



Indigenews

My People International

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One, Two, Three...Become One!

Merger was the order of the day as the Boards of Directors of *My People International* and the *North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies* met together for their annual meetings in June 2009. With the assistance of some of the personnel of each organization—NAIITS has functioned as a completely volunteer ministry since its inception—the two boards engaged in the final conversations that brought *MPI* and *NAIITS* together under one Board of Directors.



NAIITS has, since its inception almost 11 years ago, focused on creating educational opportunities for First Nations, Inuit and Métis men and women in Biblical Studies, Theology and Mission Studies. In addition *NAIITS* has also hosted annual symposia on Native North American Theology and Mission and published an annual journal of the Institute from their proceedings. To date, we have nine people involved in doctoral studies, a number in graduate studies and a cohort of 7 ready to begin graduate studies this fall. In just over seven years, within Native Evangelicalism, we have more people in doctoral studies in these fields than

the previous hundred! We have also hosted 6 symposia (#7 is this June 10-12 at George Fox University) and published 6 volumes of the journal (#7 is ready for printing!). Celebrate with us!

The third ministry, *iEmergence*, had been under the auspices of *MPI* for eighteen months previous and, following the merger vote, made request that they be made an official part of *MPI*. After a brief discussion with then representatives of *iEmergence*, Hannah Haiu, Larissa Minniecon, Matt LeBlanc, Doug MacDonald, Jennifer LeBlanc, Michelle Nieviadomy, Jeanine LeBlanc, Dan Lowe, Nicole Yellow Old Woman and Leon Haiu, the Board voted with enthusiasm to receive *iEmergence* as a “fully supported ministry of *MPI*.” You will have noted their last newsletter was sent with our November letter. Enclosed with this *Indigenews* is their most recent update—some really exciting stuff in the works and, on the horizon! The team assures me they are working on a new logo and, a website to provide the emerging generation a focused way to communicate, taking advantage of contemporary media as they pursue their mission.

iEmergence

Gatherings

Osmosis

Econ. Development

The three logos on this front page (as I noted above, *iEmergence* is working on a beefed-up version) now represent the three areas of our ministry focus. In the days ahead we will bring regular news of this globally-focused outreach to the emerging generation of indigenous youth.

North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies



~ Terry LeBlanc~

Inside this issue...

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Notes from the Field...(English et Français!)

Aboriginal worldview and values were at the center of a gathering convened by MPI associate-member Céline Bastien-Genest in early November. This gathering brought together for a second time (the first gathering having been held last February) some fifteen people involved in different types of outreach to Native communities. The purpose of this meeting, besides providing an opportunity for people with a heart for Native communities to fellowship and exchange ideas and information, was to create an awareness of Native culture, so that ministry can take place in a culturally-sensitive way. The meeting was further enriched by Quebec Mennonite Central Committee directors Claude and Muriel Queval, who shared stories and pictures on the six years they spent in Labrador among the Innu (Montagnais) and Inuit people. More gatherings of this nature are in the works, in response to the need and interest expressed by those in attendance.



Celine and Hector Bastien-Genest

La vision du monde et les valeurs autochtones étaient au centre d'une rencontre organisée par Céline Bastien-Genest, membre associée de My People International, en début novembre. Cette deuxième rencontre (la première s'étant déroulée en février dernier), a réuni une quinzaine de personnes qui exercent divers ministères auprès de peuples autochtones. La réunion, en plus de fournir l'occasion d'échanger et de créer des liens entre les participants, avait pour but de sensibiliser les gens à la culture autochtone, afin que l'œuvre entreprise dans ces communautés puisse se faire de façon respectueuse. La rencontre fut enrichie par une présentation des directeurs du Comité central mennonite du Québec, Claude et Muriel Queval, sur leurs six années passées parmi les Innus et Inuits du Labrador. D'autres réunions de cette nature sont prévues en réponse à l'intérêt et aux besoins exprimés par les participants.

~Céline Bastien-Genest~

Stories of Hope...

... this month a woman experiences the freedom of the truth!

This past year I was involved in a three-week teaching session on basic counseling skills. I sketched out the story you will read below about one of the women who found freedom during one of my teaching sessions. She was one of my students and is an example of one of the many women, native and non-native, that God has used me to help. This is only part of the story of course, but it highlights how changed she was by the end of three weeks of being with me in the teaching sessions.

She gave a little twirl as she came dancing by us on her way back to her seat. She had just gone up to receive her certificate for completing a three-week module on counseling. We cheered and applauded as each student came up and accepted their certificates. The last two of the three weeks had been very intense as the students had been involved both in practicing counseling skills under our supervision as well working on their own personal issues with their respective counselor/instructor. Many personal challenges were met and many tears were shed as each individual faced their struggles and began to move beyond their pain.

This particular woman had been one of my students. For many years, she struggled with not feeling good about herself, and not feeling good about who she is as a woman. As we met daily for one hour during those two weeks many distorted beliefs about herself, and of who she was as a woman, were confronted. She came to understand that she had believed many lies about herself that came from painful experiences in her life. But most of all, she discovered who she really was as a woman, and that she was a woman of God.



The Martins

She understood now that she could stand before her God in wholeness and purity, and be able to face her people in wholeness and purity. The little dance that she gave was an expression of her newfound freedom that came from understanding the truth of who God said she was. Not only did she give a little dance that morning, she also showed up that day wearing a pretty dress that was very becoming on her.

The truth had set her free!

~Linda Martin~

Quotables...

"Your team was a gift to the native students at Urbana! I just wanted to send along this affirmation..."

~ Nikki Toyama-Seto, Urbana Program Director ~

What they said...

