



Native Sons



Equipping Native Leaders; Empowering Native Christians

A NEW PATH

DID YOU KNOW

- The AG has 47 active missionaries and missionary associates to Native Americans on the field today.
- 24 are retired but active, 13 are appointed, 10 are missionary associates.
- 11 serve in AK.
- 10 serve as instructors at NABC or SAGU-AIC
- The following states each have one missionary: MT, NV, KY, WI, MO, NE, WA, OK, AL, FL, and AR.
- On average 1/3 of Native churches have a Native pastor, 1/3 have a missionary pastor, normally aging, and 1/3 have individuals appointed to serve as pastor by their district.

PRAYER POINTS

- Wisdom and clarity as I prepare for the proposal for Springfield.
- Favor with Springfield so that missionaries to Native people begin to receive pre-field training.
- Theresa's health.

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Last August I took a year away from teaching at SAGU-AIC to work with Rev. John Maracle and the Native American Fellowship (NAF) to develop a proposal for headquarters to train those that wish to become missionaries to Native people. This project is going well and I have begun writing it. My research has included interviewing Native pastors and missionaries, visiting reservations, and missionary and Native reading all of which is on-going.

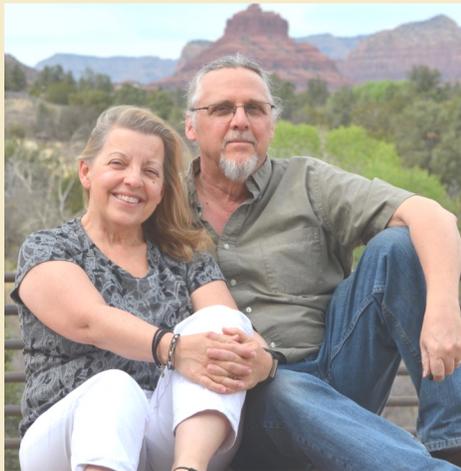
Recently, Bro. Maracle asked me to stay on with him and the NAF to help get the project off the ground if headquarters accepts it. He also wants me to help develop Native Schools of Ministry similar to District Schools of Ministry. Such Native Schools of Ministry would provide local training for those that feel called to ministry. Most of those who would participate in such a training will be older than the typical college age student, so these Schools of Ministry will not replace the education of a place like SAGU-AIC, but will be an additional approach to raising up Native ministers.

I have prayerfully decided to accept Bro. Maracle's request to stay on with him and the NAF for the following reasons. First, I

I have begun writing the proposal for Springfield for training those that want to become missionaries to Native people. At the same time I continue to call Native pastors and missionaries to Native people to get their input. I am planning a trip out to visit the Hickory Apache Rez in NM, the Osage Rez in OK, the Coshatta Rez in LA, the Alabama Coshatta Rez in TX, and the Mescalero Rez in NM at the end of March and beginning of April. I continue to appreciate the time and feedback of the Native ministers and those engaged in Native ministry. They all continue to agree on the basic pieces of what needs to be done to prepare someone for Native ministry and express and eagerness to see such training implemented.

Theresa remains busy, as do all at her school around the school's transition to its new facility. Again and again the move in date has been changed and although the building was completed in February there have been multiple

have discovered that implementing such a program will probably be placed on the NAF and so my continued help will be needed. Second, although I will always appreciate my time teaching at the Native American colleges I have slowly been forced to ponder certain realities.



John & Theresa at Sedona

Native people have been exposed to the Gospel for over 300 years and the Assemblies of God has been ministering to Native people for over 100 years. In spite of this, there are still less than 5% of Native

people that know Jesus as Lord and Savior - this suggests that we are somehow missing the mark. Native people that I have spoken with, 45 years and older, bear a consistent testimony that when they came to Christ they were told that they needed to give up everything in their culture, including their language in order to become Christians. This would make it difficult for anyone to follow Jesus and is really substituting culture for Christ. This is why so many Native Christians that I have spoken with talk about the problems of the White Man's Gospel. The White Man's Gospel is the substitution of Western culture for Christ. This is part of the problem that missionary training will address.

Even so, there is an even larger issue that needs to be addressed. AG missionary guru Melvin Hodges in his book *The Indigenous Church Principle* discusses developing self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating churches. This approach was adopted and successfully used in AG Foreign Missions.

Hodges and others discovered that in

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

red tape items that have held up their moving into the new facility. They are hoping to be moved in at the beginning of April and in preparation for this the teachers have been working to set up their new classrooms in the new building.

Levi and Alicia are well and we continue to enjoy having our grandsons over weekly. Levi has two ministry positions currently being extended to him. He preached as pulpit fill recently at a small church in New Mexico on the border of the Navajo Rez. The church would very much like him to come and be their new pastor, but he and Alicia feel that God wants them to remain in the greater Phoenix area so he is unlikely to accept this position. A church in Mesa has done three interviews with him to become their new children's ministry director. There is at least one or two more interviews in the process and they believe this may

be where God is directing them.

Caleb continues to enjoy being a paramedic-fireman and doing power-lifting. He recently returned home from a vacation on a cruise ship to the Caribbean. He had friends that invited him to come on the cruise and to attend their wedding.

As always, thanks for all your prayers and support!



