

# **Residential Schools Update #7—October 19, 2000**

Archdeacon Jim Boyles, General Secretary

## **Meetings with the Assembly of First Nations**

On September 25, the Primate along with other church leaders met with Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come in Ottawa. This was an opportunity to express mutual concerns and to explore in a very general way the issue of abuse at residential schools. Further meetings have been held with representatives of the churches and Mr. Wally McKay, a consultant for AFN on residential schools. The AFN is exploring the question of whether it can adapt a process like South Africa's "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" for use in Canada. We continue to keep in touch to see how we might support such an initiative if requested.

## **Meetings with the Federal Government**

Representatives of the four churches which were involved in residential schools met with the Deputy Prime Minister on September 28 and again on October 11. The Anglican Church was represented by myself and Michael Butler, our government consultant in Ottawa. The meetings were cordial, focused and indicated a willingness on the part of both parties to find a way through the residential schools litigation that would expedite justice for those whose lives have been damaged by the school experience and at the same time allow the churches to continue and increase their healing and reconciliation work. Nonetheless, there are some complex issues to work through.

The meetings will continue, and although the process will be slowed now that an election has been called, Mr. Gray has indicated that the work is ongoing.

## **Healing and Reconciliation Fund**

The Anglican Healing and Reconciliation Fund continues to receive applications and make grants to local groups undertaking healing projects. The Fund is financed by a grant of \$100,000 from the General Synod budget, and from donations from individuals and groups. \$17,000 has been donated this year (to mid-September). The Church of the Holy Trinity in Toronto has contributed \$10,000. The Episcopal Church took up a collection at its January Executive Council meeting, and that amount was matched by the Presiding Bishop, making a total gift of about \$2,200. The Sisters of St. John the Divine in Toronto sent a gift of \$4,500. Recently the collections from the Synod services in Ottawa and Ontario have been designated for the Fund.

## **Diocese of Cariboo**

At its Synod October 13-15, the Diocese authorized its Executive Council to take steps to wind up its operations during the next twelve months. This is a result of the litigation costs faced by the diocese in two trials. Earlier in the month, the Diocese informed the court that it could no longer afford to be present to defend itself in the ongoing trial involving eight plaintiffs who had

been abused at the Lytton school. As you know, seven of the eight actions have been brought by the Department of Justice as "third party" suits.

The only remaining assets in the diocese are parish buildings. The diocese has proposed to the Department of Justice that the two enter a process of binding arbitration to determine whether the buildings are owned by the diocese, or held in trust for the parishes. It has also asked the department to specify which parish buildings it wishes to seize.

The spirit of the diocesan synod which discussed these issues was surprisingly upbeat. In messages prepared for the synod, members of parish after parish reaffirmed their faith despite an uncertain future. This message, from the people of the North Thompson Valley, is typical: "Faith is the most precious asset we have, and something we cannot lose unless we ourselves allow it to be lost. We, the people, are the church. Our buildings are not. We will continue to be the church, no matter what."

Anglican News Service issued three news releases during the course of the synod. They're available at [anglican.ca/news/](http://anglican.ca/news/).

## **Letter-writing Campaign**

A mailing to all clergy was distributed on September 8th requesting that Anglicans contact their Members of Parliament to express concern about the residential schools litigation. Letters were to emphasize that the church's main goal remains healing and reconciliation and concern for the aboriginal people of Canada. The financial difficulties faced by some of our dioceses and by the General Synod were also important points to put forward at this time. (The Diocese of Huron decided not to have the letter circulated to their clergy, but the Archbishop sent a letter in its place).

Indications are that many letters have been written, and Anglicans have held conversations with many MPs. Greater awareness of the urgency of the issue is evident. We hope that the campaign will continue as a way of educating our leaders and making them aware of the situation. We believe that the government must take its proportionate share of responsibility for the validated claims. The government owned most of the schools, provided the funding, formulated detailed regulations for the operation of the schools, named the principal (sometimes nominated by the churches) and inspected the schools regularly.

Material related to this campaign can be found on the website.

## **Edmonton Workshop on Negotiating with the Government**

A workshop was convened by the Diocese of Calgary in September in Edmonton following the meeting of the Council of the North which focused on interest-based negotiations with the government. The workshop brought together representatives of General Synod and several of the dioceses involved in litigation. The Chancellor of the Diocese of Toronto also attended. The workshop was very helpful in clarifying the common interests of the dioceses and General Synod. A small steering committee was established to continue to monitor the work.

## **Provincial Synods**

Provincial Synods have been held in the ecclesiastical provinces of Rupert's Land, Canada and Ontario. The Synod in BC and the Yukon takes place in November. In each case a resolution has been passed to the effect that if General Synod were to cease to exist, the General Synod Canons would remain in effect in each Province, and the Primate, in consultation with the Metropolitans would have authority to work on a new national expression of the church.

## **Diocesan Consultations**

General Synod and the dioceses of Saskatchewan, Calgary, Toronto, Cariboo, Eastern, Western and Central Newfoundland, Brandon and the Arctic have taken place, and others are scheduled over the coming months. The intent is to consult about the major issues facing the church as we approach General Synod next year. A major concern is of course, the implications of the residential schools litigation. The Council of General Synod in May indicated that an increasing priority for the national church is healing and reconciliation. The consultations are looking at ways in which the church might respond at all levels to this call. Results of the consultations will be shared with the Council of General Synod and with the General Synod itself.

