

# **Residential Schools Update #9—March 30, 2001**

**Archdeacon Jim Boyles, General Secretary**

## **Anglican Healing Initiatives**

At its meeting in Calgary in March the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples endorsed a Plan of Anglican Work in Support of A New Partnership Between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Anglicans: A New Agape. The ambitious 5-point plan, which was later adopted by the Council of General Synod, builds on the substantial work already being done by the Anglican Church in its ministry with indigenous peoples.

The five goals are:

- supporting the efforts of Indigenous peoples to achieve self-determination, both within Canada and within the church
- increasing advocacy for justice for Indigenous peoples, including land claims and treaty negotiations
- expanding the church's Healing Fund to increase grants for Indigenous groups designing and implementing healing programs in their communities; and encouraging non-Indigenous Anglicans to address their own needs for healing
- addressing the consequences of colonialism and assimilation policies, including residential schools, in symbolic and ceremonial ways, to provide "historical reparation"
- working to build a new partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Members of our executive council greeted the plan with a good deal of enthusiasm and excitement, seeing it as a very significant step on our way forward.

And it's worth noting that we are well positioned to act on such a plan. For example:

- There are 225 indigenous Anglican congregations in Canada
- There are over 130 indigenous Anglican priests and deacons
- There are four indigenous bishops
- The national church is spending \$1.2 million this year on indigenous ministry, including healing and justice work
- Dioceses are spending close to \$5 million on indigenous ministry and programs

The General Synod has hired Ms. Esther Wesley as Indigenous Healing Fund Coordinator. Esther is Cree from the James Bay area, and has been serving as a member of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund Board. She began work in March. She will work closely with ACIP in administering and evaluating the Healing Fund and its grants.

## **The Healing Fund**

Recently grants totaling \$153,000 were made for 13 projects from the Healing Fund. Two of these projects are as follows:

## **Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. Forest, Ontario (Diocese of Huron)**

Family Teaching Circle Project

To work in concert with the long-term Community Healing Project.

March to August 2001

During the post-residential school era, the Church replaced traditional family and community structures and filled a void. It helped to bring families & community together and it reinforced traditional values of sharing, respect for one another and unity. History, cultural teachings and values were passed down orally from one generation the next. Today this has not been happening. This project's goals include restoration of traditional family & community connection; rebuilding the spiritual connections; opportunities for volunteerism with a focus on traditional family activities.

## **B.C. Provincial Residential School Project & the Diocese of New Westminster (Diocese of New Westminster)**

Advanced Training for Residential School Trauma Counselors

March 2001 to February 2002

The project will train aboriginal counsellors and therapists in an advanced method of trauma recovery. By building the capacity of aboriginal workers already providing residential school therapy, this program has the potential to affect a far greater number of survivors. The end result of this project will be the existence of skilled facilitators who can provide an unlimited amount of advanced trauma recovery workshops for residential school survivors.

## **Litigation Update**

A trial began this week in Vancouver involving another former student of St. George's School in Lytton. The trial was adjourned until June after one day. A trial is scheduled for mid-May in Regina regarding a post-1969 case of sexual abuse at the Gordons School. A hearing is set for June in London, Ontario to consider an application to have a class action certified with regard to the

Mohawk Institute. Ongoing pre-trial work is increasing and litigation costs, both for General Synod and the nine dioceses are rising fast.

Meanwhile, new cases are being filed, and the Department of Justice continues to bring the General Synod and the dioceses into cases by third party actions. As of mid-March, the General Synod had been named directly in cases involving 605 plaintiffs (the government has also be named in every one of these cases). The General Synod has been named by third party action by the government involving an additional 386 plaintiffs. There are also three potential class actions where 364 plaintiffs are identified, and there is potential for many more if the class actions are certified. Whatever spin is put on these numbers, it is clear that government action to involve the Anglican Church is significant.

The appeal of the first Lytton decision (Mowatt) is moving slowly, with a hearing before the B.C. Court of Appeal likely in the fall. The second Lytton trial (Aleck et al) has concluded and is now before the judge.

## **Ecumenical Working Group**

Representatives of the Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and United Churches have been meeting monthly for over three years now to coordinate strategy with regard to litigation, approaches to government and relations with the Assembly of First Nations.

The group has developed a paper on a comprehensive approach to the residential schools situation and has shared it with government and AFN. More recently it has outlined a common position in relation to the discussions with the Deputy Prime Minister, and discussed the position with him at a meeting in Ottawa on March 29. The meeting was productive, although there is continuing work before the government is in a position to respond to the churches' financial situation.

