

A Cry In the Wilderness

A Statement from the 11th Gathering of the Anglican Indigenous Network

We, the delegates attending the 11th Gathering of the Anglican Indigenous Network (AIN) are indigenous peoples who are minorities living in our own homelands. We come from Aotearoa, Australia, Canada, Hawai'i, and the United States of America. We are committed to the Anglican faith tradition while at the same time we affirm our traditional spiritualities shaped by our understanding of the interdependence of ecology, theology, spirituality and morality. We share many things in common. We believe that God is leading us to a turning point in our histories, toward full partnership between indigenous minorities living in our respective homelands.

We have pledged to work together to exercise our leadership in contributing our vision and gifts to transform the life of the Anglican Communion. We celebrate the trajectory of God's living Word in Creation and we further celebrate the continual incarnation and fulfillment of that Word in the life of our peoples.

As indigenous peoples from countries that have experienced and continue to experience the effects of colonialism, we claim our authority to live into God's future for us based upon our values, teachings, and communal self-understandings. As Indigenous minority Anglicans, we believe it is time for national churches whose borders are based upon colonial conquest, to respectfully and formally acknowledge the reality of our existence and its implications for their on-going life and governance.

Resolutions to Acc 14

- **United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Rights**

AIN strongly requests those members of ACC whose governments have not yet signed and ratified the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to take appropriate steps to encourage their governments to become signatories. And request the Secretary-General of ACC to report progress to the next AIN Gathering in 2011.

- **Theological Education Resolution**

AIN strongly requests that each national church make adequate provisions for its indigenous members to have access to all levels of theological education and training, appropriate to their cultural context and traditions, particularly for leadership development in the church. And request the Secretary-General of ACC to report progress to the next AIN Gathering in 2011.

- **Climate Change Resolution**

AIN strongly calls upon each national church to recognize and honour the wisdom of the elders by ensuring they are an integral part of all official climate change planning and development processes. And request the Secretary-General of ACC to report progress to the next AIN Gathering in 2011.

- **Protection of Our Families Resolution**

AIN strongly requests ACC and each national church to recognize the on-going disastrous effects that colonialism has had on our families. And that they take appropriate and necessary steps for the healing of our families towards wholeness and holiness. We call upon them to assist by all means possible with the protection of our women and children from violence and human trafficking. And request the Secretary-General of ACC to report progress to the next AIN Gathering in 2011.

We also commend to you our statement from the ninth gathering at Pala 2005. (see below)

A Letter from the Secretary General of AIN

The Indaba Reflection of the Bishops who met in Lambeth particularly named the Anglican Indigenous Network in paragraph 62. It says, “Indigenous peoples have traditional understandings of the earth as a gift of the Creator and of their relationship to it and its creatures being one of interconnectedness and responsible caring. The Indigenous peoples have reminded us that we are not aliens in a wilderness to be conquered, but integral parts of the created order, as are plants and animals, which are to be cherished and nurtured. The Anglican Indigenous Network could provide good resources for the Communion to develop these ideas more fully.”

Concurrently as we met in Hawai'i, a summit was held in Alaska under the United Nations gathering indigenous peoples to consider the issues of climate change. I commend their “Anchorage Declaration of April 24, 2009” to be adopted by the Communion for serious actions to be taken by a non-governmental organization. Our gathering in Hawai'i affirmed their fundamental beliefs and states, as we should as indigenous peoples of the land and sea, that we both call out for the upholding of “the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples, affirmed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)” and that they “must be fully respected in all decision-making processes and activities related to climate change.”

The gifts Indaba refers to are “our knowledge, spirituality, sciences, practices, experiences and relationships with our traditional lands, territories, waters, air, forests, oceans, sea ice, other natural resources and all life.” These are gifts that the Anchorage Declaration says, “We offer to share with humanity our Traditional Knowledge, innovations, and practices relevant to climate change, provided our

fundamental rights as intergenerational guardians of this knowledge are fully recognized and respected.” It is priceless, it is precious, and it is sacred. It is a gift we have been trying to offer to the church since 400 years ago, but it has been rejected or been made token in our presence. If these gifts are to be respected then as we state in AIN’s mission statement and affirmed in the Anchorage Declaration that there must be “full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples ... in formulating, implementing, and monitoring activities, mitigation, and adaptation relating to impacts of climate change” A change of climate change is a change in our attitude to our only home, this earth, and to the way we live with the earth. Our real gift is that we as indigenous peoples have survived as peoples for so long than such great civilizations that have come and gone. It is our way of living and how we make decisions that affect our relationship with this island home called earth.

