



OKLAHOMA IV 2010 CONSULTATION WRAP UP

May 27-29, 2010

Addressing: The Present and Future of Indigenous Leadership in the Episcopal Church

“Quit talking and do something.”

This was the advice the elders offered to the 78 participants of Oklahoma IV Consultation on “The Present and the Future of Indigenous Leadership in the Episcopal Church” at the concluding session of an historic four-day early summer gathering on the 13,000 acre wooded domain of the University of the South, Sewanee, TN.

The top most leaders on the Church—Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and Dr. Bonnie Anderson, President of the House of Deputies—were present and participating throughout the consultation. The quest for direction was developed and planned by Indigenous Theological Training Institute (ITTI). Executive Council Committee on Indigenous Ministry (ECCIM) provided support.

Fifty two participants were Indigenous clergy and laity from across the U.S. plus Indigenous Anglicans from Canada and New Zealand. Seven bishops, whose ministry includes native peoples, participated. Included were three bishops of the four aided dioceses¹: South Dakota, North Dakota, and the bishop-elect of Navajoland. The fourth aided diocese, Alaska, had not at the time consecrated its new bishop. Other participating bishops were from the dioceses of Northern California, Nevada, Minnesota, and Idaho. Three indigenous bishops were present: North Dakota’s Michael Smith and Carol Gallagher, and Mark MacDonald, Anglican Church of Canada's first National Indigenous Bishop.

“What I have heard over the last few days,” said the Most Rev. Jefferts Schori, “is an urgency about leadership development and baptismal ministry.” She said she was struck by the many laments she had heard

¹ Aided Dioceses - Dioceses that receive base budget support for DFMS (aka The Episcopal Church). The financial aid is supplied to assist with mission among Native Americans

about the ordination process and spoke of her own abuse by the Church in the early days after her ordination. "It took me five years to recognize that a call to leadership in this church is a call to reform it."

I pledge to help

Dr. Bonnie Anderson also spoke of concerns she had heard expressed regarding the ordination process. She raised the sensitive subject of national borders, a problem for many First People tribes and nations as colonial boundaries were not the same as hereditary tribal land bases. She said, "You have talked about your hopes and dreams for the expression of indigenous Episcopal identity that is not related to colonial boundaries."

"As your self-determination directs your actions, I pledge to help you in any way I can. I pledge to bring to bear all the authority of my office to help you. I stand ready to do so," she concluded.

Although the agenda was tightly packed, planners did remarkably well in weaving a pattern of plenaries, small group reflection and reports, meditation (using Gospel Based Discipleship model). These basics, however, were deftly sparked with ceremonial lighting of the sacred fire, video presentation and network confabs. Sewanee's southern hospitality was superb, facilities excellent, food far exceeding mass-meal expectations.



On Thursday's late afternoon, the presiding bishop celebrated Opening Eucharist, held in the awesome Chapel of the Apostles that has a 100-foot skylight, and is surrounded by a mantle of trees and natural landscaping. Dinner followed a cordial welcoming by Sewanee's dean and chancellor.

Travel-weary participants got acquainted at the opening plenary chaired by the Rev. Canon Ginny Doctor, chairperson of Indigenous Theological Training Institute. She made introductions and set out consultation expectations. Format was based on the Native Ministry's basic theme since 1997—*Remembrance, Recognition, Reconciliation*, with an additional initiative, *Reclamation*, which tied to the 2009 General Convention resolution denouncing the Doctrine of Discovery.

Remembrance: Plenary II

"Your past is your heritage," emphasized the Choctaw elder, Owanah Anderson, the keynote speaker.

"Know about vision viewed and goals sought by your elders and be ever mindful of the words of George Santayana who told us that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," said the silver-haired octogenarian who was directly connected to the Episcopal Church's Office of Indian Ministry for 21 years (1977-1998) in roles as chair of National Committee on Indian Work (predecessor to ECIM), as special consultant and lastly as staff officer for Indian Ministry in New York.

