

Serving With First Nations To Reach All Nations



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By Dave & Diane Norman

PUT FIVE FIRST NATIONS ELDERS TOGETHER with 70 middle school students and what do you get? A dynamic learning experience complete with traditional regalia, story telling, dancing, and freshly made frybread, smoked fish, and dried berries.

Tacoma Baptist School history teacher, Mr. Maki, set up three teaching sessions with NAIM staff, Dave and Diane Norman, to instruct the children about First Nations culture, spiritual beliefs, missions history, and our on-going responsibility. In the first session,

the Normans shared about their call to ministry and what that ministry looks like in the Tacoma, Washington area. The second session they taught the 7th and 8th graders a friendship dance and covered differences between the two cultures.

On March 8, five elders joined the Normans to share their stories of how the arrival of white European settlers negatively impacted their ancestors' lives, resulting in generational trauma that continues to this day.

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“Healing” continued

■ **Jeri Nordstrom (Tlingit)** shared how she was taken from her home in Alaska as an eight year old. By the age of twelve she was a heroin addict on the streets of Seattle. Cold, hungry and alone, she wandered into an old theater where Billy Graham was holding an evangelistic meeting. Climbing to the highest and farthest seat from the speaker she settled down to get warm. She doesn’t remember the sermon, but she remembers running down all those stairs and committing her life to Jesus. The next 50 years were not easy years, but Creator kept her in the palm of His hands and today she uses her culture to share the healing power of Jesus.

■ **Twobears Lees (Onandaga)** shared how difficult it was to grow up as a ‘half breed.’ He was not accepted in either the white or the Native culture. He attended a mission school where he was beaten and treated unfairly. He hated the white man’s God. He went on to serve in Viet Nam and came home to more alienation from the American people. Plus, now he



Above: Jeri performs a Native cultural dance for the students. Top right: Twobears shares a laugh with a student. Bottom right: Ieeta talks with a 7th grader.

faced life with PTSD (post traumatic stress syndrome). After many years in a difficult and finally failed marriage, he has found happiness with Ieeta, his childhood sweetheart. Together they lead traditional Healing Circles. He says he would probably be dead were it not for his relationship and the acceptance he found from his friend, David.

■ **Ieeta Lees (Wasco/Nisqually)** grew up in Oregon on the Warm Springs reservation. She was sold as a young woman to an older man for a bottle of whiskey. She lived with this violent, abusive, and alcoholic husband for years, but in spite of that she never drank herself. She worked her way through school and raised her children, eventually becoming a judge. She gives credit to her grandmother who taught her to love Jesus.

■ **Billy Conway (Blackfeet)** has 21 older brothers and

sisters. He was taken from his home at age two. By the age of five he had been in eight foster homes. “Nobody wanted a dumb Indian who couldn’t speak English.” Finally he went to a Christian orphanage. They tried to convert him, even baptizing him in a bathtub at age nine. He thought they were trying to drown him. It was a horrible experience. He, too, served in Viet Nam and had several failed marriages. Finally through *Bikers for Christ* he was exposed to true Christianity. Through Billy’s witness, his present wife became a Christian too. It has been a long journey for Billy, but healing has begun.

■ **Rece Cheschilly (Navajo)** was left on a doorstep after she was born. For 53 years she searched for love, but never found it. After several foster homes she landed with a Mormon family. They were good to her, but she still didn’t fit. At a very young age she began drinking and that led to years and years of alcoholism, living on the streets, and deep pain. She attempted suicide and the limb broke. She tried again



and the rope broke. She felt so hopeless. Finally she heard about a church where she could get some clean clothes and a shower. She came out with a clean soul. That was June of 2008. Two and a half years later she has shared her testimony of Jesus’ saving love and healing power around the world. She has been to Africa, Philippines, Mexico, New Zealand ... and she’s still going.

All five Native elders kept the students glued to

their seats with attention riveted on them for over one and a half hours. (Normal attention span for this age is 20 minutes!) Incredible questions followed the stories. And then we all got to mingle, while sampling traditional Native foods.

Thank you, elders, for opening your hearts to these students. Thank you for making them aware of the tremendous damage that has been done to First Nations people. And thank you for pointing them to Jesus, the ultimate “Healer and Restorer of Relationships.”

The TBS middle school students have committed to a service project. From now until the end of the school year they will be collecting back packs, school supplies, and gently used (or new) clothing for the students of the Flathead reservation in Montana. They will be delivered along with a photograph of themselves with the Tacoma Native elders. ■



Sharing Life: That's It!

By Ron & Jennifer Wilson



The day had arrived! It was early on Saturday morning, still cool before the sun warmed the city. Vancouver was just beginning to come

alive. Twenty-five Native Elders were gathering at the Aboriginal Native Centre. The atmosphere was quiet as coffee and tea were served and nods of greeting were passed to each other.



