

**Letter in response to the questions posed to the Primate candidates from the chairs of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples**

**From: The Most Rev. Gregory Kerr-Wilson  
Archbishop of Calgary and Metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land**

**What is your experience in working with Indigenous Ministry?**

In the week following my consecration as Bishop of Qu'Appelle in 2006, the Rev'd Arthur Anderson, then the priest in charge of our native ministries in the diocese and a member of ACIP, arrived in my office to talk about Indigenous Ministry. He invited me to attend a healing conference at Gordon's First Nation which became the starting point for my engagement with Indigenous Ministry. Two months later I spent three days on Gordon's – meeting and talking with the people, sitting in the teepee and conferring with the elders, learning about the experience and healing journey of the people after the impact of the residential schools, and sharing my story as requested. At the end of the conference I was invited to join some of the elders in prayer at a sweat lodge, which I did with Arthur's guidance, and a day later attended my first pow-wow on the neighboring Kawacatoose Reserve. This began a regular practice of visitation with the Indigenous communities in our diocese, both for Sunday services and mid-week events, and ongoing consultation and learning through conversations with our Indigenous clergy (both Arthur and the Rev'd Dale Gilman). During my time in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle we worked together on Urban Indigenous Ministry, re-establishing relationships that had been dormant with Indigenous elders and communities, and made Arthur our Diocesan Elder to bring the wisdom of our Indigenous peoples into the decision making and councils of the Diocese. Early in my time as Bishop of Qu'Appelle, Bishop Mark MacDonald was made National Indigenous Anglican Bishop and through various visitations and conversations I was blessed to have my understanding of Indigenous peoples and cultures greatly expanded and heard many stories about the history of the Gospel amongst indigenous peoples on Turtle Island. It was also during my time in Qu'Appelle that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission began its work, and I was able to be present to listen and speak at several of the hearings in southern Saskatchewan.

In 2012 I was elected Bishop of the Diocese of Calgary and moved from Cree territory to Blackfoot territory. I was privileged in that move to be able to begin a partnership in ministry with the then Archdeacon of Native Ministries, now Bishop, Sidney Black. Sidney quickly arranged for me to spend several days visiting the indigenous communities, meeting with our indigenous members. Since then we have worked in partnerships – in regular visitation, addressing issues arising, taking part in TRC hearings and reconciliation

events, attending funerals of prominent elders, and engaging with local elders and other leaders. We have also worked together in identifying local leadership for our Indigenous congregations, including in one case discerning a call to ordained ministry. Over the past 6+ years, many conversations with Sidney have both deepened and broadened my understanding of Indigenous ways – particularly in the Blackfoot context. For me, a high point in the partnership was in helping to facilitate the election and consecration of Sidney Black as Indigenous Bishop for Treaty 7 Territory. Not only has this strengthened the work of ministry in our communities, but Bishop Sidney's election has brought a renewed awareness of and desire for the need to strengthen and develop relations between our Indigenous and Non-Indigenous congregations. Since his consecration as bishop, we have also been able to appoint a Diocesan Elder, Eric Crowshoe.

In 2015 I was approached by the Indigenous Episcopal Leadership circle and asked to coordinate an Urban Indigenous Ministries Network. Meetings began first amongst bishops who had connections with Urban Indigenous Ministry, expanded to include UIM practitioners, and after a couple of planning meetings the first UIM Gathering took place in Winnipeg in April of 2018. The next event, ably coordinated by the Rev'd Vincent Solomon took place June 3 – 7 of this year.

I participated in and was a signatory at the "Warm Springs" consultation in 2018, and in my capacity as Metropolitan, have had opportunity to visit Indigenous communities within the Province of Rupert's Land. I have also had the honour and privilege to attend three Sacred Circles, at Pinawa (2012), Port Elgin (2015) and Prince George (2018).

### **What does self-determination mean to you?**

My first comment would be to affirm that the starting point for a discussion on self-determination is the prior question, "what does self-determination mean to Indigenous Anglicans?". Clearly self-determination is a reality that emerges from the legitimate aspirations of the people of the land to be the primary voice in articulating their own direction within the life of the Church. Self-determination is not others determining or giving permission, but walking as equal partners in the Gospel. If I was to make an attempt at articulating that I would say that self-determination within the larger Body of the Church means the freedom and authority of indigenous peoples, in partnership with the rest of the Church, to articulate the Gospel within the life, culture and worldview of one's own context. This means for me the ability to continue to indigenize the Gospel – incarnating it within the various local contexts, communities and cultures of the people.

### **Will you support the emerging self-determined Indigenous Church within the Anglican Church of Canada? Tell us how.**

Yes.

I think there are two parts to the how. Part one would be getting out of the way – or, to put it another way, to not put obstacles in the way of what is emerging and to help diminish or

remove those pieces of church function and apparatus which undermine the ability of Indigenous peoples to engage their life and ministry in a manner that is consistent with Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Part two would be learning to walk more helpfully as a partner within the Body of Christ, to assist, support and enable the emergence of a self-determining Church.

**The Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples has been in existence for a number of years. What is your understanding of the Council's mandate? Will you join the Council at their meetings?**

I understand ACIP to be the body which draws together representatives of the Indigenous church communities from across the country for unity, consultation, mutual support, to articulate the particular needs and concerns of Indigenous peoples within the context of the Anglican Church of Canada, to support and guide the work of Indigenous ministry, and to work towards the formation of a self-determining Indigenous Church within the Anglican Church of Canada. ACIP also maintains connections and communication with various other bodies of the Anglican Church of Canada – the House of Bishops, the Council of General Synod, the Council of the North, General Synod and the International Anglican Indigenous Network.

I would be most willing to join the Council at their meetings as the Council deemed appropriate and helpful.

**Some of Indigenous Ministry is located in the Council of the North. What is your understanding of the Council of the North and how it is related to the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples?**

The Council of the North is a grouping of all of the dioceses in the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) which receive financial assistance for their ongoing ministry from General Synod. The Council itself is made up of the bishops of those dioceses and it meets to determine the distribution of the funds provided. Its mandate is to support and assist remote communities in the Anglican Church of Canada in providing pastoral and sacramental ministry. To my knowledge there is no *formal* connection between ACIP and the Council of the North – however, there is clearly overlap between both dioceses, and parishes within some dioceses, that are a part of both bodies. While I have not been a member nor attended meetings of either council what I have seen and heard suggest that more coordination and communication might be helpful in promoting a healthy partnership between the two.

**How will you support the Office of the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop?**

I see the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop as a partner in ministry with the Primate. Sharing the same goal of a self-determining church within the Anglican Church of Canada would mean providing primatial support through regular communication, consultation and

prayerful reflection together. Specifics on how that might happen would grow out of working together, a shared understanding and the issues and opportunities that arise.

**What do you know about Canon 22 on the National Indigenous Ministry? Is there a need for it to be strengthened?**

Having been present for the last three Sacred Circles I have been a witness to the development of Canon 22. The Canon is fairly succinct in order to provide the basic canonical recognition for the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples and the Sacred Circle – and in the case of the two Councils, to provide an outline for how membership is determined. As the Canon provides for the basic structures of the Indigenous Church within the Anglican Church of Canada, it seems to me that any strengthening or broadening of the Canon, in keeping with the goal of self-determination, ought to be decided by the Sacred Circle.