

April 2016

Friends

The Sacred Journey from Christ Church, Alert Bay, to Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, has been completed. As I said when the Journey ended, we completed it because of the presence of God who gave us the strength to complete each day. We did it because of your prayers which we felt each hour we travelled. Thank you very much for those prayers and for all your support and encouragement. For the folk who travelled to walk with us - those who walked a few hundred yards and others who walked up to 60 kms, we give thanks for you because you were so encouraging. To see each of you waiting for us gave us energy and supported us in an amazing way.

I give thanks for Wayne Stewart on numerous levels, for his organization and planning, and for his management of the various folk who came to meetings to help us plan and organize this journey. Wayne looked after every aspect of the journey and walked with me from Alert Bay to Victoria. We grew in friendship as we shared stories, prayers and counsel.

Thank you to the planning and organizing group for all your wisdom, encouragement, time, and patience with me as I thought through the planning.

Jim Holland joined us in Campbell River and walked with us to Mill Bay. Jim's presence, wisdom, prayers, and encouragement added so much to the journey. It was a joy to have him with us. He was always present to every situation bringing wisdom and understanding.

I give thanks for Marcia, my wife, for her support and presence during the whole journey. She made all the meals and was ready at each step with nourishment and support. She travelled many kilometres up and down the Island supporting those who were walking and the other team members. She was creative in her menus and was always looking for ways to surprise us. Thank you Marcia for your care and support

We had 4 drivers on the journey: Jeff Nelson and John Woodruffe from Christ Church Cathedral, and Doug Bowen and Wally Eamer from St. Peter and St. Paul. The care they took in driving and ensuring the RV was waiting for us when we needed a stop helped immensely in our scheduling and planning each day's walk.

The clergy and laity who helped arrange meetings with Chiefs and Councils in the journey before the journey were outstanding. You know who you are - thank you.

The purpose of the journey for us as Anglicans on these islands was to travel through me and re-enter the land. It was based in an indigenous understanding of Spirit Quest.

What did I do on the Sacred Journey? What did I do on behalf of the Diocese? We engaged in an act of repentance. We re-entered symbolically these Islands recognizing

that we came originally as a colonial church and part of a colonial government and we repent that our forebears failed to recognize the Creator's presence working in and through the First Peoples of these Islands.

The journey took place in the context of a retreat. I spent time on retreat in prayer in Alert Bay and offered up to God my prayers on behalf of us all. We were guided by the principles of simplicity and humility. We walked for many hours in silence, prayer and meditation. As we were leaving Alert Bay on the ferry I sat with a number of elders who were from Kingcome and had been at St. Michael's Residential School. They spoke about many things as well as their experience of leaving their family at an early age. One of the elders said: " Bishop think about all the children who attended St. Mike's - from 1929 to 1975 - that's a lot of children. Bishop, every step is a child who attended that school."

As I walked I was challenged physically, emotionally, spiritually and culturally. I was both surprised and pleased by how I did physically. I am still on the journey both emotionally and spiritually and we, as a Diocese, are still very much on a journey that will change our culture.

One of the next steps for us is the reading of the Call to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with our parishes on National Aboriginal Day, June 21st, 2016, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf. The reading of this Call to Action that speaks about the United Nations Resolution on Indigenous Peoples should be done in the presence of the local Indigenous leadership. We, as a Diocese, are called to commit ourselves to all the calls to action and, at a local and diocesan level, work at their implementation with the Indigenous Peoples on these islands.

What else do we need to look at doing? I call your attention to the speech of Chief Debra Hanuse of the 'Namgis First Nation. The full speech can be seen on the diocesan website. She speaks about the journey towards reconciliation as having a number of components. These are forgiveness, intention, joint participation, and dialogue.

She says that reconciliation is not an event, or an apology, or a single act of forgiveness. Reconciliation is a long and sometimes arduous process by which we move intentionally, through dialogue, from a strained and troubled past to a new and respectful relationship.

She spoke of how reconciliation will remain shallow and meaningless if not addressed and if the transformation of our society for the betterment of all Canadians is not achieved.

I invite you to continue this Sacred Journey as you work with the First Peoples in your community in the following ways:

- in the revitalization of their language and culture,
- in closing the economic gap that exists between First Nations and Canadians,

- in the implementation of the 94 Calls to Action from the TRC, and
- in a recognition of rights to their land and resources.

I am asking this synod to send greeting to the chiefs and councils of all the communities on Vancouver Island, surrounding gulf islands and the community of Kingdom. I would like us to affirm our commitment to journey with them towards reconciliation.

I have said that I am still working through what the journey means to me and what it means to us as a Diocese. We must live as a church being decolonized. What does it mean for us to have re-entered this land? It means we live not as colonizers, but as kin, as relatives, as sisters and brothers, equal in the eyes of the Creator. It means we recognize the presence of the Creator in the land, sea and sky before we arrived in these islands. It means we recognize and honour the Creator's presence in the First Peoples of these islands, in their culture, language, teachings and customs.

In the end, as we walk our Sacred Journey a new rhythm will appear in our hearts: a drum beat that will slowly move us to step out and into the circle of life, to be closer to our sisters and brothers, to pass beneath our ancestors in the land of spirits until we see the vision God has intended for us and learn our new name as God's people.

—Adapted from Steven Charleston's *The Four Vision Quests of Jesus*

On the walk there were times that I thought: I do not want this to end. I very much enjoyed being out in creation although the thought of returning to the office was always present. On many occasions I stopped to soak in the beauty of the Islands. Regrettably there were many parts of the Island I did not make it to. The trip to Holy Trinity, N. Saanich, was my attempt to get as close as possible to the southern Gulf Islands. It was a beautiful day when I walked out on Panorama Ridge in Saanich and the Gulf Islands lay out before us. I was tempted to stop and just enjoy that vista, however, these words from Nelson Mandela reminds us that our journey is not over.

"I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter. I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended." Nelson Mandela

We dare not linger, for our long walk has not ended.

Walk gently with one another, walk gently on this land, and walk gently with the Creator.