Discussions continue between church representatives and staff of the Assembly of First Nations, and a further meeting of Church leaders with the Grand Chief is being planned. Church representatives are in touch with other survivor groups as well.

## **Discussions with the Deputy Prime Minister**

There have been five meetings with the Honourable Herb Gray and a series of other meetings with officials who are working with him. One discussion has involved estimates of present and future liability, and a second discussion has focused on the churches' ability to contribute. Much time has been taken in educating government people about the nature of the church as a voluntary organization, dependent on voluntary donations for its work. We have continued to point out that the presence of the Anglican Church in many communities across the country contributes substantially to the social well-being of those communities, and that particularly our work with indigenous people is an important part of our commitment and mission.

Our negotiating team includes Bishop Gordon Beardy and myself. We will be expanding the team to include a representative of the nine dioceses that have lawsuits and a representative of the other 21 dioceses. Chancellor Robert Falby of the Diocese of Toronto will represent the latter. An appointment by the nine dioceses will be made soon. The Treasurer of General Synod, Jim Cullen is also involved.

Earlier in March I wrote to all Liberal MPs expressing appreciation and hope for the ongoing talks with the Deputy Prime Minister, stating our continuing concern and frustration about the Department of Justice's policy of aggressively naming the churches as third parties in lawsuits, pressing the urgency of the financial situation for the Anglican Church, particularly the Diocese of Cariboo and General Synod, and putting forward our commitment to be part of the healing process in the years ahead. Some early responses repeat the statement that it is not the government's intention to force any church organization into bankruptcy.

## **General Synod Financial Position**

The Financial Management and Development Committee met in early March and reviewed the state of the General Synod's finances. The committee reported to the Council of General Synod that liquid financial assets are diminishing rapidly as the litigation costs increase. The committee asked that professional legal and accounting advice be sought and the Officers of General Synod were asked to take such advice seriously. As stated to the government last May, the General Synod will run out of funds for litigation sometime this year if there is no agreement with the government that will stop this outflow.

The Treasurer and General Secretary will likely be meeting with government officials in Ottawa next week to present financial information, updating the submission made to the Department of Indian Affairs last May. We will continue to express as strongly as possible the critical financial situation faced by both the Diocese of Cariboo and the General Synod.

The Council of General Synod received this report and authorized the Officers to take whatever steps are necessary. It also expressed to the government its disappointment and frustration with the pace of the current state of discussion between the church and the government, and urged that an acceptable resolution be found as quickly as possible.

The Council, also passed the following motion:

*That the Council of General Synod continue to uphold the principle that all current income from dioceses be used for current programs and not be diverted to litigation costs relating to residential schools.*

In other words, your donations continue to support the whole range of national church programs.

## **The Meeting of General Synod, July 4-11, Waterloo, Ontario**

Three hundred and ten delegates will arrive in Waterloo to spend eight days together considering the affairs of the national church. There will be a session on residential schools on the first full day. On Monday, July 9 there will be sessions on indigenous justice, and a presentation by the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, followed by a healing service for the whole Synod. The General Synod continues to support the Covenant signed by aboriginal leaders in 1994, which calls for self-determination within the church.

The Council of General Synod will be proposing that General Synod continue on course with its 1995 Strategic Plan for the next three years, but give high priority to healing work with aboriginal people, in accordance with the working paper outlined above. The six priorities from the earlier plan include: overseas partnerships, work in the north, ecumenical relationships, Anglican identity, social justice and support for dioceses.

## **Media Work**

The churches supported a joint venture by Newsworld, Vision TV and the Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network in producing a two-hour series on residential schools, which was aired in February and March. We continue to respond to media requests as fully and openly as possible. Much of the coverage is uncomfortable (and some of it, especially some of the commentary, is just plain wrong), but we continue to believe that full disclosure and open discussion are the best possible approaches we can take.

One of the tasks before us now is to work harder at 'good news' stories about the church and its service to the community. Good news may not be as popular for secular press as bad news, but we know there are compelling stories of faith, service, mission and healing going on in all our communities day by day. Be alert to opportunities to share good news.

For further information see the General Synod website at [www.anglican.ca/rs](http://www.anglican.ca/rs) or contact the General Secretary at [jboyles@national.anglican.ca](mailto:jboyles@national.anglican.ca)

Distributed to members of:

- Council of General Synod
- House of Bishops
- Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples
- Mission Co-ordination Group
- Residential Schools Steering Committee
- General Synod Staff