

2018-2021 INDIGENOUS MINISTRY OUT-REACH REPORT

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Prince Albert



The background

First Nations people are descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada who lived here for many thousands of years before explorers arrived from Europe. Many Indigenous peoples were baptized into Catholicism by French missionaries. In Canada, the largest religion among aboriginal people is Roman Catholicism. Despite the widespread criticism of the colonization of Canada by European missionaries and settlers, most aboriginals do not hate Christianity. For aboriginals, churches still remain a big part of their life. About forty percent self-identify as Roman Catholics.

The **Indigenous Ministry Action-Plan Team** of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Prince Albert, aware of the disconnect with the Indigenous People, is finding ways to respond and provide a level of engagement for the Indigenous communities; to provide a framework from which develop a consultation process leading towards the development of a work plan to reach out to the Indigenous Peoples families (with special attention to the youth and young adult).

Indigenous Ministry Plan of Action.

One of the aims of Indigenous Ministry Team is to “gather the data that provides recommendations to develop long term plan of continued engagement with Indigenous People”.

This presentation includes recommendations and suggestions.

Note that this presentation is not an evaluation of the Ministry’s out-reach, rather it is a compilation of the gathered Information and Feedback from different First Nation communities and clergy across the diocese.

The **Diocesan Indigenous Ministry Action-Plan Team** Members are:

Harry & Germaine Lafond, Tommy & Donna Lightfoot, Srs Anne Burugu Wangui, ASN & Rosemary Kitavi, ASN, Deacon Ghislain Bellavance, Deacon Dan & Janice Lamoureux, Dave McQuaid, Leona Morin and Fr Frederick Akah, MSP.

The Team has had the following Consultation and Engagement Gatherings with the First Nation People across the diocese.

Saturday, February 9, 2019	Sweetgrass
Saturday, March 23, 2019	One Arrow
Saturday, June 1, 2019	Meadow Lake
Wednesday, June 5, 2019:	Muskeg Lake meeting with the Chief and council.
Thursday, July 11, 2019	Muskeg Lake Cultural camp
Saturday, November 30, 2019:	Onion Lake

The Diocesan Indigenous Ministry Team meeting with Bishop and priests.

February 28, 2020. Venue: Moosomin First Nation:

Meeting with Bishop, Priests & Administrators of First Nation parishes and The Diocesan Indigenous Ministry Action-Plan Team.

Saturday October 3, 2020. Venue: Moosomin First Nation.

Thursday January 7, 2021. Venue: Muskeg Lake Cree Nation.

Cree Language Study

From October 2018 – April 2019 was monthly Cree Language Study held at Muskeg Lake. 22 persons, including the Bishop and 13 priests, participated.

August 10, 2019 - St. Joseph Calasanctius Church, North Battleford: Indigenous Ministry out-reach evaluation and review of **the CAMP nehiyawé**.

December 12, 2019 - Muskeg Lake: Gathering of the Participants of Cree Language Study and Pastors / Administrators of Indigenous Parishes.

The Cree Language study was reviewed.

Liturgy: Practice of parts of the Mass in Indigenous Language was encouraged to be the next step. It was recommended that the pew-parts of the mass booklet be translated into Indigenous Language. Dolores Sand accepted to do that for the Diocese.

The Aim of the Consultation and Engagement Gatherings include:

1. To establish contact with the deaneries and parishes and invite potential contact/resource persons or group from the communities;
2. Identification of the issues and challenges.
3. The why and how of moving forward into a development of a **plan of action**.
4. Brainstorm on the possible ways of reaching out and connecting with the First Nation families.
5. Plan for possible activities that may attract and bring the best out of the younger generation of the First Nation.
6. Collaboration with community chiefs and elders: Which way to go?
7. Gather the data that provides recommendations to develop long term plan of continued engagement with Indigenous People, with special attention to the youth/young adults of the communities within the diocese.

