

Muted interest in coronation hints at relationship reset



Corey Larocque

While Indigenous leaders talked to King Charles III about their relationship with the Crown ahead of the coronation on May 6, enthusiasm about the new monarch has been muted in the North.

Gov. Gen. Mary Simon — the first Indigenous person to

serve as the King's representative in Canada — organized a meeting May 4 for Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami president Natan Obed, Assembly of First Nations national Chief RoseAnne Archibald and Métis National Council president Cassidy Caron to meet the King in London.

Simon wanted Charles' coronation to be an opportunity to reset the relationship between the Crown and Indigenous Peoples because it's a key part of reconciliation.

But few Inuit leaders showed any interest in talking this week about Simon's idea.

That lack of interest, along with an apathy about the coronation, might speak volumes about the kind of relationship Inuit want.

The relationship worked miserably for Indigenous Peoples for decades. And it might have already reset itself after Queen Elizabeth died last September.

Nunatsiaq News tried to ask Inuit leaders what they thought of Simon's idea.

Only one replied — Nunavut MP Lori Idlout, who offered a two-sentence written statement agreeing the coronation "is an opportunity to reset the relationship."

The monarchy should respect Indigenous People's self-determination and inherent rights and the relationship must guide the federal government's work on reconciliation, Idlout wrote.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami issued a joint statement along with the AFN and Métis council, following the meeting on May 4.

It included pleasantries about welcoming the new King to their homelands at the earliest opportunity.

ITK's portion offered bromides about the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee and an interest in talking about bringing back Inuit cultural items from British museums.

Leading up to the coronation, Obed was not available to talk to Nunatsiaq News about meeting the King or what a renewed relationship should look like.

Nunavut Premier P.J. Akeeagok, who spent the week chumming around Ottawa with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, also did not respond to questions about the relationship with the Crown.

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. and Makivvik Corp. also didn't respond to requests to react to Simon's idea.

Across Nunavut, there wasn't much official recognition of the coronation at all. A federal government website described national events taking place in Ottawa, adding that territorial commissioners and provincial lieutenant governors might invite Canadians to take part in events in their communities.

But there was no sign Commissioner Eva Aariak had rolled out the red carpet to Nunavummiut to any coronation weekend celebrations.

The muted response to the coronation is unfortunate because Simon is right. Now is the ideal time to redefine what Indigenous Peoples want in their relationship with the Crown.

King Charles embodies the power of Canada as a nation. The coronation marks the starting point of a new reign, an opportunity to do things differently.

The reluctance to even talk about it is a missed opportunity for the kind of Crown-Indigenous relationship that will emerge during the reign of Charles III.

NEWS WORLD

Meeting King 'more than symbolic': Indigenous leaders

Governor General, national Indigenous leaders discuss reconciliation with King Charles before coronation

Madalyn Howitt

Indigenous leaders who spoke with King Charles ahead of his coronation say the meeting was a "meaningful" start to a new relationship with the Crown.

Gov. Gen. Mary Simon; Natan Obed, president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami; RoseAnne Archibald, national Chief of the Assembly of First Nations; and Cassidy Caron, president of the Métis National Council met with Charles on May 4 at Buckingham Palace.

In a statement, Simon said the meeting was the first of its kind between

Indigenous groups and a Canadian monarch and a historic day "for Indigenous Peoples, for Canada, and for our relationship with the Crown."

"I have great hope for an improved Crown-Indigenous relationship in the coming years," Simon said.

"The King understands the importance of walking the path of reconciliation with Canada and Indigenous Peoples."

The three national Indigenous leaders issued a joint statement as well, saying the group discussed climate change, housing, Indigenous en-

trepreneurship, cultural preservation, and moving forward on issues related to reconciliation.

Obed spoke about the work of the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee as an example of the Crown's influence on reconciliation in Canada, and the interest of Inuit leaders in furthering discussions to repatriate items of cultural importance from British museums.

All leaders recognized the positive nature of the discussion and felt that the meeting was more than symbolic but was in fact a sincerely meaningful meeting and the start of a new relationship with this new Monarch," said the statement.

"Discussions like these are vital. They will start slowly, and grow, forming the pillars of a renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples that is based on respect and understanding," Simon said.

"While we know words are important, it is through our actions that we can make the most difference. I will continue to encourage all Canadians, as well as the Crown, to take action on reconciliation."

The meeting was the only audience Canadians were granted with Charles before the coronation.

In her own statement, Nunavut MP Lori Idlout called the coronation an opportunity to "reset the relationship" between the

monarchy and First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

"The monarchy can advance reconciliation by respecting Indigenous

peoples' self-determination and inherent rights,

and that relationship must inform the federal government's work on reconcili-

ation in Canada," she said.

The coronation of King Charles took place May 6 at Westminster Abbey in London.



Governor General Mary Simon, centre, led a delegation of Canadian Indigenous leaders to meet with King Charles on May 4 prior to his coronation on May 6. From left are RoseAnne Archibald, national Chief of the Assembly of First Nations; King Charles; Simon; Cassidy Caron, president of the Métis National Council; and Natan Obed, president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. (Photo courtesy of Governor General/Twitter)

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