Tracking the history of the Anglican/Episcopal Church's relations with Native Americans, Anderson rapidly reviewed the paternalistic history from the 1607 settlement at Jamestown until her retirement in 1998.

She emphasized the struggle Native peoples have experienced in a drive for self-determination on policies and programs of the church. She said that the Real Involvement goal, articulated by Dr. Vine Deloria Jr. some 40 years, was almost met in the tenure of Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning.

After his first visit to Indian missions in South Dakota, Bishop Browning posed the question: "What is that we are not doing, that we ought to be doing?" From grassroots to cathedrals, answers were sought. In Oklahoma City in 1986, Bishop Browning convened 84 Episcopal leaders from 13 dioceses to scrutinize present ministry and cobbled forth the following:

DIRECTIVES OF OKLAHOMA II CONSULTATION 1986

- The continuing including and empowering of Indians and native people in the decision making apparatus of the Church.
- Exploration and experimentation with, in the very near future, alternative modes of Church governance and structure.
- Consultation with all programs of the National Church designed to combat the evils of racism.
- Assistance in the development of a variety of media especially designed to foster cross-cultural appreciation and understanding.
- Assistance in the design of material and programs for the training of indigenous Church leaders, both lay and ordained.
- Assistance in the design of educational curricula for adults and children, addressing both Church and broadly social needs.

The Phoenix General Convention of 1991 approved an implementation plan for the seven directives of Oklahoma II. "Enormous progress was realized after the Oklahoma II Consultation in 1986," said Anderson.

The seven directives were used for the next decade as the plumb line for programmatic development by the office of Indian Ministry and its advisory board, Episcopal Council of Indian Ministries. "Indians were at the helm of ECIM," she said.

The *San Jose Document*, issued in 1994, cited phenomenal programmatic progress:

San Jose Document, 1994

In the four years that ECIM has existed, it has:

- implemented youth programs at local, diocesan and national levels
- established an effective mechanism to allocate funds
- provided assistance to Indian theological students and leadership development projects
- affirmed Winter Talk, a yearly gathering of lay and ordained Indians who share issues, ideas and vision
- nurtured Paths Crossing, a network of companion parishes and dioceses
- hosted the 500 Years of Survival Celebration at the National Cathedral
- designed and implemented Evangelism programs
- improved communications through *IKHANA* and video cassettes
- acted as a founding partner in International Anglican Indigenous Network of Australian Aboriginal People, Maoris of New Zealand, Native Hawaiians, as well as Canadian and American Indians.

In closing her address, Dr. Anderson cited a second set of directives—the Jamestown Covenant—issued in 1997 at the close of the tenures of both Ed Browning as presiding bishop and herself as staff officer for Native American Ministries.

A Covenant at Jamestown, Va.

November 1, 1997

I

As we strive for justice in reconciling our history of colonization and the suffering it has engendered for generations between us: We will continue to be as constant in our search for the truth as we are responsible to its discoveries.

II

As we work together to find new solutions to the social and political challenges before us: We will continue to be as dedicated to the principles of self determination as we are committed to justice for all humanity.

III

As we expand the theological and spiritual dialogue between our several traditions and communities: We will continue to be as respectful of the Integrity of Indigenous traditions as we are loving in sharing Christ.

IV

As we stand together to honor, protect, and nurture our home, the Earth: We still continue to be as active in stewardship of God's creation as we are diligent in our advocacy for its care.

With these four principles as our guide for a Decade of Remembrance, Recognition, and Reconciliation, we, the undersigned, pledge our hearts and minds to the task God has placed before us.

Now confined to a wheel chair, Dr. Anderson in her low southern-accented voice implied a final farewell, then she concluded with, "Have you really . . . I mean really lived into the Jamestown Covenant? A pledge of 13 long years ago?"

Responses

- The bishops' group:

"Very eager to continue working on the seven directives from Oklahoma II – as Owanah reminded us. How are we doing with Jamestown?"

