



Native Sons

Equipping Native Leaders to Reach Native Americans

CHRISTIAN SMITH

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

AIC will become a part of Southwestern Assembly of God University (SAGU) this spring. The students are excited about this, because it means that we will be able to offer stronger degrees, more degree programs, and even advanced degrees. This partnership has been discussed for some time, but became providential when the Higher Learning Commission (our accrediting agency) announced in late November that it was revoking our accreditation at the end of the semester because of financial issues that the school had been addressing. We will be involved in a "teach-out" under SAGU's name for the next 1.5 yrs. at which time how the schools relate to one another will be hammered out further. Our mission and the operation of the school remains the same. Your prayers and support are still needed and appreciated.

PRAYER POINTS

- New financial partners.
- AIC as it transitions with Southwestern Assembly of God University.

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"I still feel like a stranger in this strange world" Christian mused. He is one of our most capable students. If you met him he would strike you as bright, quiet, and the kind of nice young man you hope your daughter meets and marries. He, however, tells a slightly different story of himself.

Raised going to church in a Christian home he has lived in a wide variety of settings. His mother left an unstable relationship with his father when he was very young. She moved home to her family's trailer near the Navajo Rez where Christian recalls being surrounded by loving grandparents and family. Later, she attended AIC and some of Christian's earliest memories include playing in the offices of Jim Comer (the college president) and Blair Schlepp (the campus counselor) as they helped his mother and poured their lives into her. She met and married her husband, Ryan, while at AIC.

Christian's Navajo grandparent grew up traditional, accessing medicine men and traditional Native spirituality. His grandfather was a hard man who gave his life to Jesus listening to a Gospel message on the radio driving his truck. The radio program was timely; he was depressed and planned

to kill himself in a car accident. Shortly after he came to Jesus his wife did as well. Christian remarks, "God saw our family and decided to start His legacy in our family. He allowed the old history to be cut off and started something new."

Christian feels like a stranger in our world because of the many places he has lived,



Christian Smith

the various cultures he is a part of, his introverted nature, and perhaps in part because God has set him apart to Himself. He first lived in the desert landscape of New Mexico as a young child - a pleasant

memory of enjoying life with family and friends. Moving to Phoenix and AIC is a good memory of others pouring into his and his mother's life. When his mother married, Christian became part of his step-father's Hispanic community. He began learning Spanish and was embraced by the Hispanic community.

When he was in 5th grade his parents moved to the cold mountainous areas of the Paiute-Shoshone Rez in Nevada to help his uncle with a church. Christian had friends there, but life changed. "My eyes were opened, I was not like others, and I was not accepted." The other children said he was "citified" and thought he was not fully Native (he is). He had his first fight when one boy taunted him calling him a "bastard" and "a mistake." The conflicts left him scared and confused. He talked with his parents about it, because "good kids don't fight." They explained his birth and relationship to his step-father. He was confused to discovered that he was not accepted there by those he was like.

A year later his father took a job in Baltimore and they moved again. At first they lived in a rich predominantly white com-

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

My life remains busy as I to teach at AIC and work on a doctoral program. I began a small mentoring group this semester - my attempt to help some of the students to develop their spiritual lives and to provide an informal setting for more personal discussions. More and more students stop in to sit and talk with me about their lives as well. This is honoring and humbling as I reflect on the trust involved.

Theresa loves working with the 4-5 year olds at the Academy. She is their model teacher, loved and appreciated by all her coworkers and parents. She too remains extremely busy as she works evenings developing curriculum and lesson plans. She is extremely creative in her approach, but creativity takes time and a great deal of energy.

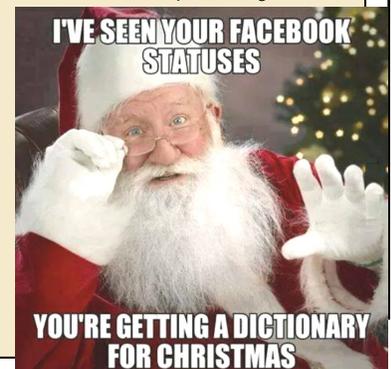
We enjoyed spending Thanksgiving with Levi, Alicia, Dillon, and Torrin. It is nice to have them nearby. Levi is mostly enjoying his classes at Fuller, but discovered he is too busy and has decided to give up his 2 part-time jobs and focus on school and family more. Next semester he wants to supplement his income with some slabwood furniture-making. Alicia loves her job, but her schedule is currently all over the place. Dillon and Torrin spend one night each week with us as well as time weekly when we watch them while mom and dad work or go to school.

Caleb and Natasha are doing well. Their paramedic training is going well and they continue to work for an ambulance company as EMTs. Caleb complains about

doing boring transports, but loves when he is able to attend a genuine medical emergency.

Thanks for your prayers and support!

