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NAIITS SYMPOSIUM
 North America Institute of Indigenous Theological Studies

**Indigenous Church:
 Expressions of Community**
June 4-6, 2009
 Trinity Western University
 Langley B.C. Canada

Some presenters include:
 Brian McLaren,
 Tom and Christine Sine
 Prabhu Singh

First time Indigenous Youth panel

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 or Terry LeBlanc tmkmaq@gmail.com

NAIITS—Indigenous Theology...

Reflecting on the history of NAIITS (North American Institute of Indigenous Theological Studies, now a formal part of MPI ministry), the chair and director, Terry LeBlanc said that "The journey to this place of First Nations driven biblical and theological education, of writing and serious discussion on the things of God, has been a long one. But this is now our 9th year, our 6th symposium on Indigenous theology and mission."

The format is a user-friendly one, in which First Peoples and others who connect with or work with First Peoples, share biblical and theological perspectives from the Scriptures from an Indigenous world view. Presentations are followed by small group discussion on what we heard. Reactions, responses, critiques are noted, then summarized to the whole group. It's a process that gives participants opportunity to chew on and digest new thoughts and challenges to conventional ways of thinking about God and God's mission. Specifically, in this conference, we examined what could or should the Indigenous church look like in light of Scriptural teachings from an Indigenous vantage point.

This year's program "Indigenous Church: Expressions of Community", engendered much thoughtful discussion during the breakout groups following each presentation.

A quick summary of the presenters and their focus:

Adrian Jacobs—"Church of the Sacred Clowns" In his passionate presentation, Adrian calls for the establishment of "The Church of the Sacred Clowns" (from a Pueblo tradition), a church that would exude vulnerability, brokenness, humility, a humanizing focus that models the characteristics of biblical messengers from God. In this church pretence is unwelcome; honest struggle happens instead. "All human experience is

here in the context of God's engagement with us. He is not afraid of anything human. He is alive and living with those who are alive with Him," says Jacobs.

Richard Twiss—"Community Building in a Multi-Cultural World" "Historically in the church, I'm always the mission field (i.e., First Nations people). The concept of Missio Dei opened up things for me. It's God's Mission that counts. And we all are part of His mission." Richard sees a major paradigm shift in the church today, "from the paternalism of the past to a genuine Native-led 'contextualization of the Gospel Story."

Roger Boyer—"The Teens from Morley, Alberta" Roger interviewed a good number of Morley First Nations young people about their perspective of who they are as Native people, put on earth by the Creator. "Figuring out who I was as a Native person made the vertical relationship with Creator much deeper," said one youth.

Jeanine Lowe LeBlanc—"Indigenous Hospitality: Learning from Cultures that Welcome" Focusing on welcoming and hospitality which the church and individual believers are encouraged to do in the Scriptures, Jeanine provided beautiful examples of hospitality, central to the early church, from far-flung Indigenous communities. The Maori of New Zealand practice a "stranger-welcoming ceremony", demonstrating hospitable intentions towards visitors. In so doing they build "a safe place to develop and continue relationships within creation." The Inukshuk, the 2010 Olympic symbol from the Inuit people of Northern Canada, is a life-like figure of rocks placed as directional markers for those who travel.

Youth Panel—"iEmergence" Young people discussed a multi-country study (Canada, USA, Philippines and New Zealand) on Indigenous young peoples' attitudes towards the church, (positive and negative), what they would change, how they see culture and identity intrinsically woven with faith. What a breath of very fresh air hearing and seeing Native Christian young people envisioning a vibrant, relevant community of faith, not so concerned with mortar and brick, entertainment and consumer/success mentality. Rather they see this community as alive with humility, brokenness, family-like acceptance, a full-time life style of practising the unconditional love seen in Jesus.

Brian McLaren/Terry LeBlanc—"Emergent Church/Indigenous Church" Brian is author of the book, Everything Must Change, among others. Terry posed tough questions to Brian on his perspectives of the history of the church, its effect on the world and on Indigenous peoples out of his wide diversity of "church" and international experiences. "What I thought was Christianity" Brian notes, "was a western cultural version of it. If only we could admit that we may have seen it all wrong! That 'Thy Kingdom come' is not just when we get to heaven but that God's Kingdom is to come down here on earth."

...cont'd on P. 3...

Quotables...

"It's very encouraging to see First Nations youth with vision coming to carry on the vision, with new eyes and lots of creativity." ⇒ ~ Tom Sine~

What you said...

We get notes from you on a weekly basis. On occasion there are some suggestions you want to make—we try and listen to them and, as able, implement what you suggest wherever possible. Most of you, however, have simply been encouraged by our work and just want to share your encouragement. We thought we would share them whenever possible to encourage you that your work with us makes a difference. Darryl agreed to allow us to publish the following...

~ Terry LeBlanc~

Hi Terry,

I just wanted to touch base with you. I trust the Lord is keeping you in full swing with ministry, education and other related activities.

