

## **The Spirit of Pakitinâsowin: Reparations in the Diocese of Edmonton**

### *Introduction*

There is a great imbalance at the heart of our life together as Indigenous, Settler, and Newcomer Peoples within this land called Canada. However, if we are willing, this brokenness need not define things forever. The liberating power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, joined by the wisdom of the spirituality and ceremony of the First Peoples of this land, can help us to break free from those shackles together and to recover our bonds of kinship and right relations once again.

Many of the First Peoples of the continent of Turtle Island practice a form of spiritual ceremony which involves giving things away as a means of remembering our mutual interdependence on one another and the Creator. In the nêhiyawêwin language of the People commonly called the Cree, this practice is known as pakitinâsowin or the give-away ceremony.

With colonization and the imposition of the Indian Act, many such sharing ceremonies were banned under Canadian law. They were seen as evidence of an unsophisticated society, and their repression was a means of cutting off interrelationship with the land and other people, thereby justifying private ownership and the storing up of personal wealth. Yet while these possession-oriented ways may have allowed some to amass an excess of belongings at the expense of others, this theft did not make them rich in a true sense.

Today we see the great devastation which this distortion has wrought. It is long past time for the descendants of settlers and colonizers to be healed and freed from the impulse to claim ownership and to hoard land and abundance for their own benefit alone. We are well overdue for a return to knowing that true richness comes only when you can give away unjust gains that were never really yours at all. It is time for our church to live a season of pakitinâsowin.

### *The Will of Synod*

The 68<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Edmonton, with the assent of the 11<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Edmonton, has directed the diocesan Executive Council to create "policies and procedures" to enable a spiritual and material process of reparations as an expression of commitment by our local diocesan church to the ongoing responsibility of seeking justice and advancing healing for the wrongs committed through the Church's complicity with European

colonialism on this land. The Synod mandated that this work be completed by October of 2023.

At the direction of the Bishop and Executive Council, the Archdeacon for Decolonization and Reconciliation subsequently went to work during 2023 to articulate a comprehensive and inspirational vision for how the giving away of reparations by the churches can take place, as well as how they could serve to fund Indigenous-led community projects and healing initiatives, mentorship and leadership development opportunities, ministries, staffing, etc. As per the direction of the Resolution of Synod this plan was developed in consultation with Elders and community leaders in the Diocese of Edmonton and with partners from the wider First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities.

What follows are the structural and administrative steps which will direct the necessary resources to support this vision and its goals as Synod has mandated. Of course, like all relationships, the specifics of various roles and structures will grow and evolve over time. This description is to be understood as the foundational basis from which to work together in a good way moving forward.

### *Fund Formation*

The 2024 budget has already begun to embody a commitment to reparations by ensuring funding from the general operating budget in support of the salary and benefits of the Archdeacon for Decolonization and Reconciliation and the Lay Reader in Charge for the community of Frog Lake First Nation and the Church of the Nativity. Moving further into 2024 and beyond, these offices will be modified slightly to reflect the expanded responsibilities they and others will have with respect to what will come to be called the Standing Stones Sacred Lodge. Going forward, these two roles will be identified as:

- Misimâw/Lodge Elder – Provides spiritual and administrative leadership to the community of the Sacred Lodge and brings inspiration and direction to every aspect of its life and work
- Ayamiheweyiniw/Pastor – Carries and teaches the sacred stories and knowledge of local gathering communities and helps people find their way into the healing journey

These two leadership positions will be especially important in giving expression to the diocesan reparations initiative with respect to people and groups who walk together with and share in the ministries of the Diocese of Edmonton in a direct way.

A second step will see the Executive Council establish two internally restricted funds that will be integral to the facilitation of other elements of the reparations process. These will be called the "Sacred Lodge Fund" and the "Pakitinâsowin Fund" respectively.

The Sacred Lodge Fund can effectively be formed through the repurposing of the existing Indigenous Ministries Initiative fund. This will become the operating fund to support the Indigenous justice and reconciliation-oriented efforts and programming of the body that will be named the Standing Stones Sacred Lodge. Here too there will be a close collaborative partnership between the Lodge and the Diocese of Edmonton, but with an even greater focus on how the Lodge serves opportunities and needs in wider circles beyond the Diocese as well. At minimum, this fund will support the annual salary and benefits of a new staff position that will help to animate the efforts of the Lodge in a variety of ways, while also being mentored into greater leadership capacity in the future. This role will be defined as follows:

- Oskâpewis/Youth Apprentice – Is mentored by and assists the Lodge Elder in ensuring that the circle of the Lodge is strong and everyone has what they need to carry out their respective roles within community

Finally, a completely new restricted fund, to be known as the Pakitinâsowin Fund, will also be created by the Executive Council. This fund will hold and distribute monies that are intended to be given away as small to medium sized grants on a regular basis with different Indigenous-led organizations, community projects, and healing initiatives that are beyond the diocese and serve the wider community in both urban and rural contexts. The dispersal of these grants will be managed by the leadership circle of the Standing Stones Sacred Lodge, which will be described further below.