GUIDEING QUESTIONS

1. What is the best way of reaching-out to the Indigenous people families?
2. What are the best ways of encouraging the families and young people to return to the Church?
3. What type of activities can attract and bring the best out of the younger generation?

4. What are the best ways of discouraging the young people from joining gangs; alcohol abuse; drug abuse?
5. What are the best ways of dialoguing with and engaging the younger generation?
6. In which ways can the chiefs, community elders and the Church collaborate in finding solution to the identified challenges?

The Aim of the Camp nehiyawé

1. The Camp – A Symbol of Unity (for Bridge building and Healing).
2. The Church and the Indigenous people (and of course, different nationalities) coming together to celebrate (the gift of) one another.
3. The Church promoting Self-Identity and sense of belonging.
4. The Church playing a part in the restoration of the Indigenous Language/culture.
5. The Church aims at restoration of confidence, friendship and trust.

The Aim of the Cree Language Study

1. Learning the Indigenous Languages will provide for the priests and administrators a better understanding of the people and their culture.
2. The Church playing a part in and encouraging the restoration of Indigenous Languages and Identity.
3. Create an opportunity for better interaction and understanding, thus, build good friendship and cordial relationship. Friendly relationship may bring about the sense of belonging and acceptance of the Gospel Message that we preach.

2019 July 11, CAMP NEHIYAWÉ

General Comments and Feedback:

Positive: there was a lot of mingling; Prayerful time; Great people leading the groups; Great presenters: herbs, dream catchers, drum making, etc.

Building friendships with people was lovely; perhaps, more opportunities will provide continuity.

The day was successful; different groups were enriching; annual camp would be great. The Children from Whitefish were grateful for the opportunity to attend and had great things to share with family and friends that did not attend.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Pipe ceremony should be celebrated in the morning.
2. Celebration of Holy Mass should conclude the day activities.
3. A shelter should be used during rainy weather to protect the Mass.
4. The Mass to include the anointing of the sick.
5. Opportunities for counselling and confessions (means of healing) be created.
6. **Elders' time; Bishop's time; Testimonies' time, should be during and around the camp fire.**

Continuity

All agreed with “The Cultural Camp is worth doing again”.

Hopefully the Muskeg Lake culture camp would be a “nursery” and perhaps it will reach out and spread to other communities.

Hopefully an open invitation to attend means more people will come next year.

SUGGESTIONS:

Method of Pastoral Outreach – Personal Contact

Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman John 4:1-42.

Before multiplying, one must first make a disciple, and that is to convert one soul. In the multiplying method, everyone is a potential contact - connecting one family/person at a time.

1. Trust in and with the church has been broken and with history, needs to be earned back through established relationships. The theme of relationship and the need to grow relationships is an absolute requirement to outreach.
2. Clerical identity, gentleness and practicality are necessary requirements for effective pastoral ministry among the Indigenous people. (**Tommy Lightfoot “I don’t preach to anyone, I do what I do and I live what I believe.” Words only go so far, it’s your actions that count more than words.**)
3. Clergy and administrators to Visit and bless homes of the Indigenous Parishioners.
4. Visit the elderly – some in social residences. While visiting the elders sometimes one gets to meet with grandchildren, children, etc. These visits have encouraged some catechesis, catechism on the reserve and in some cases sacramental prep.
5. Clergy and administrators to accept the people and appreciate them for who they are, build friendly relationship and trust. It is a ministry that, to make progress, we have to go for the people to meet them where they are. We may not make much progress if we wait for them to come to us. This is a frontier Mission.
6. Visit the “lighthouse’ – where they gather street people and poor people – meet a few people, take small steps and some begin to trust – step by step.
7. Big events with entertainment and food assist in drawing people to gatherings.
The parish Church should initiate the Gathering and collaborate with community leaders to plan and organize the desired attractive programs.
8. Pastors should encourage participation by including people and allowing them to showcase their own talents, e.g.: the drummers.
9. Need to engage the youth in some-way, we are losing them to drugs, gangs, alcohol. Many young people are in jails. How do we meet them face to face?
10. Gather at Halls, with music, food, round dance, speakers both Christian and Traditional
11. Combine rites of passage with the Sacraments e. g: naming ceremony with Baptism, woman ceremony/man ceremony with confirmation etc

