

Unique features of an Indigenous Province, The Confederacy of Indigenous Spiritual Ministry

1. Appropriate resources for leadership formation including respect for Indigenous community's call to leadership
2. Indigenous ordination canons and appropriate training for ministry
3. Incorporation of traditional ceremonies and teachings into liturgy. Example, naming ceremony with baptism.
4. High value on Elders and youth.
5. Cultural structure, structures that fit the community.
6. Better relationships between Indigenous communities and with settler communities.
7. More authority for National Indigenous Anglican Bishop.
8. Circular leadership, shared leadership that is one of equity and the gifts and talents of all are honored and utilized.
9. Meaningful prayer books and hymnals. Hymns in "Common Praise" are difficult to sing, words in Book of Common Prayer may be foreign to the Indigenous community.
10. Ministry plans grounded in the baptismal covenant, the Five Marks of Mission and the Seven Traditional Teachings are the basis for responding to crises in our communities and in making justice.
11. Stronger focus on stewardship of the land, using the Creator's gift to sustain mission and ministry.
12. Church to Nation relationship, respecting and honoring Indigenous secular leadership.
13. High value on healing from historical trauma and other trauma prevalent in our Indigenous communities.

We will select four partners to begin with: Perhaps The Office of the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, Mishamikoweesh, Missinipi, Haudenosaunee (Six Nations). These are **examples** of areas that may be suited to be partners in the Confederacy of Indigenous Spiritual Ministry in the Anglican Church of Canada. There could be others that are better suited but the first and foremost criteria for being a partner is that it be supported by the First Nation's secular (non-church) and non-secular (church) leadership. A Covenant of Mutual Ministry that outlines expectations will be developed for each area and it may differ from area to area. Once we determine who the four will be, and once we solidify the Confederacy, we will make a plan to include others.

The Rationale

Many have said that Indigenous people in Canada have experienced a cultural genocide that stems from the Doctrine of Discovery; a very long history of things that were given by the Creator taken away. They were taken away, for the most part, in an attempt to assimilate and

often exterminate Indigenous people. However, Indigenous people are resilient survivors and found ways to preserve the culture even it meant hiding it from plain view. There is nothing in our cultures that is evil and most Indigenous cultures show great thanksgiving for the gifts given for their journey upon Mother Earth. Our first responsibility is to be thankful.

The unique features of a Confederacy of Indigenous Spiritual ministry are an effort to reclaim our cultures and inherent rights (the right to land and subsistence resources and activities, the right to self-determination and self-governance, the right to our culture and customs including language and religion, to name several) in places where it is now appropriate. In recent years there has been a strong movement to remember who we are as Indigenous people of the land. The Idle No More movement is one such effort. It is also important to note that many in the movement are young people; young people yearn to know who they are as Indigenous people and are looking at ways to restore their spirituality or the Creator's purpose for their lives and how they become one of the "Good Mind." Our church can help by moving into a space that allows our culture into worship and into our self-determination. We have to put away the colonial practices that we have learned and begin thinking of what our ancestors said and did as they moved about on Mother Earth. It is all there, we just have to open our hearts and minds to see and feel it.

Leadership development is a key part of the formation of this confederacy. Traditionally, communities call people to be leaders. Every child is watched by the community to see what gifts and talents they possess, especially those that make good leaders. They look for the Seven Traditional Teachings in each person. Among Six Nation's people additional values include: fairness, kindness, confidentiality, consistency, integrity, responsibility, responsiveness, cooperation, and openness. In our proposed confederacy the people would be asked, "Who, here, would be a good spiritual leader for your community? They would then talk to the bishop about the call to spiritual leadership with or without the person they want to call. Other things to be considered in this process are: community determined needed and appropriate training; identification of at least one mentor; community expectations of a spiritual leader; identification of lay workers to minister with the Spiritual leader. The community also determines the wellness of the person being called, they must be in balance with mind, body, spirit and emotions; they must be of the Good Mind. The call comes from the people, not from the individual. A "self-call" goes against the traditional teaching of humility.

Some of our communities want to include more traditional practices in their worship. Others don't want it and that needs to be respected. For those that do, we must make sure it is authentic and authenticity can be borrowed as long as it is explained. For example, why do we smudge and what is the proper way to smudge? This can vary from community to community so it is best to find out why and how it is done for that area. As a Mohawk woman, I have been taught that our sacred medicines are burned to carry our prayers to the Creator and are not just for purification of self or cleansing of negative energy in the room or area. Mervin Wolfleg offered a teaching on the proper way to smudge at a meeting and it has stayed with me since

then. We smudge our senses – eyes, mouth, nose, ears, heart, touch (hands) and the top of head where the Creator breathed life into us. We also remove glasses and jewelry so they won't "stop" the smudge. Many of our elders were told that drums, rattles, language, dances were of the devil and not to be brought into the church and in many communities not even used outside of the church proper. I know of one Inupiaq village in Alaska that lost their dancing because they were told it was evil. Fortunately, they were able to reclaim their dance. I was there when the dance came back and it was emotional, tear filled but yet a joyous occasion. All of the people were smiling and it is this joy that we need to reclaim.

Much emphasis has always been placed on money to do ministry, However, in an Indigenous context, this is not as important as first having a clear vision. There was a bishop who talked about having a "fundable vision." This is stifling and sadly, that diocese is still pinching pennies while many Indigenous communities go without the sacraments. We have to dream big and if we are committed, believe that the Creator will bless us with the means to realize the dream. That does not mean that we have don't have to do our part. We need to look at stewardship in our communities and how we convert subsistence (living off the land) to cash to keep our churches going. For example, our communities have many artisans who sew beautiful beadwork. Why not sell it and give a portion to the church? Biblically, we have to remember the tithe of 10% of your treasure. There is a church on the Yukon River that could barely buy a barrel of oil to heat the church on Sunday. They learned about tithing and although only five could tithe 10%, it was enough. They now keep the fire going through out the cold Christmas so that those without heat can take refuge in the church and not freeze to death. And, how do we take care of our clergy who minister without pay? Do members of the church take them wood in the winter, moose in the fall, ducks in the spring or fish in the summer? These are sometimes better than money!

These are some examples of how we bring our culture into our church. Some may not agree and that's okay. Some may have other and even better ideas, and that's okay. Some will say our church will be spiritually stronger and that is certainly good. Whichever way we go, we will need to make sure that we take the time to tell our relatives where and why we are going. But, we are not going away, only finding ways to make a stronger partnership with the Anglican Church of Canada,