- Clergy group's report stated:

"As clergy persons - not reinvent the wheel - we need to sit down to push these lines."

"7 bullets for Oklahoma II come back. Just never took the problem off the paper - never went back to them..."

- Canadian Anglicans:

"And in that light, I am not speaking for the ACIP group but I think they would agree, the seven directives that came out of Oklahoma II, stick to it. Just stick to it and move forward in that way."

- The Presiding Bishop:

"And I want to recognize that it is not finished. It is only well begun again. And I want to encourage you in the same way that Owanah did. Not to put behind you the promises of Oklahoma II and III, the Jamestown Covenants but to hold those as the framework for the ongoing work. And maybe the next time a body like this gathers we can say this is what we have managed to address in those seven priorities."

Doctrine of Discovery

The 76th General Convention voted to repudiate and renounce the Doctrine of Discovery as fundamentally opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which originated with Henry VII in 1496. It held that Christian sovereigns and their representative explorers could assert dominion and title over non-Christian lands with the full blessing and sanction of the Church.

It continues to be invoked, in only slightly modified form, in court cases and in the many destructive policies of governments and other institutions of the modern nation-state that lead to the colonizing dispossession of the lands of indigenous peoples and the disruption of their way of life.

Highlights of the presentation on the resolution included a creative film alluding to the evil of the racist assumption that a land is vacant when occupied by the indigenous (*Terra nullius*, a Latin expression meaning 'land belonging to no one'). A well-done skit further emphasized the iniquitous and sinful connotations of the practice.

Responses:

- Theological schools and seminaries must teach a Native American view of history. Curriculum materials must be developed to teach the Doctrine of Discovery agenda taught by Native American teachers.
- Understand the Doctrine of Discovery but then set it aside to move on. This is to educate all the children about America's history.
- A timeline of injustice: which systematically took our land, our traditions and our spirit.
- Whites and Indians both have to correct the effect of the Doctrine.
- Indians have to start this, because most Whites don't see a problem.
- It is time to move on to look to the future.

Report on Present

Sarah Eagle Heart, an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux tribe on Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, celebrated her first anniversary as Program Officer for Native American Ministry at the Oklahoma IV Consultation.

She reported on activities, partly through video, during her tenure. Her focus was primarily on her role in responding to the General Convention Resolution which addressed domestic poverty and especially the poverty on Indian Reservations. Shannon County, SD, where Pine Ridge Reservation is located, has the unfortunate distinction of being the poorest county of the United States.

She updated on progress of a community development training program in partnership with White Bison, a non-profit Native American organization based in Colorado Springs, CO.

Recognizing the Present: Plenary III

The Rt. Rev. Carol Gallagher (Cherokee) moderated a panel reviewing the status of present day leadership in different dioceses of the Church. The panel consisted Helen Bluehorse (Navajo), Larry Beardy (Canada), the Ven. Anna Frank (Alaska), the Rev. Robert Two Bulls (Minnesota), joined by Nahoia Lucas (Native Hawaiian).

This panel directly addressed the purpose of the consultation: **“The Present and Future of Indigenous Leadership in the Episcopal Church”**

Problems were cited; but few solutions came forth. Though Two Bulls managed to negotiate his way past “gate-keepers” and received his M-Div from General Theological Seminary, he spoke of difficulties native peoples have in trying to pilot their way past commissions on ministry.

He said, "Those in control need to recognize Native spirituality and theology; there are self appointed guards to keep native people out of the ordination *process.*"

"The most important point made by the panelists," said Bishop Gallagher "is that is necessary for local tribal people to have control of training (along with church) so that culture and language are at the base of everything."

Aotearoa: Reflections by the Rev. Dr. Canon Hone Kaa

The senior Māori minister of the Anglican Church in his native Aotearoa (New Zealand), Dr. Kaa is also a veteran Māori activist as well as senior lecturer at Te Rau Kahikatea Theological College, St Johns, in Auckland. His life has been dedicated to building strength of Māoris in both sacred and secular positions.

