

Ministry Update

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Hello, dear friends. This newsletter is a little different. It's actually an article I wrote for the NAIM publication, NAIMNews. It's not published yet so I'll include it with my next newsletter in 2026.

Thank you for your continued support as I work here.

Much love,

Kathryn

A day (or days) in the life...

We watched as our dear girl lay still, machines keeping her alive beeping and whirring in the background. We were in the intensive care unit at the Campbell River Hospital. I was sitting with my granddaughter (from my First Nations family), who was in an induced coma. Eight years ago, she used to work with me in my catering company until she left to have her baby. The last gig she worked was New Year's Eve. I remember how beautiful she was that night. She was obviously very pregnant and radiant. She treated the clients and their guests with kindness and respect, exuding her joy to everyone.

I saw her a couple more times after she gave birth and then it was like she dropped off the face of the earth. I learned that she was drinking hard. She would end up at the brink of death and be hospitalized in ICU. When she was barely able to walk again, she would discharge herself and go back to drinking. This happened often. Her beautiful daughter was taken away from her and placed in a foster home.

She never wanted anyone to know she was in hospital, but one time I found out so I visited her. She was NOT happy to see me. She had a breathing tube in so couldn't talk. I was trying to interpret the look in her eyes. Shame? Fear? Pain? Disdain? Apathy? The next day I went back to visit but she refused to see me.

Fast forward two years. Nine months ago, she asked for help; her aunties met with her, got her into the hospital, and then treatment. And she got clean! Then six months ago she became sick and when her auntie caught up with her, took her to the hospital. The doctor said that she had about three to six months to live. Her liver was so damaged that it couldn't and wouldn't recover.



Last week, she ended up in ICU for the last time. As I sat with her and her auntie, there were long silences.

Eventually her auntie asked me to pray. Afterward, another long period of silence. Then her auntie started recounting all the people in our family who have died from drinking and drugging: one after another she named them. As we talked, it occurred to me that this was normal conversation here. Tragic death happens so often that it's simply a matter of discourse. Don't get me wrong. It may be normal, but it isn't easy; the waters of layered grief run deep.

A few days later, the doctor said it was time to take our girl off life support. Her liver was gone and would never recover.

Thirty-six hours before she died, we lost another one to a toxic drug overdose. The deaths of these two, both in their early thirties, have devastated our family. It's simply unbearable. Next week there will be a funeral for our dear young man on Monday and one for our girl on Tuesday. How is this normal?

What Does This Have to Do with Being a Part Time Missionary?

Building rapport in the First Nations community takes time and effort. Always. It's face-to-face time, listening, and being willing to wait out long silences to hear what is going on underneath everything. That is the trust piece. If time is not put in, the relationships grow weak and wither...there is no listening and no silences to sit through.

Working full-time with NAIM a "traditional missionary", I had unlimited availability to be a part of the community rhythm. I could spontaneously join in, and spontaneity is a hallmark of living here. As a part-timer, I don't have flexibility to join in. I can't schedule a meeting with someone when I do have time and hope that they'll share their heart with me—well I can and I do, but either no one shows up or they are not interested in getting together.

So why am I here? To share the love of Christ. To love others as Jesus loves me. How do I share Jesus' love? Time together...visiting, hospital visits, crafts, praying; in other words, being available. But more times than not, I'm not available because of my limited availability. But despite the awkward reality, I believe that God is still at work. I pray and sit with people when I can. Thank our Lord that it isn't up to me to make this work!



Barney Williams Jr.

Klith-was-taa (Dr. Barney Williams Jr), is a hereditary leader from the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation of the Nuw-chah-nulth Nation. He is renowned for his expertise in Indigenous healing and counselling. From 2008 to 2015, Barney played a vital role as a member of the Survivor's Committee for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Kathryn and Barney have known each other since 1988 and are connected through family.

"Kathryn's energy and personality draw people to her. You can feel this without speaking. She made it easier for our people to connect, who historically have had a difficult time in a lot of our communities with any kind of religion because of residential school and how it impacted us. When people come to our communities, relationships sometimes take a long time, and sometimes they don't happen. Kathryn made herself known in the community and was welcomed

because she didn't push what she was doing like some people do. People have come in and told us what we are doing is wrong and we've heard that for years. She was pretty incredible and still is.

She has a lot of friends and was adopted into the Nicolaye family which is really big in our culture. I see Kathryn pretty regularly...at different functions and we've had a lot of funerals again...three back-to-back...two of them family members Kathryn belongs to. We had 11 overdoses in Campbell River last month alone (over half of those First Nations)."

Michele

Kathryn's long-time friend Michele and her family travelled to Campbell River to attend the memorial potlatch for Kathryn's late brother-in-law and hereditary Chief, Earl Smith.

"Over 500 people came to the hall that day to support the family and pay respect to Earl. All day the room was filled with the sounds of drumming, dancing, and stories of a cherished man. There were tears, meals, gifts, and meaningful memories shared.

As we watched each one of us noticed something. We saw 'our Kathryn' in her element. Throughout the event we saw her interacting with individuals whom she cares for with such depth. Person after person after person came to her and she greeted them with such warmth, familiarity and love. She embraced them, danced alongside them, laughed with them, shared food with them and something became profoundly obvious to us: these deep connections that Kathryn has with them aren't just because she was in the room that day...it's because she has spent decades, almost a lifetime, of serving them, loving them and meeting them where they're at. That is her ministry. That is her life. That is who Kathryn is."



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Thank you!



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