

Anglican Indigenous Network (AIN)

By way of a report to the Standing Committee, AIN has submitted a communiqué from their April 2015 triennial conference which they have asked to be forwarded to ACC-16.

Communiqué from the Anglican Indigenous Network (AIN)

AIN met at Stony Point Center in New York from April 14th-17th, 2015. We began by being welcomed by Janine Tinsley-Roe and her uncle, LeRoy Carle, a tribal elder, on behalf of the Shinnecock-Sewanaka tribe of this area. Our meeting began in earnest on the 15th, as we heard reports from each delegation on the work being done in their areas, responding to the concerns of their people. In our discussions that followed we saw the larger overarching trends present in each of our areas of struggle – that we are not engaging as individual Indigenous groups but rather as a global people.

From the United States, we heard the resolutions that went into the Blue Book report to be acted on at General Convention this June, 2015. The first of these resolutions was about at-risk teens, with specific examples of high teen pregnancy and suicides. These issues widely resonated with all delegations present at AIN, as these epidemics are often the result of systemic and continual culture and self-identity loss. The second resolution was about establishing young men's ministry, encouraging and enabling our men to step into the myriad roles they need to take in our world. The third resolution discussed is about Tribal College Campus Ministry, which at its core is encouraging leadership development and fostering a sense of pride within one's own culture. Following this resolution, the next was about Indigenous Theological Training and raising up Indigenous leadership in the Church, with particular mention made to the Bishops Native Collaborative effort. The last resolution raised was specific to the issue and concern of human trafficking, in particular as it is connected to oil fracking and the Bakken fields of North Dakota. This issue is particularly prevalent in Native communities, as it affects in particular women and children.

From Canada, we rejoiced with our brothers and sisters in the passing of Canon 22 Amendments by the last General Synod, giving recognition to Bishop Mark MacDonald, the first National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, and the formation of a Mishamikoweesh ministry for Indigenous Peoples. This discussion led to a wider commentary on self governance and sovereignty, ways to break out of structures that no longer serve us as Indigenous peoples, and the wish, echoed by all delegations, to be a partner in our churches. Canada also talked about some of the different issues that Indigenous Peoples are experiencing in disproportionately high numbers – teenage suicide, domestic violence, substance abuse, incarceration – through the lens of continued healing and reconciliation work. A part of this work is resource development for Indigenous Catechist training, which is used for training lay ministers, and empowering congregations so as not to be dependent on priests. This healing is not only essential for our communities today, but also for the youth and young people, in order to equip them to be effective leaders. We invite you to pray with us as this work is being done at the grassroots level, to lift up those who are engaging with these issues and those whose lives are touched by them.

From Australia, we rejoiced with our brothers and sisters over the consecration of the Right Reverend Chris McLeod as Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Adelaide, with a special ministry to aboriginal peoples across South Australia. We listened with great distress as we heard the plight that the peoples of Western Australia are facing at the forced closure of communities through the removal of government services. The forced closure of these communities, which are located in traditional homelands will be destructive to aboriginal people in terms of spiritual, cultural, and self-identity. Every Indigenous person present at the AIN meeting could connect with this loss, as we have all fought battles over land, and in many communities continue to do so. The Anglican Indigenous Network stands in solidarity with the aboriginal peoples of Western Australia in asking the government to reconsider this poorly conceived and destructive policy. The Australian aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands delegation also expressed a wish for the wider mainstream church to better engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, especially through meaningful ministry with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their community, as peoples to be ministered with, not only as a source of outreach.

The Torres Strait Islander delegate spoke on the serious threat of climate change. This is especially significant for low lying islands in the Torres Strait, already facing the consequence of rising sea levels and warming waters. This is leading to destruction of habitats, which are culturally and spiritually significant to the peoples of the Torres Strait Islands.

The Aotearoa New Zealand Delegation wished to firstly affirm the treaty rights of Maori in Constitutional Reform in Aotearoa New Zealand, as this issue is currently under consideration by the Constitutional Advisory Panel. The delegation also wished to uphold the initiatives led by iwi (tribes) to ensure a just and fair process in resolving all treaty settlements. The delegation then endorsed the statement issued by the Anglican and Catholic Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand concerning the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), expressing the desire for full transparency and consultation. The delegation expressed support for efforts to advance Maori customary rights to water; eliminating domestic violence, and child poverty. Once again, these issues resonated with each delegation on an international level, compelling the group to view itself as a collaborative global network. The delegation finally encouraged the implementation of processes that promote the environmentally responsible extraction of natural resources, a sentiment that each delegation echoed in both its simplicity and importance to Indigenous People worldwide.

The Hawaii delegation affirmed much of the work happening within their Diocese. The Committee on Native Hawaiian Ministry focused on celebrating their culture and offered workshops on the kukui nut, himeni (hymn) and pule (prayer). One of their parishes shared their learning of the kukui nut, and with the help of their parish youth, extracted the kukui nut oil and uses it to care for their church altar. The himeni and pule workshop also offered hula and encouraged the integration of hula in worship. Some present in the delegation had been asked to undertake work on leading a task-force to commemorate Queen Lili'uokalani to include her in, 'Holy Women, Holy Men' and all subsequent church calendars. There was rejoicing in the raising of indigenous leaderships through the local formation program for clergy called, 'Waiolaihui'ia', which has four postulants up for ordination at least by early next year. Hawaii talked about the battle against homelessness, and the disproportionate number of Native Hawaiian peoples in this population.

The Anglican Indigenous Network is moving forward with the commission of a new steering committee, with a representative from every delegation. From Aotearoa, The Right Reverend Te Kitohi Pikaahu, (Convenor), from Australia The Reverend Daryl McCullough, from Canada The Reverend Chris Harper, from Hawaii Mr Edward Hanohano, from Torres Strait Ms McRose Elu and from the United States Ms Jasmine Bostock. We move forward with great clarity and hope in our vision, asking for your prayers and support as we move into our future, standing tall and proud on the shoulders of those who came before us.