residential schools healing and reconciliation work begun in the early ‘90s, and our recommendations.

This past triennium the Council’s sub-committee, the Residential Schools Advisory Group, has continued the support for healing and reconciliation that was begun in 1993. We have responded to Aboriginal **community healing initiatives** by providing approximately \$150,000 in grants (1996-1998). The previous Working Group with Anglican Video produced two videos: *Search For Healing* and *The Healing Circle* with workshop booklets.

It has been the **mission of indigenous ministries** to ensure that indigenous people have a place within the life of the Church; to explore and pursue a meaningful way of sharing our cultural diversity in the Church; and to reflect recognition and support of the development and advancement of indigenous government. Our task through our various ministries is to share the vision of a journey of spiritual renewal through prayerful dialogue in the good news of Jesus Christ.

In 1994, at a Partners In Mission Consultation, *Preparing The Way*, we responded joyfully to God’s sacred call and covenanted together to work for self-determination within the church. The 1995 General Synod of The Anglican Church of Canada accepted and affirmed the **Native Covenant** adopted by the Council pledging, “*Under the guidance of God’s spirit we agree to do all we can to call our people into unity in a new self-determining community within the Anglican Church of Canada. To this end, we extend the hand of partnership to all those who will help us build a truly Anglican Indigenous Church in Canada. May God bless this new vision and give us grace to accomplish it.*” The Council and Anglican Video have also documented this historical journey in *The Seventh Fire* video and workshop booklet.

Internationally, since 1983, we have been discovering and celebrating our common global spirituality, concerns, gifts and hopes with the other members of the **Anglican Indigenous Network**.

With the Native Americans and Hawai’ians we have begun to explore education resources through the Indigenous Theological Training Institute initiated by ECUSA’s Indian Ministries.

*We are indigenous minority peoples living in our own lands. We are committed to the*

*Anglican tradition while affirming our own traditional spirituality. We have discovered that we have many things in common: a common spirituality, common concerns, common gifts, common hopes. We believe that God is leading the Church to a turning point in this history and that the full partnership of indigenous peoples is essential. Therefore we pledge to work together to exercise our leadership in contributing our vision and gifts to transform the life of the Christian community.*

The Council hosted a gathering of this Network in Lethbridge, Alberta following our Circle gathering in July, 1997 and met with Native Americans, Hawai'ians, Maori and Aboriginal people of Australia and Torres Strait Islanders. ACIP members in attendance found it to be very informative and affirming to participate in the discussions on the issues of **mutual concerns**: self-determination, liturgy and worship, indigenous ministries resources, education and training for lay and ordained leadership. We desire to expand the Network and continue to invite other indigenous Anglicans in Japan and South America.

In Ottawa, November 1996, the **Royal Commission On Aboriginal Peoples** released its report (five volumes) with findings from the many consultations held across our country including recommendations to the Government of Canada. The RCAP residential schools recommendations under the Public Inquiries Act, call upon the government of Canada to establish a public inquiry instructed to undertake five areas: investigation, public hearings, research and analysis, and recommend remedial action by governments and the responsible churches.

On January 7, 1998 the Hon. Jane Stewart, Minister of Indian Affairs made a public response to the RCAP report and presented '**Gathering Strength**' *Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*. This plan agrees that significant changes in the relationship between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people are urgently required and are committed to a renewal of government's relationship with Aboriginal people based on: recognizing past mistakes and injustices; commencing reconciliation, healing and renewal; and building a joint plan for the future. This plan has four objectives:

- 1) Renewing the Partnerships
- 2) Strengthening Aboriginal Governance
- 3) Developing a New Fiscal Relationship
- 4) Supporting Strong Communities, People and Economies

With this plan was a "Statement of Reconciliation' Learning from the Past" in which the Minister for Indian Affairs provided an '**apology**' and the following is an excerpt: "*The Government of Canada acknowledges the role it played in the development and administration of these schools....to individuals who experienced the tragedy of sexual and physical abuse....who have carried this burden....who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we are deeply sorry.*"

We continue to support the **healing and recovery** from the injustice of the last century's

legacy of colonialism and sharing in the joyful work of renewing our spiritual and cultural traditions and moving toward self-determination. The Council together with the Council of the North bishops, are exploring **new ways of working together** to make the new Covenant real in the parishes and congregations by demonstrating the equal partnership that we have claimed for our peoples within the church.

Together with the bishops, the Council continues to address the issues of **spirituality, education and awareness** in a variety of ways. Our meetings together have been carried out using the *Circle* which provides a place to share our experiences, questions and concerns in a safe environment conducive to openness and honesty. We urge the General Synod to spend a day meeting in the aboriginal way, not parliamentary way, where the process of consensus can be developed.

The Council encourages the support of, and the creation of **diocesan Native Councils** and the development of their **guiding principles** to facilitate the sharing and dissemination of information and resources. This would benefit and encourage further **training for lay and ordained** as our ministry leaders will need support in identifying their leadership development needs. We must affirm the education and training now available and being utilized, and **identify new education for a new ministry**.

We support Indigenous political struggles for self-determination, recognition of land rights, and respect for Mother Earth.

Our **priorities** for the next triennium:  
continue moving forward in our **self-determination** in the church  
promote **education and awareness** and resources  
continue in the **healing and reconciliation**  
**spirituality** of our being Native and Christian  
Anglican Indigenous Circle 2000