



ANGLICAN COUNCIL OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

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October 10, 2003

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace to you and peace through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We, the men and women from both the aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities within the Anglican Church of Canada, who gathered in Winnipeg to discern our roles in leadership for the communities we serve and the Church we love, share this letter as an expression of our common witness to the reconciling power of God in all of our lives.

Our gathering was marked by expressions of alienation. Some indigenous members told again the stories of the residential schools; others told tragic stories of their own lives and of the lives of their communities, deepened by a sense of rejection by the dominant society and the church. Some non-indigenous members spoke of incomprehension among church members who felt that the Agreement, which to them represented significant sacrifice in the name of justice for victims, had been rejected for reasons they did not understand. Some were anxious about the prospect of increasing isolation in which indigenous people would be tempted to remain in their woundedness, proclaiming it but declining healing, while non-indigenous people would remain in their incomprehension, refusing the knowledge which can only come from meeting with and listening to their aboriginal brothers and sisters.

Acknowledging our mutual responsibility for this shared reality, we confess our part in the pain we all feel. With our senses, feelings, thoughts, choices, actions and racism we have disowned, alienated, hurt and wounded our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have read with our eyes unloving words of others. We have allowed our love to be overpowered by our pain. We have invited hateful thoughts into our choices. We have acted in retaliation. We have not acted as Jesus would.

We are called by our loving, creator God to find a path of blessing. God's eyes can see that our path of blessing is a common one. Our human vision is at times dim and blind. Yet, we commit ourselves from different places on the journey to move forward together in hope to realize God's glory.

Jesus says, "I am the way". He invites us to walk that way with him. It is the way of the cross. Jesus reminds us that his face is set towards Jerusalem: toward the cross. We know this road is painful, but we also know that it is the path to life...true life for ourselves, for our brothers and sisters, and eternal life with God. Therefore, we choose the path of the Spirit.

The way of the Spirit can only lead us forward, never backward. The Spirit calls us not to abandon the best of our tradition, our culture, as we move ahead, but calls us to move in respect for the dignity of every community that is part of the Body of Christ.

Therefore, our practical response to this spiritual journey is to be rigorously honest with ourselves and to be in unity with Christ. We will accept our differences. We will take the risk to embrace them by honoring one another's stories. Our vision is to respond by doing what God calls us to do.

We believe God calls us to stand together in prayer and in commitment. While the journey ahead may be long, we make that journey together as brothers and sisters in the Lord. We lift our voice in prayer. We offer our voice to God's Spirit. We ask for the Spirit of discernment. We pray to hear the Spirit in others. We welcome the Spirit to abide in our hearts. We pray to be reconnected through the healing Spirit of God and we invite all others to join us in this new beginning through the grace of God in Christ Jesus, our Saviour.

The Community Gathered at Winnipeg, MB, October 2003,

Todd Russell	Andrew Wesley	Michael Peers, Primate
Erica Anaviapik	Daniel Aupalu	Yolanda Bird
Charles Bobbish	Sidney Black	Lily Bell
Elizabeth Colin	Nina Burnaham	Grace Delaney
Olive Elm	Shirley Johnson	Morris Fiddler
Laverne Jacobs	Eunice McManon	Mark Loyal
Eli Morris	Vernon Morris	Gloria Moses
Marion Schafer	Lorraine Still	Barbara Shoomski
Wilfred Stevenson	Jean Guanish Vachon	Murray Still
Margaret Waterchief	Ruth Ross	Sherry Small
Mervin Wolfleg	Frank Armistead ELCIC	Maria Jane Highway
Douglas Highway	Eliza Webb	Paul Idlout
Ethel Ahenakew	Ron Evans	Donna Bomberry
Esther Wesley	Chris Hiller	Millie Poplar
Teresa Mandricks	Dorothy Davies-Flindall	Helena Rose Holdcroft
James Cowan	Caleb Lawrence	Peter Elliot
John Clarke	Jim Boyles	Eleanor Johnson