

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-D019
Title: Acknowledgment of Indigenous Lands
Proposer: The Rev. Simeon Lewis Powell
Topic: Native Americans and Ministry

Directly Related: (Attached)

2015-C053 Support Subsistence Rights of Indigenous Cultures
2012-A131 Express Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples
2012-A132 Protect Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Sites
2009-A152 Request Study of Burial Sites of Indigenous Peoples
2009-A153 Request Advocacy for Federal Tribal Recognition
2009-D035 Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

2012-A086 Address Community Development Opportunities in Native Communities
2012-A133 Fund Theological Training for Indigenous Peoples
2012-C004 Recommit to Indigenous Peoples' Ministry
2009-B022 Endorse the Return of Tribal Artifacts
1997-D051 Increase Funding to Dioceses Ministering to Native Americans
1997-D053 Oppose Commercial Exploitation of Native American Symbols

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2018, selecting "direct" resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The "direct" resolutions are attached and "indirect" resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#) or call 800-525-9329.

D019 - Acknowledgement of Indigenous Lands

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: The Rev. Simeon Lewis Powell

Endorsed by: The Rev. John Floberg, The Rev. Rachel Taber-Hamilton

Requests New Interim Body: No

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Has Budget Implications: Yes

Cost: \$100,000.00

HiA: HD

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 04 - Governance & Structure

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring,

That the 80th General Convention shall promote the acknowledgement of Indigenous Lands at all gatherings within the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (TEC) and its affiliate organizations; and be it further

Resolved, that the Standing Committee on Programs, Budgets, and Finance allocate an additional amount up to \$50,000 per year to fund the implementation of this resolution under the guidance of the Indigenous Ministries Office to conduct research, to provide training, and to assist dioceses and churches in their efforts to identify and acknowledge Indigenous lands in their local areas.

Explanation

General Convention Resolution 2012-A131 stated;

***Resolved*, That the 77th General Convention expresses its solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples of the world and supports the rights of Indigenous Peoples to live in and retain their traditional lands and territories, to maintain their languages and enrich their cultures, and to ensure that their traditions are strengthened and passed on for generations to come.**

The purpose of this resolution is to expand on the work that was started in 2012-A131. It moves the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (TEC) from walking aside Indigenous Peoples of the Land to recognizing the lands on which we worship, work, and live as lands that do not belong to us but only serve as our temporary residences. It moves us closer to the Way of Love. The Way of Love sets us on a path to Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, and Rest. All of these are foundational to our lives as followers of the Living Christ.

The acknowledgement of the lands on which we worship, pray, work, and live our lives helps us to appreciate that we have relationships that have not been fully understood or acknowledged. We proclaim that our church "Welcomes All", yet at the same time, we do not acknowledge that the lands on which we conduct our lives are not our ancestral lands. The ancestors of the land are among the "Great Cloud of Witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1). This resolution serves to acknowledge those witnesses as we move toward a more Beloved Community as the Body of Christ.



Resolution Number: 2015-C053
Title: Support Subsistence Rights of Indigenous Cultures
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church urge the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society to study and theologically interpret the social justice issues facing Alaska Native and Native American subsistence hunters and gatherers, and to recommend policies and strategies to support subsistence rights and access to traditional native food sources to the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church; and be it further
Resolved, That this work give attention to the consequences for subsistence cultures of climate change, and policy decisions or proposals that have affected, or may affect the future migration patterns, population, and health of wild fish and game—the native and traditional food source of subsistence cultures; and be it further
Resolved, That the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society engage this work in direct consultation with elders, indigenous subsistence hunters and the bishops of the native and indigenous communities they represent; and be it further
Resolved, That the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society engage the ministry of the Episcopal Public Policy Network to advocate for public policies that address the sustainable subsistence rights of indigenous cultures.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 406-407.



Resolution Number: 2012-A131
Title: Express Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention expresses its solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples of the world and supports the rights of Indigenous Peoples to live in and retain their traditional lands and territories, to maintain their languages and enrich their cultures, and to ensure that their traditions are strengthened and passed on for generations to come; and be it further

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention ask the Presiding Bishop and other representatives of The Episcopal Church to make protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples a priority in joint work with other Provinces of the Anglican Communion, in ecumenical work with other Christian denominations, and in interfaith work with other faith communities; and be it further

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention reaffirm the 76th General Convention's repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery, a misguided, unfair, and harmful legal doctrine which the Church helped promote in earlier centuries, a legal doctrine which has been used in English, Continental, and American law to justify the unfair treatment and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples; and be it further

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention urges the United States government and governments in other countries in which the Episcopal Church has dioceses to review their laws and policies, in consultation with Indigenous Peoples, and to identify and correct those which treat Indigenous Peoples unfairly or which, although neutral in content, result in invidious discrimination against Indigenous Peoples; and be it further

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention direct the Office of Government Relations, in consultation with Indigenous Peoples, to make protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples a high priority in its advocacy about United States foreign policy, including advocacy about trade agreements, human rights advocacy, and international environmental protection; and be it further