He shared with the consultation the struggle of his people for 'self-determination' and how the indigenous Māori of New Zealand—after generations of trying—attained a non-geographic bishopric over all Maori people—wherever they may reside—some 20 years ago. Since then, their church growth has been phenomenal after the Māori developed and implemented their own theological education and ordination process.

National Indigenous Bishop

The subject of an indigenous bishop serving indigenous peoples has floated around the campfire of Native peoples' gatherings for two decades. The subject, of course, quickly surfaced in Tennessee as participants pondered future indigenous leadership.

Canadian Anglicans and the Aotearoa Māori generously shared information on process and procedure to revise canons to enable non-geographical jurisdiction, thereby paving the way for an indigenous bishopric in The Episcopal Church.

Present at the consultation was a group of Canadian First Nation Anglicans and the Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald who was named their first National Indigenous bishop in 2007. In addition, the venerable Hone Kaa was able to respond to questions on the role of a bishop over a people instead of a geographic region.

Opposite views on calling for an Indigenous Bishop were strongly voiced in the small group session following the Recognition plenary. One group spoke out in favor of a call for an indigenous bishop; another stressed there to be no need.

In the end, in both consultation evaluation and group reports there was no clear clarion call to move forward with the concept.

The presiding bishop stated that due to the diversity of context probably means that "one bishop for Indigenous/Native Peoples is never going to be enough." She added that the Church is going to need Indigenous bishops in many, many Native Communities. "I want to encourage you to think big," she said.

Reconciliation – Plenary 5

The Rev. Dr. Martin Brokenleg addressed the Reconciliation segment of the consultation. Bright, highly articulate, son of a distinguished Rosebud Sioux priest, Martin retired two years ago as Director of Native American Program at Vancouver Theological Seminary in British Columbia.

The South Dakota native stressed that reconciliation cannot occur without the offender taking responsibility. "One of our major offenders has been our Episcopal church. . . . Our offender has to confess, to take responsibility." He further said, "The offender has to make amends for the offense . . . The Doctrine of Discovery is not our business...but dealing with the effects of it is our responsibility."

CHALLENGE BEYOND SEWANEE

We came from great distances to the green valleys of Tennessee and in the early days of summer we listened to our Church's leaders and for the most part we listened to each other. Opinions and ideas were exchanged between youth, such as Garrick Logg of Holbrook, AZ and the Rt. Rev. Barry Beisner, bishop of Northern California; between Maggie Brown of Navajoland and Paul Lucas, Native Hawaiian; between Bishop Michael Smith, chair of ECCIM and the Rev. Canon Ginny Doctor, chair of ITTI.

There was, unfortunately, factional tension nibbling at the sidelines but it was, in the end, overshadowed with a prevailing commitment to seek to serve Native peoples.

We prayed together, sang together and learned together about innovative directions from Canadian Anglicans and Maori Anglicans of Aoteara (New Zealand).

On the first full day of the consultation, the elder keynoter challenged participants to honor past visions of Native leadership development, and that is exactly what the consultation did.

The quest for direction was – in the end – rediscovered in directives of Oklahoma II consultation of 1986 and Jamestown Covenant of 1997. Thus, it was discovered, the pathway was hidden in plain sight awaiting energy and action of Indigenous Theological Training Institute (ITTI), Executive Council

Committee on Indigenous Ministry (ECCIM), and the office Native American Ministries.

The challenge: "Quit talking and do something."

Editors' Note – We express appreciation to Ruth Ann Collins and Mary Crist for providing us with the Consultation notes and proceedings. We also thank the Rev. Debbie Royal for organizational skills. And most of all to University of the South for welcoming us and the Sewanee Ambassadors for helping us at every turn. Finally, we thank Owanah Anderson for her wisdom in compiling this report.