

The Road to Warm Springs
The National Consultation on Indigenous Anglican Self-Determination
Anglican Church of Canada
Pinawa, Manitoba

September 14-17, 2017

Transcript: Greetings from the Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Anglican Bishop

More information including a video of this welcome at www.anglican.ca/roadtowarmsprings

Boozhoo, Nindinawemaganug.

I greet you all as my relatives. But the Ojibwa is very precise in its imprecision. Meaning that it's roughly translated, "You are my relatives," but if more accurately translated—I'm not quite sure yet.

I think that what that means as a traditional form of greeting is that we should try to engage as relatives. We should try to be as relatives one to another. And I hope that that's the way that we will be throughout this gathering.

Henry Budd, who was the first ordained Cree priest of the Anglican Church of Canada, said almost 150 years ago that this isn't going to go anywhere until we are actually making decisions about what happens. 150 years later, we're still waiting for that to happen. And he realized, because he saw over and over again, that he had great success in his ministry. Thousands and thousands of people involved in it.

But the Church would then try to clean it up a bit, and sent somebody from England—some yahoo from England—they'd paid the guy twice as much to destroy what he had done. This was because to be a Church was defined not in Biblical or spiritual terms, it wasn't defined in indigenous terms. It was defined in English terms, in cultural terms that were foreign to the people. And I think it needs to be said, foreign to the Gospel.

There have been all kinds of prophetic movements. A group of elders back close to 60-70 years ago, in the area that is now Mishamikoweesh, dreamed of a Church where the decisions would be made by indigenous people. Where things would be run by indigenous people, where the clergy would be indigenous, where the bishops would be indigenous, all of these things. And we're beginning to see that happening in places like Mishamikoweesh and other places across Canada. It's a good thing.

For a number of us, we caught the vision about 30 years ago when the Māoris first came to visit Canada. They came, and we were surprised because they were in charge of their Church. We were surprised at the way they were able to make all the decisions on their own. And we asked them about that. "How did you do this? How did you accomplish this?" And what they said is, "It's in the treaties." We said, "The Church is in the treaties?" And they said, "No, the Church is not in the treaties. But the treaties are the basis of our self-determination, our capacity to take over for ourselves and to run this on our own."

It took us a while to understand what they were saying. But just as in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the treaties recognized the right of indigenous people to develop on their own basis and in their own way. And that's what this is all about: recognizing the humanity, and reclaiming the humanity of indigenous people. That's what this is all about.

Now the Māoris were here again the week before last, and they were very interested in the way that we have chosen to do this. They were very interested that we were having a joint consultation with indigenous and non-indigenous. The reason they said is that when they separated from the Anglican Church, when they followed self-determination, they did one of their hakas and then walked away.

And they said, "It isn't until now that we're beginning to look at what the partnership means." And they commended us for looking at what the partnership would be, and what it would be like. So it is our hope, not that this gathering will define for indigenous people what self-determination looks like, because only a council of indigenous people can make that determination. But that this will shape the partnership that will allow self-determination to happen, and allow us to go forward.

It seems to me that our elders were very, very clear. They liked what the Māoris were doing, but they didn't want to lose the connection and the partnership with the Church. And so that's really our task. How do we allow self-determination to happen, and partnership to happen at the same time? This is a process of maturity.

When I went to seminary, my mother and father drove me to Toronto. And I got really sick along the way. I was so sick that I was in bed in the hotel where we were staying. And I overheard my mother calling up the doctor or the nurse for the hotel, and saying, "I have a sick child here." You know, there I was 21 years old with a beard, and so on. Yeah. I was just imagining the doctor coming in and looking at me, and expecting a five-year-old and getting a 21-year-old.

I thought of that story when I came here. You know? We're 21, it's time for us not to be children anymore. And it's time to be recognized in that way. God bless.