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention calls on congregations, institutions, dioceses, and corporate offices of The Episcopal Church, with the aid of resources such as "Exposing the Doctrine of Discovery," to reflect upon their history and to encourage them to support Indigenous Peoples in their ongoing efforts to exercise their inherent sovereignty and fundamental human rights, to continue to raise awareness about the issues facing Indigenous Peoples, and to develop advocacy campaigns to support the rights, aspirations, and needs of Indigenous Peoples; and be it further

Resolved, That in consultation with Indigenous Peoples within their dioceses or Provinces that congregations and dioceses be urged to take tangible steps to help Indigenous Peoples, including:

- *Action to preserve Indigenous Peoples' language, history and culture, such as by supporting appropriate linguistic, historic, Bible (and authorized liturgical resources) translation work for language groups into which the Bible and authorized liturgical resources have not yet been fully translated,*

- Action to obtain fairer and better treatment of Indigenous Peoples, such as seeking the repeal of unfair laws and policies,
- Formation of partnerships with congregations whose members consist primarily of Indigenous Peoples; and be it further

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention calls on congregations, institutions, dioceses, and corporate offices of The Episcopal Church to support continued use and development of theological reflections by Indigenous Peoples, with guidance from the Office of Indigenous Ministries, Indigenous Theological Training Institute, local Schools for Ministry and seminaries, which promote Indigenous visions of full, good, and abundant life and which strengthen their own spiritual and theological reflections.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 2012* (New York: General Convention, 2012), pp. 149-150.



Resolution Number: 2012-A132
Title: Protect Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Sites
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention out of respect for the unique cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples, and as a step toward repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, calls upon congregations, institutions, dioceses and the corporate offices of The Episcopal Church, particularly in handling church property, expansion and investment, to help protect the sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples, and to encourage compliance in their communities with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, 25 U.S.C. § 3001; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chancellor to the Presiding Bishop be asked to establish a task force, working with volunteers from diocesan chancellors and other attorneys who are Episcopalians, and in consultation with affected Indigenous Peoples, to develop practical written guidance for dioceses and churches, particularly for wardens and others responsible for church properties, construction, and investment.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 2012* (New York: General Convention, 2012), pp. 225-226.



Resolution Number: 2009-A152

Title: Request Study of Burial Sites of Indigenous Peoples

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the Executive Council Committee on Indigenous Ministries to study and assess the preservation of burial sites and other sacred places of Indigenous Peoples in the countries that comprise The Episcopal Church and to report its findings to the Executive Council and the 77th General Convention.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), p. 178.



Resolution Number: 2009-A153
Title: Request Advocacy for Federal Tribal Recognition
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention request The Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations in Washington D.C. and the bishops and Episcopalians of the Dioceses of Virginia, Southwest Virginia and Southern Virginia to call upon their elected officials in support of the federal tribal recognition of the Upper Mattaponi Tribe, the Monacan Indian Nation, the Chickahominy Tribe, the Eastern Chickahominy Tribe, the Rappahannock Tribe and the Nansemond Tribe of Virginia; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention request The Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations and the bishops and Episcopalians of the dioceses of Louisiana, Western Louisiana, Georgia, Atlanta, Hawaii, Fond du Lac, and the six dioceses in the State of New York, to advocate in their respective spheres of influence for the federal tribal recognition of the United Houma Nation of Louisiana, the Shinnecock Tribal Nation of New York, the Southeastern Cherokee Council Inc. of Georgia, the Native Hawaiian Nation and the Brothertown Nation of Wisconsin.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), p. 357.



Resolution Number: 2009-D035
Title: Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention repudiates and renounces the Doctrine of Discovery as fundamentally opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our understanding of the inherent rights that individuals and peoples have received from God, and that this declaration be proclaimed among our churches and shared with the United Nations and all the nations and peoples located within The Episcopal Church's boundaries. This doctrine, which originated with Henry VII in 1496, 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; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church review its policies and programs with a view to exposing the historical reality and impact of the Doctrine of Discovery and eliminating its presence in its contemporary policies, program and structures and, further, that this body directs the appropriate representatives of the House of Bishops and House of Deputies, to inform all relevant governmental bodies in the United States of its action and suggest similar and equivalent review of historical and contemporary policies that contribute to the continuing colonization of Indigenous Peoples and, further, to write to Queen Elizabeth II, the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, requesting that her Majesty disavow, and repudiate publicly, the claimed validity of the Christian Doctrine of Discovery; and be it further

Resolved, That each diocese within The Episcopal Church be encouraged to reflect upon its own history, in light of these actions and encourage all Episcopalians to seek a greater understanding of the Indigenous Peoples within the geo-political boundaries claimed by the United States and other nation states located within The Episcopal Church's boundaries, and to support those peoples in their ongoing efforts for their inherent sovereignty and fundamental human rights as peoples to be respected; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the Office of Government Relations to advocate for the U.S. government's endorsement of the "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," which the United States has refused to endorse (only the U.S., Canada, New Zealand and Australia have failed to sign on).

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), pp. 371-372.