"Brother, I was so proud of you and the dancers the night you did that awesome teaching moment about the ways Creator gave many lessons about faith and creation to the people -- lessons we can learn from through the dances. That was really good. Thank you for continuing to press the *Kin-dom* to greater understanding."

~ Lisa Sharon Harper, NY Faith and Justice ~

"Twice Native dancers took the stage to share their culture with the 16,000 attendees. Also a Native woman named Cheryl Bear shared how it is possible to be both Native and Christian. I was moved to tears by these affirmations of my students' culture from the main stage."

~ IVCF Staff worker at Urbana 2009! ~

"...as we share the gospel story and canon of scripture, we will hear Jesus calling us to be who he made us to be!"

~ Ray Aldred, Church Planter's Conference ~

Prayer Needs

⇒ ...for the MPI staff—January's meeting this week will set the tone for the coming months

⇒ ...In keeping with the above prayer item, please pray for increased funding for My People International.

⇒ ...Ray Aldred as he final edits his dissertation—he defends and graduates this spring!

⇒ ...Terry for time to get to the writing work on top of many other family and ministry commitments.

⇒ ...Camp—this year's Kid's Camp planning meeting is set for January 29,30. Pray that we can build on the partnerships and success of the last few years.



The Gospel and Conversion...

Ray Aldred recently spoke to over 50 pastors at a church planting conference held at Calgary's Centre Street Church. Kim Follis from Ambrose University College captured the story... *T LeBlanc*

In order for cross-cultural conversion to occur the gospel must be in the heart language of the people. Indeed, according to Aldred, "The Gospel story must be taken in and take in the people." Most importantly, it must be the triune God who is in control.

He challenged those reaching out to First Nations people to understand how we translate the radical call for conversion into the language of our communities. "To me this is self-theologizing," says Aldred. "It means taking seriously the task of listening to the language of culture, the socio-political aspirations, the art, and the religious language. The next task is embracing culture and people on the level of human suffering, so that we can hear each other. Then, as we share the gospel story and canon of scripture, we will hear Jesus calling us to be who he made us to be." Aldred emphasized the need to understand and appreciate traditional cultural categories, traditional religion and the Christian tradition already in the culture.

Structurally church planters must work as much as possible through native advisors and seek to reintegrate First Nations languages. They must also see economic self-sufficiency and a nation to nation relationship with the state as an important part of community healing. Whatever the mainstream might think about it (and there are a variety of positions on it) Aldred said, "I believe that aboriginal people need to continue the drive toward self-government and self-determination, so that they can regain their God given identity as human beings."

After laying a foundation for understanding First Nations people, he then talked about the issues facing church planters in either an urban or rural setting. Urban Planting requires building a community through a process that takes seriously powers and structures. He suggests monthly rather than weekly gatherings as a more focused and celebratory time than a weekly 'routine' which is easy to dismiss or avoid. Also, a planter needs to know his/her audience including the "emotive longing" for social and political aspirations and the rapidly shifting trends.

In the reservation and rural setting planters face a missionary hang-over rooted in dependence. He believes that the church should first emphasize independence with a goal of interdependence in order to meet spiritual needs of First Nations people.

~ Kim Follis, Ambrose University College ~

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Our Vision?

Our vision is a simple one. It is that:

“Every Native North American person will embrace a life-giving relationship with the person of Jesus – and experience that relationship in a Native North American Way.”

Our mission?

“To communicate the teachings of Jesus to Native North American people in a culturally relevant way; to encourage Native North American life to be centred in a spiritual relationship with Jesus; and, to facilitate culturally appropriate participation of Native people within the wider community of those who follow Jesus.”

Dates and Events ...

Upcoming Staff Events—Dates and Places ...

- February 2-5—**National Prayer Breakfast**, Washington, DC—Terry attending
- April 14—**Atlantic Prayer Breakfast**—Terry Speaking
- April 22-25—**OMSC Mission Leaders Forum**, Yale—Terry and Jeanine LeBlanc attending
- June 2-6—**Edinburgh 2010 Missions Conference**, Edinburgh Scotland—Terry, delegate
- August 18-22—**Kids Culture Camp**—Sundre, AB—Tim, Yin Mooi and staff

Training Events—Dates and Places...

- February 14-18—**Inenimowin**, Camp Arnes—Ray and Elaine, Rick and Linda, Adrian teaching
- February 22-26—**Teaching (Anthro Christian Mission)**, Yonge Street Mission, Toronto—Terry teaching
- Feb 27—**Native Masters Degree Cohort**, Toronto—Terry teaching
- March 4-6—**Society for Pentecostal Studies**, Minneapolis—Terry presenting
- March 8-10—**Ministry dates in Minneapolis**—Terry speaking
- April 6-8—**Counselling Skills Workshop**—Neah Bay, WA—Rick and Linda teaching
- April 10-13—**Ministry Dates on reserve in Nova Scotia and PEI**—Terry speaking
- April 15-18—**Envision Evangelical Scholars**, North Park University, Chicago—Terry and Ray speaking
- May 26-30—**Rising Above**, Winnipeg—Rick and Linda teaching
- May 10-15—**Teaching (Asset-based Planing and Dev’t)**, Yonge Street Mission, Toronto—Terry teaching
- May 16—**Native Masters Degree Cohort**, Toronto—Terry teaching
- June 7,8—**Presbyterian Assembly**, Sydney, NS—Terry Speaking
- June 10-12—**NAIITS 7th Symposium**, George Fox University, Newberg, OR— Terry and staff presenting
- July 13-24—**Counselling Training**, Dryden—Rick and Linda teaching

KEEP YOUR EYS ON THE WEB FOR MORE DETAILS AND OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS...