

Pala USA 2005

The ninth gathering of the Anglican Indigenous Network (AIN) was held on the reservation of the Pala Indian Mission in Pala, California and was hosted by the Episcopal Council on Indigenous Ministry (ECIM) of the Episcopal Church of the United States, from 10-15 April, 2005.

This gathering was successful from the start having almost full delegations from all the members. This increased participation by the members signaled a revitalization and invigoration since the events of September 11, 2001. It also is the result of the changing leadership of all the members as none of the participating delegations had attended the initial meetings that created and established AIN.

The gathering began with a morning Eucharist service led by members of the host nation, ECIM. They represented the diversity of the indigenous peoples of the United States of each regional area: Alaska-Northwest, Northeast, Mid-west, Southeast, and Hawai'i. Several indigenous traditional rites and symbols were interwoven into the service with many indigenous songs of praise, traditional and modern. The homily was given by Mr. Robert McGhee, Vice chair of ECIM and a member of the Poarch Creek Nation. The service was led by Native American bishops, the Rt. Revs Carol Gallagher (Southern Virginia), a member of the Cherokee Nation and Michael Smith (North Dakota), a member of the Potawatomi Nation.

The delegations and guest heard greetings from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams who called upon the gathering as "an opportunity to affirm the role and gifts you have to offer the world-wide Anglican Communion, to give thanks and to celebrate all that you have achieved, and to plan and build for the future." The Presiding Bishop and Primate of the United States, Frank Griswold also sent his greetings saying, "I support your mission wholeheartedly 'that God is leading the Church to a turning point in its history and that the full partnership of indigenous peoples is essential.' The whole Church looks forward to your partnership at this important moment for us all." With these inspiring words, the delegations heard AIN's Secretary General, Malcolm Naea Chun call upon all AIN members to use the time to determine the implementation of AIN's programmes for elder & youth, women, theological education, and the development of a church without borders and an indigenous province.

All the member delegations turned in printed reports updating their own work and concerns and of particular note were the development of a covenant in Australia for indigenous peoples in the church and the collaborative efforts of the Native Americans and indigenous Canadians to define an indigenous church and develop one without political and geographic borders.

The gathering was also inspired by the presentation of a newly released video entitled, "Topahdewin: The Gladys Cook Story." It is the real life story of an indigenous woman who uplifts herself from boarding school sexual abuse to using love and reconciliation to heal her and others.

Interviewed by the Episcopal News Service, Secretary General was quoted, "Cook's story resonates for everyone in this room. It was a very heavy and challenging day. Some of us have been kept silent for a long time. It reminded us that, beyond the celebratory things, beyond the rejoicing and coming together, that we struggle yet both within and without the church."

Delegates included representatives of the Maori people of New Zealand, Torres Strait Islanders from Australia, native Hawaiians, Native Americans from the continental United States, as well as Canada. A frequent theme discussed was incorporating traditional rites into worship services and cultivating indigenous male and female clergy and leaders. "There are many people who can't worship the way they would like to worship," Chun said. "They don't have priests who look like them, who talk like them. As a result, the church loses people."

After several days and evenings of deliberation in the programme working groups, the following resolutions were adopted by all delegations.

Resolutions

Indigenous Urban Ministry

Acknowledging that the urban migration of indigenous peoples often results in their disconnection from their home lands, people and traditions resulting in the consequent need for ministry and outreach among indigenous peoples living in urban areas;

We at AIN PALA 2005 urge our respective Provinces and Dioceses to help encourage and resource urban ministry and outreach among indigenous peoples.

Archbishop of Canterbury

Acknowledging the role of Rowan, the Archbishop of Canterbury for appointing an indigenous person, Dr. Jenny Te Paa of Aotearoa, to serve on the Lambeth Commission on Communion, we express our desire to remain members of the Anglican Communion and to work in unity for the advancement of indigenous mission and ministries.

We at AIN PALA 2005 commend the Windsor Report as a way forward together, despite our differences of opinion over matters of justice and morality.

