

Alaska USA 1995

The period between AIN gatherings in Aotearoa and Alaska was a time of mixed pain and gladness for the five constituencies. The bad news included the turmoil over financial matters in the Diocese of Hawai'i and the Episcopal Church Center in New York . In Hawai'i the diocesan budget was be scaled back sharply in order to pay the interest on a foreclosed \$4,000,000 loan the Diocese had guaranteed. In an atmosphere of accusations and mistrust Bishop Hart, who had met with the Network in 1992, resigned. This financial turmoil seriously reduced CONHM's funding and delayed the approval of its Native Hawaiian Ministry Study Program until December 1995.

While this was happening in Hawai'i, the US delegates returned home to an ECIM meeting in San Jose, California where, in the spirit generated in Rotorua, they welcomed CONHM as a partner in the ECIM network and instructed the staff to invite the chair of the Commission On Native Hawaiian Ministry to the next ECIM meeting. This action was in response to CONHM's request in July 1993 for a liaison relationship with the Council with voice, vote only on issues of mutual concern, funding for liaison travel if available and to be included in the Staff Officers' portfolio. But later on in 1994 internal conflicts moved the Executive Council to approve a restructuring of the Church Center that would eliminate ECIM along with the other ethnic commissions and have 3 persons from the constituencies of the four ethnic desks appointed by the Presiding Bishop to a single advisory committee. Later that summer at General Convention, Bishop Charleston's pleas for the restoration of ECIM resulted in a truncated ECIM, reduced from 13 members to 5, only one of whom was a re-appointment. Hawai'i lost its seat after only two ECIM meetings in 1995.

Unfortunately that was not the only setback for Native American ministry. Out of a renewed sense of self determination at the 1995 Winter Talk there emerged a Statement of Self Determination as a Native effort towards cohesiveness and unity. The larger Church, in its upheaval over the discovery in May of the embezzlement of \$2.2 million by the Church Center 's treasurer, regarded the statement as further separation and divisiveness in the Church family. With not much to smile about Ginny Doctor was quoted as saying, "But we have not given up."

On a happier note, there was gladness in AIN over the optimism just north of the US border and in the faraway South Pacific. The First Nation peoples of Canada returned home from Rotorua and took bold steps toward self-determination in April by calling for a new relationship with the Anglican Church in Canada , resulting in a public apology from Archbishop Peers for the past behavior of the Church, and the beginning of a process towards a real partnership. Bishop Charleston of Alaska went south to assist the USA 's Canadian AIN partners to the north with their initiative.

Reporting for AIN's newest constituency, Australian Bishop Malcolm said that ideas from AIN had been put to use by Anglican Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders through the National Aboriginal Anglican Council (NAAC). As a result of this cross fertilization within AIN, they were looking forward with optimism to a synod after returning home from Alaska that could well provide an additional Aboriginal bishop in North Queensland, a new Native bishop for the Torres Strait Islands and the possibility of an all-indigenous theological college.

This mixed note prevailed at the AIN gathering from September 11-13 at Meier Lake Conference Center led by a "down-sized and down-cast" but not down-and- out American Indian and Alaska Native delegation. After delegates reported on the status of their constituencies, took care of old business and were treated to an Alaska Native Potlatch, the gathering took on a positive note cued by the personal statement of Bishop Charleston: "In the last few days I have begun to see again through the glass darkly; I have again felt the passion, and begun to recapture the vision I thought I had lost."

Consequently, a second Statement of Consensus was adopted which renewed our pledge to support each other with specific references to the First Nation's Covenant Statement of Self Determination adopted in Canada, the appointment of indigenous bishops in the Carpentaria and North Queensland Regions in Australia, the Statement of Self Determination adopted at the U.S. Natives' Winter Talk in 1995, the development of an indigenous training center in North America and the newly established Native Hawaiian Community of Faith, Ka Papa Anaina Hawai'i O Kristo. The Statement also reflected the desire to enlarge the AIN circle by inviting two new members. It included the adoption of the Anglican Consultative Council's five-point Statement as AIN's guiding principles. Finally, this Statement is to be distributed throughout the Anglican Communion, as high up as " Canterbury , and even to the Queen, herself."