“Ask and you shall receive ... Seek and you shall find.” The man and the woman on the road to Emmaus invited the stranger to eat together at the table as full partners in Christ, not as children, nor servants, or as the Australian Constitution has categorised, as flora and fauna, but as Peoples. We have only been asking for the same treatment. Faithfully, yours in Christ

A Brief History of AIN

During the 1991 General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Phoenix, Arizona the first step was taken toward forming a network of indigenous Anglicans. It was here that the Anglican observer to the United Nations, the Rt. Rev. Sir Paul Reeves, convened a meeting of indigenous Anglicans and/or their representatives: Dr. Owanah Anderson, the Rev. Dr. Martin Brokenleg, Bishop Steven Charleston and Dr. Carol Hampton of the Episcopal Council of Indian Ministries; Bishop Wakahuihui and Doris Vercoe from Aotearoa; the Rev. Charles G. K. Hopkins from Hawai’i; Archbishop Michael Pierce representing native Canadians. The idea of an indigenous network to coincide with the United Nation’s International Year of the World’s Indigenous People was presented and the countries represented at the meeting agreed to participate in it. It was further decided that one person from each country meet as a steering committee with Sir Paul Reeves to develop a plan for networking among American Indians and Alaska Natives, Canadian Natives, Native Hawaiians and Maori.

At the seventh gathering since Phoenix, ACC member Dr. Winiata was asked to seek formal recognition for this network as the voice of indigenous Anglicans who are minorities in their own homelands. At the following gathering in Cairns, Australia the network established the office of a Secretary-General to help coordinate future gatherings, to ensure the continuance of the network between gatherings and to represent it. Also established were programme groups that would also be reflected in the make of the delegations: Women, Youth, Clergy, Theological Educators and Elders.

Some of the results of being a network have been the establishment of an indigenous theological training institute in the United State, the publication of an indigenous theological journal, greater exchanges of peoples at respective events, the support of the exchange of theological students and faculty, the development and support for the office of the national indigenous bishop of Canada and the covenant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Anglican church of Australia.

Members continue to gather once every two years with a rotating hosting of the gathering. The host member affords all ground arrangements for the gathering while others are responsible for their airfare. AIN had not dues or budget until some of the members were able to contribute for the first time after the 2007 Vancouver gathering.

The network realizes that its present membership reflects an area around the Pacific of English speaking peoples and has set out a means for other Anglican indigenous minorities to become full members. Perspective members are asked to send a representative to the next gathering as an observer so to determine if the network is something they really would like to participant in. If so, then at the following gathering they would send a full delegation. If they are not English speaking then they would need to provide their own translators, either as part of the delegation or accompanying them. With the new budget it may be possible for the network to hire the technology to assist with simultaneous translation costs.

Pala Statement 2005

We believe that the following will enrich our traditions and relationship with the Trinitarian aspects of a 'Living God' who was, and is, always among us:

The development of a living pedagogical model that will enable indigenous communities to articulate the diverse theologies that are grounded within those communities; develop these tools and or models that enable indigenous communities to create liturgies that express their unique spiritualities; develop a "gospel lens" that is appropriate to each of our indigenous languages, cultures and life experiences; strongly urge the non-indigenous church to also develop a "gospel lens;"

The development through the text and traditions of the Anglican communion a post-colonial and post-modern critique, that transforms the colonial legacy that has been imposed upon us; to believe that we have a responsibility and obligation to the future, to those generations who are children now and those yet to be born, not to repeat the destruction, damage and cultural genocide of our colonial past;

The increased sensitivity of the wider church to the pressures upon indigenous leaders, both lay and ordained, who walk the path between the two worlds, i.e. the world of the church and their own respective worlds; to urge the Anglican Church, in all of its Anglican ministry units throughout the world, to establish clearly defined and accessible resource, including finance from national churches, to undertake effective professional and curriculum development and to enable appropriate exchanges of indigenous educators and students within the Anglican Communion, and to urge the Anglican Communion to honestly and seriously engage in cross-cultural exchange with their respective indigenous communities.