

The Road to Warm Springs

The National Consultation on Indigenous Anglican Self-Determination
Anglican Church of Canada
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Transcript: Ministry Moment from The Rt. Rev. Barbara Andrews,
Bishop of the Territory of the People

*More information including a video of this Ministry Moment at
www.anglican.ca/roadtowarmsprings*

Thank you, Norm. I hope I won't shine, but the story of our people will shine. I want to first thank Nancy and Richard for the welcome to this homeland; my homeland, too, since my great-great-grandfather came down this river and met my great-great-grandmother in the Red River Settlement. From there, they had a whole pile of kids. One of them went out to Alberta, a Métis man who married a woman, Blue Ears from the Papal Chase Reserve. So my roots are deep here, so it was good to be welcomed home here to part of my own history.

This is a story of a people, a people who prayed hard to do something different. So I'm going to start the story in the present and take you back in history, but first I need to acknowledge Terry who is here in the room, who is the beginning of this story and journey for us. I hope that through this you will see his courage and bravery in beginning this step along the way to reconciliation for us.

So presently, as of August the 10th of 2017, we received our Certificate of Incorporation as the Territory of the People Anglican Church. This is a long journey for us and it's okay to applaud this moment in our history. This incorporation and the writing of a new constitution was affirmed at our assembly in May 2017, which laid out a unique governance model for our little part of the Anglican Church. This is a part, this Constitution lays out the balance of power in our structure is given to the First Nations people. In our assembly, like your synods, there are representatives from each church community, but we give an initial 15 seats to First Nations people, giving them the balance of power in our structure.

Our work has been happening, actually, it went quite quickly over four years when we got serious about moving our application before the Provincial Synod of BC Yukon to ask them to recognize us as a Territory, and then it went on to General Synod and in November of 2015 they gave us their assurance of support. This began out of a motion that came before our assembly in 2018 and it was emotion brought before the assembly by the indigenous community. It was all wrapped up in around the fact that we had made a commitment to the

Provincial Synod, after the tad bit of kafuffle that happened around the election of the last bishop, and we committed to review the process and look for new ways of moving forward.

We struck a task force and we looked at what we might do to become an entity in the Anglican Church of Canada that would better reflect who we were as a people. So we invited a small group of people to begin to think. The first thing we had to do was read all the Constitutions and the Canon. Boring. But out of that, we discovered a word in the Constitution of the Ecclesiastical Province that named Territory. There was no definition, no way of knowing what that was, but we thought that was a pretty good word. So our first request was simply to define Territory and maybe we could fit into it.

Provincial Synod asked us to incorporate under the BC Society Act and to become an entity equal to a diocese within the Canadian Church structure, which is what we've done. But we followed the principles that we had set for ourselves back when we closed the Diocese of Cariboo. Those principles that guided us was that we would first consult with First Nations people; secondly, our parishes; and thirdly, the wider church. That's the process we've followed every step of the way. You see, it made no sense to any of us to give up the Diocese of Cariboo only to reinstate ourselves in the same way 15 years later. A terrible price had been paid by many people during that time, and we needed to honor that.

So we met with the Elders. We consulted and we talked with parishes, and then we talked to the wider church. At the administration committee meeting, it became apparent we needed to have a new name. So we went to the Elders and received a number of names. We asked our parishes. We received about 30 names in all that were submitted. An interesting thing happened. The non-First Nation communities all submitted First Nations names, and the First Nations people—our Pastoral Elders—were firm with us. They wanted us to be called People of the Territory. They did not want to use a First Nations name because we are of six different linguistic groups in our area, and what linguistic group would you use to? There was suggestions on using an ancient language, but it was a dead language and we want it to be alive.

So the first name that was proposed by the indigenous community was People of the Territory and the Primate was with us when that came out. But I know how we liked to use acronyms in the church, and I was a little bit reluctant to be called the Bishop of POTT. Really, really appropriate for the Central Interior and our alternative economy that we have, but somehow, so the Elders switched it around and called it the Territory of the People. I prefer to be known as the TOPP bishop.

We came to this point after a long history of ministry with First Nations people in the Central Interior of BC. Over a 150 years ago, our church was invited into the Fraser Canyon and the Nicola Valley by the Chiefs. We were invited as early missionaries because it was said it seemed that our story was compatible to their story. Our way of being spiritual people complemented what was already there. The early missionaries worked hard to learn the culture of the people and the language, and today, the language has been preserved by the early recordings of early missionaries. That's how we're reclaiming our language.

So the Anglican Church was an invited church into the area, and that's important to our story. Through time, history shows us that we made some terrible mistakes when we entered into the

agreement with the New England Company who started St. George's Residential School, and many of the day schools in the area. The Church Missionary Society provided staff for the schools, and at one point there were seven clergy living in Lytton, BC. Many of these individuals were fine people, but some of them were not, and we know today the whole system and the motivation of the government was questionable and caused a legacy of deep harm to our indigenous people.

So from the early days of the Diocese of Cariboo, we worked with indigenous people. Sometimes we did things well, and sometimes we did things poorly. The litigation that came from the Lytton School caused the Diocese of Cariboo to make a historical decision in 2000. You see, if we were going to walk the path of reconciliation, we needed to walk it as equals. What most people don't realize is that it was the indigenous people never sued the Diocese of Cariboo, only the Canadian government, right Terry?

So a moral and ethical decision was made to close the Diocese of Cariboo. There were lots of decisions we could have made, but the decision not to carry on with any legal actions was an important one and a defining moment in our journey. We decided that if we stayed in litigation, we could not ever be in right relationship, and so if we were to be in right relationship, we needed to walk the path of healing and reconciliation. We needed to walk as equals. As a result, every parish in the Diocese of Cariboo passed a motion at an annual vestry meeting to place all of its assets into a Bare Trust. All of the assets were offered to the Canadian government as an end to litigation.

Bishop Jim Cruickshank and other officials placed that asset book on the negotiation table and the Diocese of Cariboo was prepared to give everything to the government. I was told by others in the room that day that that simple act of laying that asset book on the table changed the tone and the result of the All Churches Agreement, in that simple act of us prepared to give everything to the government.

So defining moments in history guide us when we gave and we were prepared to give everything up. We said, "We will still be the family of God. We will explore new ways of being God's people and carrying on God's mission, and we affirmed that God was calling us to a ministry of healing and reconciliation."

We continue that walk today. We were, if you want to know the exact process of how we went through incorporation, read David Jones' memo. I read my homework last night. It laid out a way in which we could move forward and to continue our journey of walking as one people.

The whole process of incorporation meant that we had to talk and define carefully how we were going to function as a people. We had to do some gymnastics in fitting our church model into the Society Act's model, and that when you read our Constitution, you might say, "What in the world are they doing?" Well, it was just because the Government of BC wanted us to do certain things. We found that with the support of the Ecclesiastical Province, the Chancellors, the legal advisors, the Metropolitan, and all of the support we received from the national church, the national Chancellor in that, all of those people helped us to get to where we wanted to be.

There was, at no time, did we ever sense anyone putting barriers up to us and a motion was passed at our assembly that I am to act on and somehow thank all the people that helped us on the journey.

It can be done. We are not finished. We're only at the first steps along this journey. None of us have the sense of having arrived and I'm sorry, Randolph as Prolocutor of the Province, you'd be hearing from us many more times, I'm sure. We have a unique model and we are now recognized in our unique way as an equal in the church as any other diocese. We just do things a little different. So thank you for giving me this time.