## **General Synod, 2001**

The General Synod will meet in Waterloo, Ontario in July, 2001. Planning is moving ahead. A major part of the synod will be considering the call to full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. The Synod will also have to look at its future direction in the light of the litigation and the financial implications.

## **Staff Layoffs**

On August 14, ten staff positions were eliminated because of the need to balance the 2000 and 2001 budgets. This arose because income has not met expectations. In normal times the General Synod could have handled the shortfall from the diocese of Niagara, but with funds being drained from our assets because of litigation, it was necessary to balance the budgets with these cuts. Along with staff reductions, grants to the Council of the North are reduced by 5% this year, and other national programs are reduced as well.

## **Provincial Secretaries Meeting**

Provincial Secretaries from 33 of the 38 Anglican Provinces around the world gathered in Mississauga in late August. This group meets every five years for consultation. This year the group took a day and a half of its week-long meeting to learn about and reflect on the situation of the Canadian church regarding abuse in residential schools. A group of aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadian Anglicans joined the meeting. Links were evident with other parts of the world as we discussed racism, colonialism and the plight of aboriginal peoples in different places. The meeting offered some advice which will be passed on to the Council of General Synod.

## **Staff Healing and Reconciliation Team**

Ellie Johnson, Director of Partnerships has called together a staff group to work on our approach to healing and reconciliation. The proposed 2001 budget calls for an increase in this area of work, with the grant to the Healing and Reconciliation Fund doubling to \$200,000. Additional new funds will be earmarked for diocesan initiatives in healing work (\$100,000), indigenous justice work (\$53,000), covenant interpretation (\$22,000) and resource production (\$35,000). The budget will be presented to the Council of General Synod in November for approval.

## **Litigation Update**

Currently we are involved in a trial in Vancouver involving eight former students of the St. George's Residential School in Lytton. In only one of these cases are we involved directly. In the other seven, we are present because the federal government has named us as a third party. The trial is focused on assessment of damages. The students were sexually abused by Derek Clark, a child care worker who is now in prison.

## **ADR Update**

Although the government claims that most of the twelve planned pilot ADR projects are up and running and successful, the churches feel that progress is painfully slow, with many problems arising. The General Synod is involved with the Diocese of Qu'Appelle in one possible ADR project with a small group of former students who attended the Gordons School. There is yet no agreement with the government about the sharing of costs.

## **General Synod Finances**

The General Synod continues to assure donors that their current gifts are not supporting litigation costs, but are used for the ongoing mission of the national church in all its aspects. Indications from dioceses are that their proportional gifts will continue at about the same level next year as in 2000, with some dioceses reducing their gift because of their situations, and some increasing theirs as they attempt to reach the agreed goal of a General Synod contribution of 26% of diocesan income.

## **PWRDF Incorporation**

The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund is now incorporated and has its own charitable receipt number! The new Board met for the first time Oct. 19-22 in Toronto. The Chair is Marion Saunders. All new donations will be receipted by the new corporation. The work of the Fund continues as in the past.

## **Launch of Jubilee III**

The Primate joined other church leaders on September 24th in Ottawa to launch the third year of Jubilee and its special emphasis on aboriginal land rights. The petition campaign coordinated by the Aboriginal Rights Coalition and the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative calls on the

federal government to act immediately to establish a truly independent commission with a mandate to implement Aboriginal land, treaty and inherent rights.

For more information about the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, visit their web site at [www.ceji-iocj.org/index.html](http://www.ceji-iocj.org/index.html)

## **Officers of General Synod**

The Officers met on October 11 to continue their study of all the options regarding the financial well-being of the General Synod. They reviewed reports on the discussions with government, met with our solicitors about the option of creditor protection (CCAA) and heard reports on the progress of litigation. They decided not to expand the letter-writing effort into a full election effort, but wanted to continue to encourage Anglicans to contact their MPs on this issue.

## **Telling Our Story -- Ways to help**

Often when I meet with groups or individuals the question is asked, "How can I help?"

First, pray for the indigenous people who have been hurt by the residential school experience. Pray for all those involved in litigation and other aspects of the issue.

Second, join in giving thanks for the service of those who worked faithfully in the schools, often forfeiting higher pay and better living conditions because of their Christian commitment to service in the schools.

Third, write or contact your MP to share your concerns and to urge the government to live up to its responsibility.

Fourth, seek out opportunities in your community to contact aboriginal people, to learn more, to take the first steps to bridge the gulf between our cultures. Person to person contact, friendship are important ways in which our healing and reconciliation work can begin.

Fifth, keep informed on the issue. Watch our website, read the Anglican Journal, monitor the secular media and seek out other resources.

Finally, sixth, continue your support for your church, your parish, the Primate's Fund, the Anglican Appeal. Your donations are secure, and they help us maintain vital programs both in Canada and overseas.

Please share any comments or pass on any questions to:

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