Dillon & Torrin at play

communal cultures, such as those in Native America, when college age men and women were sent to Western educational institutions for ministry training certain problems arose. First, these young ministers did not have the respect of others because of their age. Second, after being trained in Western style ministry, the people of their own culture often felt they thought and acted like Westerners, so a cultural gap was created. Finally, many that returned from Western schools wanted Western style professional pay packages. To address this need local ministry schools were developed.

These schools worked along these lines. Someone who gave their life to Jesus would tell others about Him in their community. Those hungry to learn more would begin to regularly meet with the new Christian. The church would then assign a mentor to the person. The person would tell all they knew about Jesus. When they ran out of material the church would bring them back for a month of training and then they would continue their ministry in their local village. This would happen repeatedly until the new minister was well trained. In this

The Swinomish wake and funeral were different, very different. The wake began with a community dinner involving about two-hundred people. Food



Swinomish Tribal Chairman & Christian Brian Cladoosby

was placed on the tables family style. Periodically an elder announced that an individual wanted to gift the family who had lost their loved one. The dinner was opened and closed in prayer and a number of traditional Native songs were sung accompanied by Native flute and drums. After the dinner the group moved to the community center next door for the wake.

The wake lasted several hours. The community center was a large open rectangular shape with a couple of wide steps down into a large open area. The family of the deceased sat in chairs on a long side of the building in the sunken floor. They sat facing the casket. To their left on a short side of the open area were chairs with others seated in them. People sat all around the perimeter of the area and on the steps down. Those deemed prayer warriors were seated along the long wall facing the family—a place of honor. Every speaker needed to turn again and again in order to address all present. If a family member got up during the service someone else came down to take their place so that there was never an empty family chair.

The service was opened with prayers from Pentecostals, Catholics, those that practiced Swinomish traditional spirituality, and a group called Indian

way, not only was ministry training provided, but hands on ministry was engaged in and a daughter church was born. This process was repeated again and again so that a mother church would not only mother other churches, but granddaughter and great-granddaughter churches as well. Under this process evangelism and discipleship thrives. This is the intent of the Native Schools of Ministry.

Native Schools of Ministry will serve an additional purpose. Many of the students I have taught at SAGU-AIC have struggled, especially in their first year. They struggle because of being under-educated before coming to college and because of the culture shock and homesickness they experience when leaving their culture and families. Native Schools of Ministry could help bridge this gap for younger students by helping them to develop study skills and study habits in preparation for a traditional college education.

I will always believe in a place like AIC, but I also think it is necessary to provide some pre-steps as I have just described. I also think it is necessary to adopt some alternative approaches so that

A Swinomish Funeral

Shakers. Indian Shakers mixed Swinomish spirituality with Pentecostalism.

The service included singing, rituals and individuals from each tradition addressing the family. Multiple tokens of remembrance of the deceased were passed out during the service. Around 10 PM most went home, but some remained with the body of the deceased all night.

The next day, honored individuals were invited to a breakfast at 8 AM. Afterwards the entire group from the evening before gathered again in the



Community Center

community building for the funeral service. The Catholic priest prayed and shook holy water on the family.

After the family and friends had filed passed the deceased, the Shakers engaged in “soul-scooping.” This practice involves the belief that the spirit of dead person pulls the souls of others to themselves and so the souls must be scooped from them with cupped hands and returned to the individuals. The Swinomish traditionalists sang songs accompanied by drums and Native flutes. The funeral message was given by Doug York Assembly of God missionary to the Swinomish.

The deceased woman practiced Native traditionalism. The family had asked Doug to give the message because he had built a relationship with them by spending time with them. He discovered if he waited long enough during a visit they would always ask for prayer. So they would join hands

Native churches are pastored by Native ministers.

In my research over the last six months approximately one in three Native churches have Native pastors even though there are about twice as many Native ministers nationwide than there are Native churches.

Every missionary to Native people must be prepared not only to enter and embrace the culture to which they go, but must also be challenged to disciple and raise up Native people to take their place as ministers of God. Ministry is pictured as a relay race that involves passing the baton from one generation to the next (2 Tim. 2:2). At this point, in spite of centuries of Native ministry, I think it is necessary to admit that we have been running, but that we have somehow dropped the baton. It is my hope that my work with the NAF will help address these issues.

I ask that you might prayerfully consider continuing with us as missionaries to Native Americans as we continue to seek effective ways to reach, equip, and empower Native Christians and prepare Native leaders for ministry.

and pray. Eventually, the family decided that those who held his hand during prayer were those whose prayers were answered, so they fought over who stood on his right and left. His simple act of compassion opened doors to ministry to the family. His willingness to be with the people and spend time with them has opened doors for he and his wife into the community. They live in tribal housing and are esteemed as beloved elders by the people of the tribe.



After the funeral everyone went to the graveside. There was more singing, rituals, and speaking until the coffin was lowered. The grave was filled by hand. All returned to the dining hall for another meal and the “give away.” A give away involves the family giving gifts and money to those they wished to honor. Selected honored members again addressed the family about the loss of their loved one. It was 4 PM when all was said and done. A lot of ritual, a lot of community concern, a lot of grieving, and lot of processing had been done. I have never seen anything like it.

Many would have difficulty accepting the mixture of spiritual beliefs present, but it was a show of widespread community support that was healthy and needed. Tolerating it opened the door for the presentation of the Gospel and for relationship building that has opened further doors. This is one form that showing the love of Jesus takes in Native ministry. I suppose it might offend some, but then again, when Jesus spent time with tax collectors, prostitutes, and other sinners He also caused offense.