



Native Sons

Equipping Native Leaders; Empowering Native Christians

REV. JOHN (THOHATE) MARACLE

&

THE NATIVE AMERICAN FELLOWSHIP

DID YOU KNOW?

- There are 12 Native American Reservations in the state of New York.
- These include: the Allegheny (SW; Seneca), the Cattaraugus (NW; Seneca), the Cayuga Nation of NY (Central NY), Oil Springs (SW & S. Central; Seneca), the Oneida Indian Nation (Central NY), the Onondaga (Central, NY), the Poospatuck (Long Island), the St. Regis Mohawk (NE), Shinnecock (Long Island), the Seneca Nation (NW), the Tonawanda (NW), and the Tuscarora (NW).

PRAYER POINTS

- Theresa as she looks for new employment.
- Native people & reservations hard hit by COVID-19 and COVID Restrictions.
- Guidance bringing the missionary training program & the Centers for Native Leadership Development into being.

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"Nehemiah is one of my favorite ministry role models, because he teaches us that we need to work with the people and resources we have." Rev. John E. Maracle was reflecting on the nature of ministry.

Bro. Maracle is a member of the Mohawk Nation of the Iroquois Confederacy and a 3rd generation Pentecostal. Both his parents knew the Lord. His grandmother led him to Christ when he was 5. He received the baptism in the Spirit and his call into ministry when he was 13 during a summer youth camp in upstate New York. He says he literally heard the voice of God telling him, "I want you to be My servant and a servant to My people."

He has served as a pastor in numerous churches and is well known and highly respected in Native communities and main stream culture across the US and Canada. When I intenerate in NY, I am often asked if I know him by those he has pastored and those who know his family. The Maracle family is a prominent and highly respected family in New York and Canada. Bro. John's grandmother was one of the first Pentecostal believers on his reservation and John's

uncle, Rev. Andrew Maracle, was one of the first Native Americans to be ordained in the Assemblies of God. Many in the



Revs. John & Rana Maracle

northeast know who Andrew Maracle was because he pastored churches in New England and pioneered churches across New York.

Bro. John was elected as the Chief/President of the Native American Fellowship of the Assemblies of God (NAF) in 2000 and continues in this role today. However, he will turn 70 this month and

plans to vacate his position at the next convocation, next summer. I am working with and under him to establish the Centers for Native Leadership Development to provide local training for Native people who feel called to ministry.

The NAF seeks to facilitate evangelism, leadership development, and establish Native churches and ministries. It also seeks to provide information to both Native ministers and missionaries so these can minister more effectively.

This is a tall order. Bro. John is the sole person serving in the NAF office.

Occasionally, there has been a part-time volunteer secretary or someone who he has paid from his own funds. There is no salary attached to the Chief/President position, or any of the executive positions in the NAF. Bro. Maracle is a US Missionary and needs to raise his own support, but because of the tasks laid on him he has not been able to take time to itinerate to re-raise depleted funding in decades.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

COVID-19 restrictions remain especially tight on most reservations. I had hoped by now to start several Centers for Native Leadership Development (CNLD) in reservation churches, but gathering restrictions have kept this from happening. I have created the first course in the program in its entirety and part of the second course. I took one of the PowerPoint presentation lessons and added an audio track then sent it to the ministers that were interested in running CNLDs on their reservations. I received very positive feedback from all and so am working on turning the entire first course into something that can be done online. To this end, I have also created a website to promote Native ministry and to provide a delivery mechanism for starting the CNLDs remotely. I am still in the process of developing the website, but for any interested the address is www.b4nativesons.com and www.nativesonsministry.com.

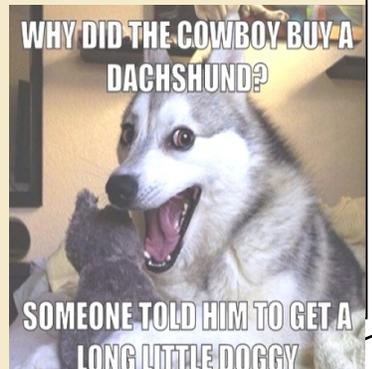
Theresa's world has taken some radical turns

since the last newsletter. About a month ago, every teacher and the administrator of the Christian academy she has taught at for the last 6 years resigned. This is a long and unfortunate story with the school's board seeking to control and change things unnecessarily and to the detriment of the ministry taking place. After resigning, Theresa took two weeks to visit family & friends in VT & NH. She is now home & looking for another position.

Levi, Alicia, and the boys are well. The boys are back in school and like others need to wear masks all day. Levi is again working FT, but his job has changed so that he is basically just monitoring at risk students as they do school work on computers. His position was a grant position and since the YMCA can no longer run the program (COVID), he is uncertain how long they will keep him. Alicia continues to enjoy nursing and her coworkers.

Caleb and Erin are well. They have set their wedding date for Oct. 30, 2021 and are planning a costume-themed wedding. This is typical Caleb, always outside of the box!

As always, thanks for all your prayers and support!



He is a member of the executive presbytery of the AG General Council (GC) and serves on the board of directors of numerous Native organizations, Assemblies of God groups, and other Christian organizations, including two AG colleges. He travels often to fulfill these duties and to visit Native churches across the country.

