

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

**From: The Most Rev. Ron Cutler
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What is your experience in working with Indigenous Ministry?

I have next to no experience in working with Indigenous Ministry. Since ordination I have served in the Dioceses of Central Newfoundland and Nova Scotia/Prince Edward Island. In both dioceses there has been no modern connection between the Indigenous people and the Anglican Church. My only knowledge of Indigenous Ministry comes from the conversations within the House of Bishops and General Synod and recent conversations with elders in the Mi'kmaq nation in a variety of contexts around this diocese.

What does self-determination mean to you?

To me, self-determination means to exercise the right for the governance structure of a country or organisation to make decisions about all aspects of the life of that entity without the need for consent from another governance structure or the need to ask permission from another structure before making decisions. It would imply that the lines of authority and accountability are within the organisation rather than to external bodies.

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

As I wrote above, I have little experience with indigenous ministry within the Anglican Church of Canada, however I have watched the development of the self-determining Indigenous Church within the ACoC for the eleven years which I have served as bishop. I do support this emergent church as an authentic development of the maturing relationship between indigenous people and communities and the structure of the Anglican Church of Canada. It is a moving on from structures that were shaped by colonial assumptions. There is an excitement in watching the development of a structure which is grounded in traditional ways of meeting and yet is shaped by the current realities for how Christian mission and ministry is lived in Canada at this point in our history. I would support this development first of all by listening to those who have been involved in this work for so long. The emergence of this ministry is complex as it is national in scope and transcends our usual provincial and diocesan boundaries. It exhibits marks of traditional ways that Anglicans gather and make decisions with ways grounded in Indigenous nations. My role

would be to help the broader church to understand what this development looks like and to help deal with the inevitable anxieties which come from proposed changes in a system which believes it is already under stress.

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 see the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples as the ongoing representative body responsible for coordination of Indigenous Ministries in the Anglican Church of Canada. It is responsible for carrying forward the discussions and decisions made at the meetings of Sacred Circle. As such it has concern for the current state of Indigenous ministries and guides the further development of these ministries. I see these ministries developing in different ways in different regions/dioceses throughout Canada. ACIP is a place where support is offered and learning shared as these ministries develop. It is also the body which relates to other bodies within the Anglican Church of Canada on behalf of the wider Indigenous Ministries. Yes I would join the Council at their meetings.

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?

My understanding is that the Council of the North serves as both a means for distributing the General Synod budget to support ministry in northern, remote dioceses of the Anglican Church of Canada and a communication channel to the rest of the Church about the challenges and achievements of Anglicans in these dioceses. I am uncertain of how the Council of the North relates to the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, except for the obvious: that both bodies are supporting Anglican ministries in similar geographic areas of the country.

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

The offices of the Primate and of the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop each have specific mandates and as those mandates are both national and to some extent international in scope, there is a need for clear communication and ongoing conversation between the incumbents of the two offices. My understanding of the growth of a self-determining Indigenous Church within the Anglican Church of Canada would see the two offices attain a more equal footing within the structure. Yet the use of the phrase "within the ACoC" would mean that the offices are not mutually exclusive but rather interdependent. I do not know what specific kinds of support the office of the NIAB would require from the Primate, and would expect that would become clear both in the personal interactions of the incumbents and as the relationship between the National Indigenous Ministries and the structures of the Anglican Church of Canada continues to develop. I know that I have always worked best in a team environment and have valued the

relationships in ministry which I have been privileged to be a part of. Those relationships have not always been easy and attention to how they might be nurtured has always been necessary.

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

I was a member of General Synod in 2010 when Canon 22 was first introduced. I have been present at every General Synod since as the Canon has been amended. The Canon itself, notes that organization of Indigenous ministries will continue to develop over time and that such development can be accommodated by changes to existing constitutional and canonical structures. Resolutions at the upcoming General Synod will propose changes to the Canon, which I would see as strengthening and clarifying the mandate and composition of the structures of the National Indigenous Ministries. I do not believe that it yet describes a truly self-determining Indigenous Church within the Anglican Church of Canada. As the journey of self-determination continues, Canon 22 will continue to need to be amended to reflect the development of this church. So yes I see that it needs strengthening.