

Lethbridge Canada 1997

On the campus of the University of Lethbridge , the Canadian delegation convened the 1997 assembly of AIN. After hearing a brief history of AIN, the five delegations reported at length on their ministries since the gathering in Alaska ; one of the items from the U.S.A. was the establishment of the Indigenous Theological Training Institute. The description of local developments and concerns set the agenda for the remaining sessions.

The apparent “second class” status of Bishop Malcolm in the Anglican Province of Australia raised the issue of a bishop’s jurisdiction especially as it applies to indigenous bishops. Are the jurisdictions defined by geographical boundaries within a national church or by the location of indigenous people and the need for one of their own kind no matter where they are in the Anglican Communion? After a lengthy discussion and suggestions for the Australian situation, it was decided that a position paper was needed regarding the authority, jurisdiction and role of bishops in their episcopate among indigenous people. Mark MacDonald was given the responsibility for the position paper to be presented at the next AIN gathering.

Native Spirituality, one of the priority mutual concerns, was the next matter taken up by the assembly. Discussion centered on what native spirituality means in each delegation’s constituency; beliefs and practices, authenticity, expressions, role in the Church, place in the lives of the young, etc. Delegations were asked to present a paper on their understanding of native spirituality at the next AIN gathering in Hawai’i.

Other matters covered were:

1. Indigenous theological training where those who head institutions within the Network were asked to establish an ongoing working group to support and assist one another
2. The need for indigenous input on local churches’ policies and plans to combat racism in church institutions in preparation for the WCC meeting in 1998
3. The need for Anglican Consultative Council’s official recognition of AIN as the voice of Anglican indigenous people utilizing those in the AIN constituencies who sit on the Council.