WE WERE ALL ANTICIPATING THE TRIP via chartered coach to the annual BC Elders Gathering. Métis, Cree, Coastal people and a couple of Caucasians mingled together. There was an underlying restlessness with the anticipation of traveling far from familiar territory. One of the men stood with his drum in hand. He encouraged each person to pray as he sang in his

Below: Bob and Liz Garcia, respected elders in Merritt, join others at The Gathering.



Coastal language. The melody was familiar and we hummed along ... What were the English words? ... Oh, yes ... “Be Still and Know That I Am God.” Our hearts filled with peace and joy. This journey was completely in God’s hands.

After 15 years in Alaskan villages, we were living among the people of a BC coastal reserve for a year or two when we made a discovery. We were hoping for friendships and opportunities to share life. We were meeting youth and their parents...and we were meeting elders. We noticed that in several homes a grandchild would be living with a grandparent for several months or even more than a year. The influence of the elders was both apparent and significant.

With the Holy Spirit as our Guide, an intentional decision was made to spend more time with elders – those who had great influence among all members of the community. As trusting relationships developed and as God’s love was shared, elders became increasingly confident in their community role. The elders themselves began conversations with community members.

Now living in Vancouver, we casually connect in the neighborhood where we live. Some contacts are unexpected and others are intentional. Funerals, other community gatherings, celebrations ... whatever brings people together creates our day-to-day. And there are the times when we join a group traveling to other communities. These “sharing life” experiences often deepen friendships, and allow us opportunities

to share the love, grace, and power of Jesus Christ.

At the weekly Elders’ lunch we join close to 100 other Native Elders. Ever since coming to the city almost 11 years ago we have been spending Wednesdays around tables at the Aboriginal Center meeting new people, enjoying lunch, listening to individual life stories and just being present. As people have gotten to know us opportunities arise to pray, share our life with Jesus and extend compassion. Defining our roles is left up to the group – we have no agenda except to share our life with Jesus, through deeds and words, among those we meet.

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From the Field

By Terry and Pat Hall

HI! WE ARE TERRY AND PAT, and we have been walking with the Lord since February 1971. A couple of years ago we celebrated our 40th anniversary, and at that time we were seeking the Lord for direction. We have laughed and said that we have done our wandering in the wilderness for the past 40 years—now maybe it's time to go into the promised land—our home, Bella Coola!

For a few years, we felt some unrest and began seeking the Lord as to what we should do. As we prayed, the B.C. regions of Bella Coola and Prince George came to mind; each place holds family for us, and these smaller areas would also put us in contact with a lot of native people. While we had been feeling led to Bella Coola for a long time, and even did a prayer walk to confirm this, it seemed that the timing wasn't right.

Our son, Jason, applied to the RCMP a couple years ago, but after a short time, he and his family realized that the RCMP was not the place that God wanted them. These were his words: "Dad, I always thought that I would like to work alongside you, you as the pastor and I as the youth pastor." So they moved back to Bella Coola, and we continued to pray for direction, both feeling certain that that was where we should be.

All the years of coming back to Bella Coola, our people have been asking, "When are you going to come home?" So we are back home so to speak, and raring to go. Terry's medical operation has slowed us down some but we are presently drawing up house plans to build our home in Bella Coola. In this building project, we see an opportunity to connect with the community.

"Sharing Life" continued

Like any community, there are those who are resistant to heart changes, those who are moving toward Jesus step-by-step and those who are enjoying the blessing of God's love. As we listen to the hearts of our friends, we respond with comfort, challenge and hope in the great love God has for us. We see God change outlooks and lives and we see the results of resistance. Yes, we share our love and God's love, but often we feel like we receive so much more than we give through the love and acceptance this community is giving to us!

That's it! This is our life. Stepping into community, serving, friendship, smiles, openness ... we pray that it all leads to God's plan for those we meet—eternal life in Jesus! ■

Right: Native elders form strong communities, even in the inner city.



Jason has been a youth drug and alcohol counselor for the past decade, so in a way we already have our foot in the door. Right now he is working with the youth to take them to a Bible Youth Camp that our friends put on. At first, 49 youth signed up, but now that number is down to 25. To encourage them away from drinking and partying, Jason gets them to fundraise for the camp, but if they do not participate, they cannot go.

We are seeing that many people here are falling between the cracks and getting lost.

Our focus is evangelism and discipleship in order to change the eternal destiny of our family and others. Evangelism is happening right now in Bella Coola through Jason, and discipleship is to follow. During our prayer walk several years ago, we came across a verse declaring that people from afar said God is in this little place. Our ultimate goal is to impact the world for Jesus from this place. May God grant wisdom, discernment and good judgement, and may He do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think. May He enlarge our territory so that many will be blessed and be a blessing to many, to advance the kingdom of God to the glory of God. ■



From the Talking Circle



By Clyde Cowan
Executive Director

EVELYN* IS AN ELDER.

At age 71, this Native woman made a missions trip to Mexico with two van loads of Native youth.

Evelyn started the trip in despair. She had lost her husband within the last year, the second husband she had buried. She'd weathered a painful crisis among her children, and told me that she was on the verge of giving up her faith. Christ's promises held her, but she did not see them true in her life. A Christian counselor told her to go to Mexico and hug orphan children.

