

Christian Self-Understanding in a Context of Indigenous Traditions and Customs



Indigenous Christianity emphasises the figure of Jesus Christ, the Creator's incarnation. This is extremely important for many Indigenous peoples, even those who would

not formally describe themselves as Christians. Many Indigenous people had dreamed about Jesus and his coming even before the period of devastating colonisation. Jesus, as a figure who suffered at the hands of oppressors, is seen as one who empathises with the plight of Indigenous people.

The intimate interrelationship between God and creation/land/nature is emphasized throughout Indigenous understanding.

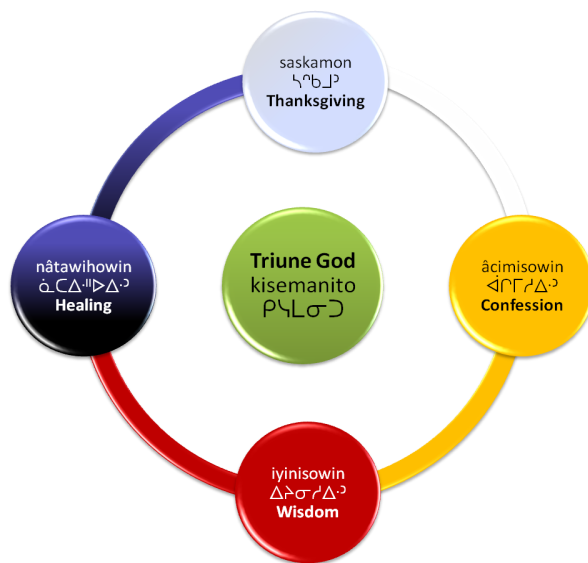
The whole earth is God's temple and without the earth we are nothing. In many Indigenous communities, when people want to get close to God, they sit on the ground. Indigenous moral and spiritual development cannot be separated from our attitudes to the land. It is essential for human beings to be in harmony with the land.

In relation to the Christian Bible, the importance of the four gospels can be linked to the 'four directional thinking' (east, south, west and north) of many Indigenous peoples. Jesus Christ is too great to be spoken of in only one direction.



Standing Stones is a gathering in which Indigenous and Non-Indigenous peoples explore God in an Indigenous context, specifically Cree.

As Anglicans we have traditionally defined ourselves as a church committed to prayer in common language. This binds us to hearing the proclamation of Christ from others.



We gather to worship Jesus, infusing Cree symbols into Christian ceremony. We smudge to purify our minds, hearts and spirits in order to come to a clearer understanding of God; we seek wisdom in Indigenous story and scripture, ask for God's healing water and prayer for ourselves and our community and celebrate God's activities in our lives though the sharing of bannock and berries. The hope is this Gathering is a means of Christ's reconciling

Love to heal ancient wounds and enlighten future generations of Canadians.

All Saint's Cathedral in Edmonton has a dedicated chapel just for this ceremony.



Anglican Diocese of Edmonton Indigenous Ministry

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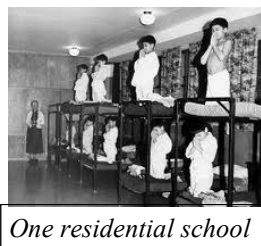
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We acknowledge the traditional peoples of this territory and extend thanks for their hospitality.

Mandate

Indian Residential School resulted in the displacement of culture & identity within Indigenous communities. In response to this history, the Anglican Church is called to listen to the stories of Indigenous brothers and sisters.



One residential school

This mandate was intentionally created with no pre-conceived end product or project, as it was thought that the church simply needs to be present in places and situations where Indigenous brothers and sisters have traditionally been engaging, learning and sharing.

The Three Anglican Pillars of Indigenous Ministries:

Education within our Anglican family is the first pillar. Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Alberta Event, we are continuing to facilitate a series of workshops. The purpose is to educate people regarding the strengths of Indigenous cultures and the positive results of *walking in good relationship*.

The Standing Stones ceremony happens in at least three parishes regularly giving an outlook on our Christian faith through an Indigenous lens. It has opened the door to teaching our parishes how to use ceremonies of this land to worship our God together.



Presentation at the TRC by the Anglican Church.

Reconciliation

Continuing to organize churches listening circles is part of reconciliation. These took place at the TRC. Currently there are three regional centers of conversation and healing; St. Faith/St Stephen in Edmonton, Immanuel in Wetaskiwin, and St. John in Cold Lake.

Reconciliation also continues by consultations with Indigenous Elders.

Mission

The third Anglican pillar of Indigenous ministries is mission. Essentially this is bridging communities: Indigenous and Anglican.



Commissioners smudging at the TRC

One focus will be creating spaces and communities of hope for Indigenous peoples.

The goal is to facilitate our becoming a newly restored people strengthened by gifts each has been given by the Creator.

Apology

In the two decades since the late 1980s, many residential school survivors have come forward with stories of their experiences, including physical & sexual abuse & the impacts of loss of culture. During this period, government and religious bodies have partnered in programs to assist not only the school survivors but the Indigenous population in general.

In 1991, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was convened to examine many

unresolved issues and make recommendations to foster a fair and honourable relationship between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Also in 1991 the Anglican Church established an Indigenous Healing Fund to support the healing work undertaken by local Aboriginal communities and groups. In his 1993 address to the National Native Convocation, the Anglican Primate, Archbishop Michael Peers offered a full apology for the Church's role in the system and for the wrongs committed. In 1998, the native-run Aboriginal Healing Foundation was created to manage the healing strategy and to complement existing government, church and First Nations programs.

Government and Aboriginal groups continue to seek solutions to address the legacy of residential school experiences & to provide satisfactory compensation for survivors. Negotiations culminated with the Residential Schools Settlement Agreement in Principle announced Nov. 23, 2005 with implementation September 19, 2007. Former students were given an opportunity to opt out and pursue independent litigation. However, First Nations leaders and government expected a large majority of former students to accept the Common Experience Payment and additional amounts for each year they were in residence. In 2005, there were an estimated 80,000 living school survivors.

The Settlement Agreement also provided funding for several healing initiatives including the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Research Centre.



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