There is a great need in Native country for both trained Native ministers and for missionaries to Native people. In talking with Bro. John about this, he repeatedly emphasizes that need “to pray to the Lord of the harvest that He send out workers into the Native harvest field” (cf. Mt. 9:37-38). I would echo that request here to all of you. Pray that God send out workers into Native country. Pray also for wisdom, strength, and resources for Bro. John and the person that serves after him in the NAF.

The next person elected to the role of Chief/President of the NAF will need to contend with the unfortunate fact that Native churches are closing regularly, often for lack of a pastor. When I began my research last year to create a proposal for training missionaries to Native people, I was provided a list of 181 Native churches, but when I began calling, I discovered that 34 had closed their doors. Many of the remaining churches did not have a pastor. Only 43% of the churches with a pastor have a Native pastor and 70% of these were 50 years or older. There are only 20 missionaries serving in Native churches, and 15 of these are 70 or older. Over a third of the churches have non-Native, non-missionary pastors sent in to temporarily fill the pulpits and try to keep the church open by the local district. Therefore, the next leader will need both wisdom and God’s provision of human and financial resources to effec-

tively minister and make a difference in Native communities.

As Bro. John looks toward stepping away from his formal leadership in the NAF he has no plans to retire. He echoes what I have also often said, “How do you retire from God’s call?” Looking forward, he wants to re-establish the Native New Life Center in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory on the St. Regis Mohawk Rez—his home Rez. This is a small college founded by his cousin Ross as a ministry training center. Bro. John’s vision is that this school would be a hybrid between an accredited college and a Teen Challenge. He hopes to create a discipleship center that helps Native Christians to deal with the life controlling issues that so deeply plague Native country (drug & substance abuse, healing from physical & sexual abuse, etc.). There is a real need for this type of training center. I mentored many students that were plagued with such issues. Before it folded, Central Indian Bible College in South Dakota worked carefully with its students around such issues. The Indian Bible College in Flagstaff, AZ has designed a curriculum and mentorship program specifically around the spiritual and psychological issues that so often trouble Native students. In a regular college such struggles will result in expulsion. However, in God’s kingdom we need to find ways to work with the broken to heal and mentor so that these individuals can live the new life that Jesus intends for them and then become instruments of such healing to others.

Bro. Maracle’s ultimate hope is to equip leaders who will equip leaders (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2). He compares our spiritual lives and ministry to both a marathon and a relay race. In a marathon, it is necessary to pace oneself in order to go the dis-

tance. In a relay race the baton must be passed from one runner to another for the race to be won. If we fail to raise up the next generation of disciples we fail to pass the baton.

Bro. John recognizes different people exercise different gifts and skill sets. It is easy for ministers to think, “My way of doing ministry is the only right way to do ministry.” It is also easy to be intimidated by those who have different gifts and talents than we do. This is as true in Native country and in mainstream America. Bro. Maracle hopes to encourage diversity and help others to grow in their own gifts and to celebrate and work cooperatively with those who exercise different gifts. He emphasizes that he does not want to raise up followers, but leaders who think for themselves and learn to listen to and obey the voice of Jesus; In regards to this, he expressed deep gratitude to the many leaders that poured their lives into his so that he could become what God has called him to be.

One of Bro. Maracle’s central concerns in raising up future leaders is that what is learned is actually applied in real life. He cites how his grandmother taught her children and grandchildren. “She taught us and she showed us.” One example includes the picking of Mohawk medicinal plants. She would tell them what they were and what they were for. The grandchildren worked alongside their grandmother harvesting plants, so they learned to recognize the different plants and their uses. This is the difference between book-learning and hands-on-learning. Knowledge and understanding are best learned by experience. This is the biblical approach to discipleship.

Please keep Bro. Maracle and the NAF in prayer, especially with the upcoming leadership transition.

The Mohawk



The Mohawk call themselves the *Kanienkehaka* which means “the people of the flint.” This is a reference to a special flint arrow that is a part of the traditional Mohawk creation story. The Mohawk’s enemies called them “Mohawk” from the Algonquian word “*mohowawog*” which means “eaters of men.” Historically, the Mohawks were especially fierce warriors who were brutal and merciless to their enemies. They also engaged in ceremonial cannibalism to “absorb the strength of their enemies.”



Hiawatha

The Mohawk are the Eastern Gatekeepers (protectors) in the Iroquois Confederacy. The constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy was created by the Mohawk chiefs Dekanawida and Hiawatha. These visionary leaders preached

the principles of peace and were instrumental in founding the Iroquois Confederacy. They sought to establish the Confederacy to bring an end to inter-tribal warfare and to put an end to cannibalism. The Iroquois Confederacy was created around 1550 and was comprised of five north-eastern Native nations including: the Mohawk, the Seneca, the Oneida, the Onondaga, and the Cayuga. These nations inhabited the regions of the great lakes, and part of what is now New York and Canada. In 1722, the Tuscarora Nation fleeing persecution and enslavement in North Carolina fled to NY and joined the Iroquois Confederacy. Modern scholars and historians widely acknowledge that the US Constitution is based on the constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy.

During the Revolutionary War the Mo-



Deganawida

hawk sided with the British. One of the most prominent Mohawks of this time was Joseph Brant who was both a political and military leader. He led the Mohawk and colonial loyalists in battle against the revolutionaries. He personally knew many of the revolutionary and British leaders including George Washington and King George III. Following the Revolutionary War, Brant led the Mohawk to Canada. Today, the St. Regis Mohawk/Akwesasne Reservation stretches between upstate New York and Canada, so every member is a citizen of North America.



Joseph Brant