*Have a Very Merry Christmas
& a Wonderful New Year!*



munity. Christian notes, "Everything was different there, the atmosphere, the school, everything." He attended a predominately Anglo school, his best friend was Hispanic, and he had a few African-American friends. The family was unable to stay in the area and moved to the poorer side of town in an African-American community. Gangs were active in the neighborhood and some of his friends carried weapons. Racial issues brought Christian into further fights at times. He spent a lot of time babysitting his 4-year old brother and newborn sister while his parents worked. He was shocked to discover that many of these kids had never left their neighborhood knowing no greater world than their immediate surroundings. The kids of Baltimore did not know what a Native American was and Christian found himself showing them "cheesy pictures of Sioux hunting buffalo" and saying "this is what I am, but I am Navajo." It was confusing trying to explain that he was Native and not mixed blood, it probably did not help that his family was attending a Puerto Rican church.

After a year in Baltimore the family returned to Phoenix. Christian notes, "I left Phoenix a naïve little kid and came back uncertain of who I was because of all the rejection I had experienced." In Phoenix his parents enrolled him in a Charter School hoping for a good education, but his was filled with children fresh out of "Juvie". "It was horrible; the food was legit jail food, the kids were fresh out of gangs, psychotic, schizophrenic, etc." He again experienced rejection and confusion around who he was. The Mexicans accepted him, but then rejected him because he had friends from other ethnicities. He says, "I felt more accepted by the Anglos than anyone else at this time."

After a year his parents placed him in another school. Again, it was a new and different situation

and he had to make new friends. He met some Native students there and expect to be rejected because of his past experience, but was surprised to be accepted. His family began attending a large predominately white church filled with cliques and "preppie Christians". He reconnected with his "Mexican family". Many of these were misbehaved pastor's kids partying and getting into trouble. Christian began drinking, doing drugs, became sexually active, and involved in porn. He continued to do well in school and was seen by others as a "good kid." He was involved in church ministry and community outreach all the while. He had many fair-weather friends, but felt empty. "I felt like I was nothing and a mistake. I thought my family picture would be better off without me. These were the lies in my mind."

As a high school sophomore he attended a National Native Youth Convention (NNYC) at AIC. God began speaking to Christian through the minister, "I want you to know that you are not a mistake. I created you for a purpose. I love you." Christian gave his life to the Lord then, but continued to struggle with drinking, drugs, sex and porn. In his junior year he began having hallucinations while high. A shadowy figure would appear with a strange headdress. Later he discovered that at this same time his parents had been warned that they were under spiritual attack. The figure that he repeatedly saw looks like the Yei-bi-chai (pronounced "Yay-ba-chay"), a Navajo masked spirit-dancer. He struggled with depression and issues of identity, the drugs no longer brought relief and he turned more to porn. "It felt dirty and I knew it was dirty, but..." He knew the Lord, but his life was all over the place.

In his senior year he again attended NNYC and became convinced that he should attend AIC. He quit drinking and drugs, but continued to struggle with

sexual issues. At AIC he played the "good kid" card and earned good grades. During his second year, he cried out to the Lord, "I am so empty. I want more of you. I want to let this go, but I do not know how. If I am going to go through pain I want to go though it with you." Shortly afterward the relationship with his girlfriend ended. Christian says, "It hurt a lot and a lot has been ripped away from me. I am content with how things are now. I am not where I want to be yet, but I am not where I was either."

Christian graduated with an AA in business and is now working on a BA in Christian Ministry. "AIC is a big part of my family's testimony. My mom met my dad here. The people here helped them and have been helping me. He admits that he is afraid of ministry and of public speaking, but "deep down I guess I've always had a heart for people. When others talk with me they tell me that it comforts them. I know what it feels like to have no [purpose, to be lost, to feel alone. It's not what I want for anyone; on the Rez its even worse. God says, 'You have that heart for a reason, let Me do something with it.'" He sees himself as a lead pastor someday, or maybe even a Bible College professor. "AIC is a good place. I met my best friend ever here. Teachers like you and Blair have helped me to understand myself and live for Jesus. Many people here have helped me and my mother. The Holy Spirit is alive and active here. If someone is willing and applies himself God will shape and mold them into who He created them to be. I am not going to be like everyone else. God has created a new legacy for my family, and I am honored and privileged to be a part of that legacy.

Native Urbanization & the Indian Relocation Acts of 1956

the federal government was decreasing subsidies to Native people living on reservations. It was one of many attempts by the government to eradicate Native American cultures and to abdicate responsibility for financial obligations connected with forcing First Nations people to "sell" their lands. The Acts encouraged First Nations people to leave the reservations and to assimilate into dominant society. For those who moved to government designated cities it offered to pay moving expenses, provide some short-term vocational training, grant a 4-week per diem subsistence expense, and funds to purchase work tools and clothing.

The relocation program was originally instituted at the request of President Truman in 1947 relocate and provide vocational training for the Navajo and Hopi. In 1955 the program was expanded. By 1954 about 6200 Native people had relocated to cities. The relocation policy was terminated in the 1970s.

The effects of the relocation policy was devastat-

ing. Relocated tribal members were isolated from their communities, faced segregation and discrimination, and limited to low wage jobs with little hope for advancement. Many returned home, but many also found that they had no home to return to. The urban areas they were relocated to were often areas targeted for urban renewal and so they were forced to relocate because of commercial development projects. Children of the relocated families also faced discrimination in the segregated school systems of the time.



City relocation



The Indian Relocation Acts of 1956 was a part of the Indian Termination Act, enacted at a time when