

Residential Schools Update #6—June 1, 2000

Archdeacon Jim Boyles, General Secretary

The Primate's Pastoral Letter

The letter was read in most parishes on May 28th, setting off another flurry of media attention to the issues of bankruptcy and the future of the Anglican Church. The letter attempted to set out the current situation, to realistically face the circumstances in which General Synod finds itself, and to proclaim the hope of the gospel.

"Where in this do I discern hope? At the heart of it, we trust God is with us in the choices we face, that we will find new ways to carry out our shared mission and that we will continue to work for healing and reconciliation."

[A copy of the pastoral letter is available at our website.](#)

Healing and Reconciliation Fund

This far in 2000, eleven projects have been approved for funding, totaling \$80,700. They includes:

A Diocese of the Arctic youth conference, to bring Inuit youth together to celebrate, learn and discover life, to encourage one another, to share and pursue a lifestyle dedicated to excellence, build leadership qualities, relationships and vision.

A project of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations in Saskatoon, to provide intensive training for First Nations participants working with residential schools issues by which they will be certified in Critical Incident Stress Management techniques for working with the intergenerational traumas that arise.

"Shingwauk Reunion 2000 -- Shingwauk's Vision in the Seventh Generation" A gathering of sharing, healing and learning for those affected by the residential schools, to be held in July, 2000.

The Fund is supported by the General Synod to the amount of \$100,000 each year as well as other donations received from time to time.

Restoring Dignity: Responding to Child Abuse in Canadian Institutions

This is the title of [a report from the Law Commission of Canada](#) issued in March. Its work relates to residential schools as well as other institutions. Seven general recommendations were made:

Approaches to providing redress to survivors of institutional child abuse must take the needs of survivors, their families and their communities as a starting point.

Every survivor has unique needs. All attempts to address these needs should be grounded in respect, engagement and informed choice.

Processes of redress should not cause further harm to survivors of institutional child abuse, their families and their communities

Community initiatives should be promoted as a significant means of redressing institutional child abuse

Redress programs negotiated with survivors and their communities are the best official response for addressing the full range of their needs while being responsive to concerns of fairness and accountability.

In addition to specific programs designed to meet the needs of survivors, it is crucial to establish programs of public education and to continue to develop and revise protocols and other strategies for prevention.

Specific recommendations were included. The report (455 pages) and its Executive Summary are available at www.lcc.gc.ca

Residential Schools Staff

There are two new pastoral initiatives happening over the next few months. Some former residential schools staff have been asked to contribute their thoughts and reflections and share any papers they may have from their time in the schools. We recognize that this is a complex issue. Each individual had her or his own experience. Also we are aware that reactions to today's situation are equally diverse. If you know of anyone who would like to be part of this project please inform Terry Thompson in the General Synod archives.

Bishop Gordon Beardy and Archdeacon David Ashdown are coordinating a process for a reunion of former staff. At the recent Provincial Synod of Rupert's Land they invited former staff to let them know what type of gathering would be helpful. Further details will be available through the diocese of Keewatin synod office.

Update on Litigation

The second trial involving eight former students of St. George's, Lytton has begun. In seven of these cases the General Synod and Diocese of Cariboo are involved because the federal government has named us as a third party. Agreement was reached before trial as to liability, so the only issue is that of assessment of damages. The results of the appeal in the Mowatt case, the first Lytton trial, will be applicable to any apportionment of costs in this case as well. The appeal will likely be heard in late 2000 or early 2001.

In Saskatchewan, the court has identified eight cases for fast tracking in the expectation that precedents will be set so that other cases may be settled. The General Synod and Diocese of Qu'Appelle is involved in one such case where sexual abuse happened between 1969 and 1973.

A trial will likely be held in the fall.

The church continues to defend itself in litigation at the same time as we work away at alternative dispute resolution processes and negotiate with the government.

Alternative Dispute Resolution Pilot Projects

The government is attempting to put in place up to twelve such projects across the country. There are now nine in various stages of implementation. The General Synod and Diocese of Qu'Appelle are involved in preliminary discussions in one such project involving members of the Kwakatoose band whose students attended the Gordon's School. Progress has been slow.

Another small family-based project with Keesakoose people is proceeding in southern Saskatchewan, also involving the Gordon's School.

Negotiations with the Government

The Treasurer of General Synod, Jim Cullen worked with our auditors, Ernst & Young to develop a brief for presentation to government. The submission was approved by the Financial Management and Development Committee in late April and was presented to officials in the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development on May 2. It outlined the corporate structure of the Anglican Church and included a detailed analysis of the General Synod's finances. The document was well received, but we have heard nothing further since that time.

The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Robert Nault has stated both in a parliamentary committee and at a gathering in his home riding in Kenora that, "it is not the intention of the federal government to force the churches to bankruptcy."