I would just like to thank you and your staff for keeping me in the loop with regard to My People International and its ministry involvement. I enjoy the stories and testimonies I read in MPI's newsletters and it is heart warming to know that our people are at the forefront of missions and ministry.

My prayers are with MPI, you, the staff and the families.

Blessings,

Darryl Styres

Supervisor, Probation & Parole Officer
Six Nations Grand River Correctional Services

Prayer Needs

- ⇒ ...for the MPI staff—January's meeting laid out a gruelling course of ministry and fundraising to keep ministry going in the face of the loss of a major donor's grant of \$80,000
- ⇒ ...In keeping with the above prayer item, please pray for increased funding for My People International.
- ⇒ ...The staff who are in the middle of their research and writing work on top of their family and ministry commitments—Ray, Roger and Terry
- ⇒ ...Camp—this year's Kid's Camp is set for July 29-Aug 2...pray for a good time of ministry
- ⇒ ...Marc as he gives leadership to the francophone ministry we have been privileged to connect with

North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies



NAIITS cont'd...

Tom and Christine Sine with Eliacin Rosario Cruz—“The Jesus Way in the Shadow of the Global Mall” The new global economy marketers use sophisticated means as they mould our imaginations, "persuading people all over the planet to make their home in the global mall and to buy into their notions of what constitutes the good life and better future." (That's the new colonialism.) We in North America have already settled for a Eurocentric syncretistic approach to Christian faith, with a very troubled history. And now with the church in major decline denominations of all kinds are, in fact, looking to the young people to bring creativity and new life to the message of Jesus. (Author: The New Conspirators: Creating the Future One Mustard Seed at a Time)

~ Tim Stime~

North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies



Stories of Hope cont'd....

When we finally found the spot I could hardly believe the size of the tree. I was somewhat concerned that it would not fall as there were many trees around it close by. But we hacked and cleared brush and finally Alex was able to bring it down with the chain saw he had borrowed. The cabin itself was levelled and just glimpses of the foundation could be seen. But he knew exactly where the door was and where the tree was that he needed to cut down.

We then cut part of it up. There was a dead limb that we were able to find. Alex chopped this up and we built a fire. As the fire burned, we stood there. I prayed and then Alex got out the letter. He read every part and then before I knew it, he crunched it up and threw it in the fire. Wow, there goes that letter, so well written from the heart, covering so much! For Cyril, it was the best thing he had done in a long time. The past had hurt him but he had to let it go. He had to burn that letter and the tree which symbolized the past. He was moving on. We stood there for a long time. I played my guitar. We worshipped and grieved.

We spent most of the afternoon there, praying and talking and grieving. He felt relief as he had been dealing with these memories for more than 45 years. It was a sacred time. As the smoke went up, Cyril joked about it being smoke signals—and really, they were. In my mind they were the cry of Cyril's heart and they were smoke signals to God telling him that he was burning his past and he needed his Creator's help to move on and heal.

That was Thursday June 25, 2009. On Sunday he was worshipping with us at an outdoor service in a local community. He was there from 10 in the morning to 6 at night worshipping God's goodness.

~Rick Martin~



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More news on our newly
revamped website!

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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.”

Quotables—deja-vu...

“I do appreciate all that happened since [our first meeting in the spring] and hope that it will continue. We just had our annual meeting for the Renaissance Autochtone Organization and I have presented to our administrator what you told me... I talked also about my reconciliation with myself. Two other workers who are Métis have been really touched by it and had cried too. It has changed a lot of perspective of my ministry.”
“Thanks to our Lord and thanks to you !!!”

Dates and Events ...

Upcoming Staff Dates (see the website for more details as they become available)

July 29-August 2—Sundre, AB, Kids Culture Camp w/ IVCF—Roger, Tim, Others

Aug. 17,18—Calgary, NAIITS Curriculum Development—Ray and Terry

Sept. 11—Grande Prairie, “Ministry Presentation and Fundraiser”—Ray and Terry

Oct. 15-17—“Reading Scriptures...among U.S. Communities of Color”—Terry

Oct. 23-25—Abbotsford, “BC Leaders Weekend”, with City in Focus—Terry & Ray

Nov. 6—Edmonton area, Location TBA, “Ministry Presentation and Fundraiser”—Tim & Terry

Nov. 7—Calgary, “Ministry Presentation and Fundraiser”—Ray, Roger and Terry

Training Events—Dates and Places...

November 22-26—Inenimowin Circle—Camp Arnes, MB—Rick, Linda, Ray and Elaine

November 20, 21—Nēstooāak—”People’s Church, Toronto—Adrian, Rick, Linda, Terry

June 10-12, 2010—NAIITS 7th Symposium. ”In the Beginning: Our Chapter(s) in the Story”—Staff

PLEASE NOTE We are actively looking for partners for our Inenimowin Circle, Nēstooāak and Men’s Mentoring programs. If you are interested in hosting one of these excellent training and ministry opportunities, contact Terry or Dan by email: terry@mypeopleinternational.com or dan@mypeopleinternational.com

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