### *Fund Generation*

As mentioned above, the annual financial obligations to support the salaries and benefits of the leadership roles of Misimâw/Lodge Elder and Ayamiheweyiniw/Pastor are to continue as part of the ongoing operating budget of the Diocese of Edmonton. The funding of these roles is now to be understood not as just another program but rather as something essential to and of the highest priority for the future life of our community of faith on this land (i.e., they become woven entirely into the fabric of this church in this place).

The Executive Council will help to facilitate the funding of the Sacred Lodge Fund and the Pakitinâsowin Fund in the following ways:

1) Future sales of diocesan assets or the assets of disestablished parish corporations:

In the event of the disestablishment of a parish corporation according to the terms of Canon 5 of the Diocese of Edmonton, all property, both real and personal, of said corporation shall vest in the Synod of the Diocese of Edmonton. Canon 5.15 states that portions of funds generated by the sale of such properties may be designated to the Diocesan Development Fund at the discretion of the Executive Council. Pursuant to Resolution R-1c of the 68<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Edmonton, a minimum of 10% of such funds must also be designated towards reparations. In due course, Canon 5 should be amended to reflect the will of Synod in this regard. In the meantime, the Executive Council will approve the direction of such funds from the sale of any properties that have been liquidated since the conclusion of the 68<sup>th</sup> Synod and forward.

2) Reparations share:

Other material benefits regularly accrue to parishes from the lands and infrastructure which churches occupy. The original spirit and intent of the treaties envisioned that these would also be shared by the Peoples living together on the land in partnership. Pursuant to Resolution R-1a of the 68<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Edmonton, the Diocese shall invite parish corporations to consider accepting an additional "Reparations Share" on top of their annual diocesan apportionment. These amounts will be determined based on a calculation of 10% of what would be the assessed municipal taxes on church property from which churches are presently exempt. Acceptance of this additional annual opportunity to participate in reparations shall be entirely voluntary for parishes but is to be encouraged not as a new cost but rather as a new opportunity for expanded relationship and ministry in partnership with Indigenous relatives and communities. Parishes who choose to participate in this way will enjoy regular opportunities to meet with leaders of the Sacred Lodge to hear about, celebrate, and take part in the works which their contributions are helping to support.

3) Direct fundraising

Parishes will also be regularly invited to consider making one-time or recurring contributions to either the Sacred Lodge Fund or the Pakitinâsowin Fund by drawing upon unreserved funds or from reserved funds designated for mission and outreach ministry. Individuals may also make one-time or recurring donations to these

Funds, which will be eligible for tax receipts. The Diocese will develop promotional materials and fundraising initiatives to encourage such support.

In addition to these streams of primary funding, the Standing Stones Sacred Lodge will also have the freedom to generate additional funding for its programs and other initiatives through sources such as:

4) National, Provincial, Municipal and Church-funded grants

The Sacred Lodge may also wish to apply for various relevant grants to add to and enhance its programmatic work and will be encouraged and supported by the Diocese in doing so to the fullest extent possible. External grant funds are not normally to be utilized towards the funding of the Misimâw/Lodge Elder, Ayamiheweyiniw/Pastor, and Oskâpewis/Youth Apprentice positions of the Lodge.

5) Income through the activities and ministries of the Sacred Lodge

The Sacred Lodge may generate some revenue through programming, social enterprise, etc., and will also be able to draw on this for enabling further programmatic work. Such income will not normally be utilized towards funding staff roles of the Lodge.

*Fund Oversight*

Each of these funds named above will vest with the Synod of the Diocese of Edmonton, but decision-making ability and administrative oversight of both the Sacred Lodge Fund and the Pakitinâsowin Fund will belong to the Standing Stones Sacred Lodge and its leadership circle, with the Misimâw/Lodge Elder presiding. In some ways analogous to a parish corporation or a separately incorporated diocesan ministry, the Sacred Lodge is to be understood as having self-determining authority over these two funds and the staff and programming they support. However, there is an understanding that the Sacred Lodge and the Diocese are in moving in kinship relations that therefore imply reciprocal commitments to good communication and respectful collaboration in what are common efforts.

In addition to the Lodge Elder, the leadership circle of the Standing Stones Sacred Lodge will include, at minimum, one Indigenous Elder, one female Indigenous Elder or Knowledge Keeper, one Indigenous youth member, and one Indigenous community member at large. Others will be welcome to participate in the gatherings of the circle as the Sacred Lodge may wish. In addition, the Diocese will be invited to appoint one representative, to be

chosen by the Executive Council, to join in the conversations and discernment of the Lodge.

As needed, the Sacred Lodge will convene leadership circle meetings to take account of the funds that have been made available to the Sacred Lodge and Pakitinâsowin funds respectively, and to make decisions about their ongoing allocation. The Sacred Lodge will share updates with the Executive Council annually on its financial and programmatic operations for the sake of greater awareness and the mutual celebration of its good work.