Our goal is to achieve agreement with the government so that we may continue to participate in healing and reconciliation work, making a significant contribution to such work while remaining viable as a church organization. This would mean our continued presence in the courts or at ADR sessions, as appropriate, but more in a pastoral rather than a legal role. The Law Commission report outlined several areas of healing to which the church is well suited to contribute.

Council of General Synod

The Council met May 4-7 in Fredericton, and after hearing extensive reports, took the following actions:

- Asked the Management Team to ensure that the 2000 expenditures did not exceed income, this in the light of a shortfall in income of \$500,000, in part because of financial difficulties in the Diocese of Niagara.
- Asked a small group to work on developing a 2001 budget. It is asked to study income trends and to produce scenarios of a 10%, 20% and 30% cut to expenditures. Its task is to

present a draft budget in October to the Financial Management and Development Committee for forwarding to the Council for approval.

- Asked a 'Planning for the Future' group to look at possible alternate forms of organization, and to present options to the 2001 General Synod.
- Decided that representatives of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples would participate whenever decisions affecting indigenous ministry are being made.
- Authorized the Officers of General Synod to make necessary decisions about financial viability and about residential schools, and asked them to work with the Church House Management Team in developing a crisis management plan.

Consulting with Overseas Partners

There is a meeting of the Provincial Secretaries of the Anglican Communion in Mississauga in late August. During that meeting approximately two days will be spent with representatives of the General Synod, both indigenous and non-indigenous people, in consultation about the situation now facing the Anglican Church of Canada. We value our partners' input, advice and support.

Media Exposure

Following the Fredericton meeting and the release of the polling results, the issue has attracted significant media exposure. Some of this has been cast in negative terms, but it has sparked keen interest among Anglicans and the public. We are attempting to reassure Anglicans that their donations continue to support the ongoing ministry of the General Synod, and that legal costs are taken from assets, or reserves. We also want to impress on government that the situation is critical and that it is important that we reach agreement soon. We have asked bishops and others to speak to cabinet ministers, MP's and senators to express concern and a willingness to contribute to a solution to the massive legal claims facing both church and government.

While the possibility of bankruptcy is dramatic and commands significant attention, the more important issue is the need to provide timely and fair compensation to all those who were harmed by the schools. I have set out this position in an article to be published in the Toronto Star. [A copy is available on our web site.](#)

Ecumenical Cooperation

Representatives of the four churches which had been involved in residential schools -- Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and United -- continue to meet together regularly. In April a working paper was prepared and circulated, titled, "*First Nations, Canada, and Church Organizations: Towards a Resolution of Residential Schools Issues.*" These points were made:

- The "Indian Residential Schools" legacy reveals a need for new policy
- Reconciliation should be the goal of a new policy approach
- Government's current approach is counter-productive
- The policy of assimilation is a government responsibility

The final paragraph states:

"There is a need for a policy approach that deals with residential schools litigation within the larger framework of healing and reconciliation between First Nations and other Canadians. The approach should accommodate an Aboriginal vision of restorative justice, rather than the adversarial style of the courts. It should operate more speedily, and less expensively, than litigation or ADR models. Most important, it should allow both government and churches to turn away from the destructive focus on lawsuits and instead focus on working together with Aboriginal organizations to promote healing."

Church representatives have met twice with George Erasmus, President of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (the organization established by the federal government and given \$350 million to make grants for healing programs among residential school survivors). Both the Foundation and the churches are working at the common theme of healing and reconciliation.

The ecumenical group is also developing a proposal for an alternate redress model which it hopes to put forward in the near future to expedite the present slow litigation model and to ensure that justice is found for those abused by the residential school system, many of whom are now elderly.

Expressions of Support

We have been encouraged by expressions of support sent to the Primate, the National Office and the Council of General Synod in the past months. The Episcopal Church, USA passed this resolution at its January Executive Council meeting:

"That the Executive Council... express its solidarity with the Anglican Church of Canada as it seeks healing and reconciliation with aboriginal peoples who have been damaged through their residential schools experience and as it deals with the human and financial pain resulting from recent litigation brought against the Church because of its involvement in Indian residential schools from 1830 to 1969."

At the recent Council of General Synod meeting, our Lutheran partner told us the Executive of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada passed a "heartfelt motion" extending its support and solidarity with members of Anglican Church around the residential schools issue "and inviting members to articulate specific actions that our church can consider that would be helpful at this time."

Overseas partners have expressed their support too. A few examples:

"Be assured that you have our prayers and our support as you proceed through rough waters."
Sabeel Liberation Theology Centre, Israel

"Rest assured that you have our prayerful support during these difficult times. We sincerely sympathise with your situation." *The Anglican Church of Tanzania*

"Our indigenous peoples [in the Philippines]... have also faced dislocation and became the

victims of colonization. Our prayers are with you as you endeavour to work towards the healing of the nation...." *National Council of Churches of the Philippines*

We are grateful for the support, and ask your continued prayers for the strengthening and healing of all those whose lives have been affected by the residential schools.

Archdeacon Jim Boyles,
General Secretary, Anglican Church of Canada
June 1, 2000