12. Involve Chief and Council, RCMP, Health Clinic, Mental Health, Reserve Nurse, Food Bank, any and all support groups
13. First Saturday Holy Rosary, Mass, Pot luck lunch and fellowship should be encouraged where it is possible.
14. Family Fun day/festival with games, music, traditional events, speakers etc
15. Invite Clergy/Church leaders to community gatherings e. g: Pow Wows, Round Dances, Sun Dances, Horse Dances, Sports Days, Track and Field Days etc.
16. **CAMP NEHIYAWE** should not be centralized. It should be rotated and should include more wellness and healing activities.
17. **The Camp** should target the young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General advice: Drop your own agenda, listen to the people.

Work with the people you see, not the ones who you want to see.

1. **There should be a regular wellness activity.**
2. It is good that priests try to learn the native languages. The parts of the Mass should be included in the Native Language Study and be practiced in the Indigenous People Community masses.
3. More Pastoral Presence and attention are needed at Onion Lake and Moosomin First Nation Communities and areas. If possible, getting Female religious to reside there will create more impart.
4. Some of the diocesan programs to be held in First Nation Community facilities.
5. Pastors and deans to involve and encourage the Indigenous Peoples' participation in planning of the deanery programs.
6. Indigenous People be included in some of the diocesan planning committees.
7. In the on-going move for healing and reconciliation, there is need for the Church to acknowledge and apologies for the part played in the residential school system. Many are still hurt and need healing.
8. Priests should be assigned to minister to Sweetgrass, Red Pheasant, Mosquito, Poundmaker and Little Pine First Nation. This will complement the ministry of the deacons there.
9. Cree language training for Clergy/Church Leaders to encourage Liturgy in Indigenous language(s)
10. **More** opportunity of meetings with the First Nations Community Chiefs and councils should be created to bring to their awareness the Church's willingness to work with the Indigenous people. It is a good start towards healing and reconciliation.

Cree Liturgy: We encourage the learning and the use of Indigenous Languages in celebrating community masses. But before combining Christian Liturgy (mass) and traditional worship (rituals), there should be more extensive and widespread consultation and catechesis. Thus there is need to find the common ground (i.e. where each ritual fit in) before implementation.

New Plan of Action

Cree Liturgy: We are working on getting the Cree translation of parts of the mass. We encourage the learning and the use of Indigenous Languages in celebrating Community masses.

Indigenous Language Study

The Practice of parts of the Mass in Indigenous Language will be the next step. The English pew-parts of the mass booklet is to be translated into Indigenous Language. Dolores Sand accepted to translate the Cree version for the Diocese.

Leadership Formation: We are planning to send five persons, two priests inclusive, to Saints – Paul University Ottawa, for 5 days Indigenous Pastoral Leadership Formation Program. The Bishop will contact the persons in due time.

CAMP NEHIYAWE #2 may be held at Moosomin First Nation after pandemic. The Moosomin Chief and Council pledge their support to collaborate with the Church for the success of any useful program.

Consultation and Engagement Gatherings

The Diocesan Indigenous Ministry Team will continue the Consultation and Engagement Gatherings with Indigenous communities across the diocese after the pandemic.

NOTA BENE:

- 1. The Indigenous Ministry Team does not organise activities for parishes. It is the responsibility of the pastors and administrators to plan with the parishioners their out-reach program and activities.**
- 2. The venue of the consultative and engagement gathering with the Diocesan Team is at the discretion of the pastors and administrators of the areas.**

*Compiled by Fr Frederick Akah, MSP
For the Diocesan Indigenous Ministry Team*