

An Indigenous Theology of Place and Land

Mark MacDonald is the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop for Canada. He is a First Nations person from the Wyandot tribe who also identifies with the Navaho people, with that area, and their spirituality. This conversation with Alan Roxburgh contrasts the indigenous understanding of the significance of land with the emphasis on contract, ownership and resource in western culture. The full 45 minute video is available [here](#). In this clip Mark explains that the indigenous word for land, 'akee' describes something more akin to 'ecosystem', *all* the relationships which create and sustain life in a place. He quotes John 3.16: 'For God so loved the land...'. The land is lovely, holy and pleasing to God. The term used for a male elder means 'caretaker of the land'. For First Nations People the significance of life, age and maturity is a growing moral and spiritual relationship to the land.

In the second clip from this conversation, Alan Roxburgh and Mark MacDonald begin to discuss the collision which has occurred between the First Nations people and dominant western culture. Mark comments that 'it would be difficult to overstate the impact of western notions of land and land ownership with Indigenous people' They have experienced the consequences of centuries of policy attempts to alienate them from land and minimise the importance of land for First Nations people. This has led to an experience of loss which has diminished indigenous people in their capacity to care for land and community life. Negotiations have been conducted 'nation to nation', but this way of thinking contains western assumptions about land and ownership which do not speak to First Nations' understanding of land and personhood and cannot understand the significance of their experience of dispossession.