Indigenous Ministry and an Indigenous Province

Acknowledging the need to enable mission and ministry to the indigenous peoples, and that the AIN Rotorua 2003 resolution called for the establishment of an Indigenous Province in the Pacific basin, and the vision of our AIN elders calls for a "Church without Borders;"

We at AIN PALA 2005 wish to develop an enablement plan for indigenous world mission and ministry in the Pacific basin. We intend to exercise our right to self-determination, by considering stories, structures, processes, visions, mission and values appropriate for indigenous peoples, and we will appoint a working group to begin work on developing a plan, and who will report back to the AIN 2007 gathering in Canada.

World Mission

Acknowledging that indigenous ministry has a mission not just to itself, but to the whole world, and the Archbishop of Canterbury's letter inherently encourages the AIN to share its gifts, and Bishop Carol Gallagher's recommendation of sending an indigenous evangelism mission to England during the 2007 commemoration of the Jamestown Covenant as "the roots of our Faith stories;"

We at AIN PALA 2005 wish to send a team to England in 2009 comprising from all of the AIN membership, and we will appoint a working group to finalize a draft mission plan for discussion at the AIN 2007 gathering in Canada .

Healing Ministry

Acknowledging the need for appropriate forms of healing ministry among colonized indigenous peoples;

We wish to develop appropriate forms of indigenous ministry for prayer, the sharing of healing stories, reconciliation and restorative justice seeking wholeness, and a working group will be formed to develop and to implement this ministry.

Gwich'in Nation and the Arctic Drilling

Acknowledging the sacred connection of Land, Language and Culture is a gift from God, receiving its authority from God; that authority has been recognized by churches and nations for centuries, most recently in the United Nations Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the threat of the development of oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a treat to the Aboriginal usage, right, and life of our brothers and sisters in Christ, of the Gwich'in Nation; AIN affirms our aboriginal rights rooted in the truth of God and in the inherent rights of all people; in the God ordained living connection of the peoples of Mother Earth, our environments; and the living connection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Porcupine Caribou Herd, and the Gwich'in Nation;

We support the Gwich'in Nation of North America in their opposition to oil development in the Arctic National Refuge, and urges the churches and nations of this earth to protect us all by looking to protect the Refuge.

Youth Ministry and Concerns

Acknowledging that indigenous youth have an active voice at all levels, such as the development and practice of liturgies and programs, that meaningful relationships with elders include mentoring through the sharing of stories to provide guidance support and growth so to develop a meaningful dialogue through sharing and listening;

We support and provide resources, particularly funding, for an annual indigenous youth gathering of United States Youth and the AIN youth delegates to maintain a continuity of youth participation;

We reaffirm the resolutions and reports of the pervious AIN Youth meeting in ROTORUA 2003.

Concerns of Indigenous Elders

The Elder group of AIN PALA 2005 calls for the support of meaning full dialogue and programs with indigenous youth of AIN, to put forth an action plan for change, ministry and growth which includes funding and logistical support for an annual gathering of both the United States indigenous youth and the youth delegates of AIN, and that the progress of this plan will be supported and monitored by AIN Elder Delegates Frank Oberly and Gloria Moses for a report to the AIN 2007 gathering in Canada.

Church without Borders

We acknowledge that AIN has for several years held intense discussion concerning the concept of a "church without borders" as a means of brining the message of reconciliation and forgiveness, of unity and hope, and a future for indigenous members of the churches of Canada and the United States of America, we have witnessed recent events in both our churches that call out for this concept to be seriously considered and discussed on greater and deeper levels of our churches for all people and members of our churches;

We call upon the House of Bishops of the churches in Canada and the United States of America to recognize this concept of a church without borders as a viable means of bringing reconciliation, forgiveness, unity and hope for

a future for the indigenous peoples and all members of our churches, and will expand the depth of discussion of this concept at the national and diocesan levels of the churches in Canada and the United States.

Indigenous Theological Issues and Concerns

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

We need to develop 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;" develop 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; to assist the wider church to be sensitive of 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.

In Support of Mr. Michael Tamihere, Youth Representative to the Anglican Consultative Council

We acknowledge the appointment of Mr. Michael Tamihere from the Province of New Zealand and a member of the Pihopatanga o Aoteroa as a youth representative to the Anglican Consultative Council; and we congratulate, recognize and support Mr. Michael Tamihere as voice for indigenous youth at the Anglican Consultative Council and as a liaison for the Anglican Indigenous Network.

The next AIN gathering is planned for Canada in 2007.