I remember Evelyn as a younger woman, when her Micmac husband struggled through the pangs of new birth in Christ. As I visited in their home one evening, a scripture we read convicted him of something wrong in his life. He said, "Get out of my house."

Later that year, on New Year's Eve he came to our door and extended his hand. "Among Micmacs," he said, "we have a custom to not let bad feelings between people carry into a New Year." He became a strong follower of Christ. He was

a good guitar player and when we moved away from the Reserve, he played my favorite guitar tune for me at the farewell dinner. Evelyn lost this man last year.

In Mexico, Evelyn worked with children in the orphanage. All of her young co-workers loved her. When they visited labor camps comprised of Native Mexican indigenous peoples, they would take a plastic chair along for her to sit. The local Native women would gather around her. They could not speak each other's language. They simply wanted to touch Evelyn, an elder sister from another tribe. One of the young people said it was as if Evelyn had a glow about her.

At the last chapel service, Evelyn told everyone that this experience had renewed her faith in Christ. She wants to organize another trip to bring her home community and extended family.

Elders do things like that. They pass on the values young people might forget.

This NAIMNews issue looks at how Native Christian elders are speaking into the lives of their families and communities. These men and women have earned the respect, trust, and right to do so. Young people are listening, and hearing the greatest words ever passed on from generation to generation—those of our Risen Lord, Jesus Christ. ■

* Name has been changed to protect identity.

NAIMNEWS PROFILE

Lummi Elder, Mary Helen Cagey

"I LAY MY CHILDREN at the foot of the cross," says Lummi elder, Mary Helen Cagey. In the five generations of her family, she has 198 descendents, including 11 children. Her passion is for them to know and follow Jesus. Prayer for her family and community is a key component of her life. Her daughter Theresa says, "I thank God every day for her prayers and teachings because they've made such a difference in my life."

Mary Helen was born on the Lummi Reservation in Northwest Washington, and except for a few brief periods, has lived there her entire life. In Native communities, respect comes with a long life well lived. Her 93 years have provided a wealth of knowledge and wisdom, causing her to frequently be sought for advice.

Quick to give the Lord credit, Mary Helen witnesses to what He has done in her life. She speaks out at community gatherings, encouraging people to follow Jesus. She boldly declares that while the cultural ways are important, Jesus is the only way to Heaven.



Mary Helen Cagey with the Lummi logo that she designed.

Out of Mary Helen's desire for her great grandchildren to know Jesus, she asked Tom and June Cox (NAIM) to direct a camp. The 7th annual Jesus Quest Bible Camp is being planned for August. Children throughout Lummi and their families are invited, as Mary Helen wants everyone to believe.

This winter Mary Helen became very sick and felt pulled to the other side. She asked for prayer and God healed her. Thankfully, God still has work for her here. ■



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Summer Ministry Initiative (SMI)

Applications are coming in for SMI 2011—NAIM’s summer ministry experience. Spots are still open for anyone seeking to dive into ministry alongside First Nations people. You will form life-changing friendships with those you meet; sharing Jesus’ love as you live life with one another.

This year, teams will be placed in Native communities in Northern Saskatchewan. Dates for the 7-week team are June 27 to August 12. The 3-week team dates are June 27 to July 19. For more info and an application, please contact us: www.naim.ca/fnp or smi@naim.ca.

Talking Circle Note cards

NAIM is once again offering “Talking Circle” note cards. These high-quality blank note cards are great for personal use, as a reminder of your support of NAIM. There are 10 cards in a pack, at the

price of \$8.00 US/CDN (shipping included).

Please contact NAIM at office@naim.ca, or 604.850.3052 to purchase the cards.



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Hands for the Harvest

By Don DeHart, First Nations Partnership

“Jesus’ final marching orders to His followers are recorded in all four gospels and in Acts. Simple obedience and His promised return must be our motivation now, as then.”

These prophetic words still echo from a recent gathering of First Nations leaders from across North America calling for discipleship as a vital part of the Great Commission.

“Native people have the potential to be the world’s most powerful missionaries since the early apostles because of who we are through our history and stories.”

“God has given us so much. We thank our white brothers and sisters for bringing Jesus to us. But now it is time for us to rise up as Native Christians and join the harvest among our own people and around the world.”

These words spoken by First Nations leaders fuel NAIM’s passion to help mobilize Native workers into the fields Jesus left us until His return.

In early April, NAIM launched two Great Commission Summits in Vancouver, BC and Regina, SK. Navajo guest speakers, Herman and Cynthia Nells, and Daniel and Coreen Esplin traveled up from New Mexico to passionately share their life stories, God’s heart for the lost as seen in the Old and New Testaments, and Jesus’ commissioning of all believers to share His Good News to the nations. These weekends were powerful.

Our God is working among Native people in ways never before seen. This year, we have received over 20 inquires and two Native believers have applied to become NAIM staff. Together, let’s obey His command and keep on asking Jesus to send more workers and provide the needed funds to enter the ministry fields. ■