



# Indigenews

My People International

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## HISTORIC PARTNERSHIP

### Renowned University and Seminary and NAIITS Create a New Theological Degree Program!

OREGON, June 12, 2010 — An historic agreement was entered into between the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies (NAIITS) and George Fox Evangelical Seminary at Newberg, OR. The agreement marks the beginning of a new type of partnership and is the realization of a long-standing hope for a new way to provide theological education for Native North Americans.

“The partnership created with this agreement will focus on the delivery of Theological education for Native North Americans and other indigenous peoples using instructional approaches and materials developed by NAIITS,” said Terry LeBlanc, founding chair, now Executive Director of NAIITS. The first offering in the new partnership will be an MA specializing in intercultural studies that is slated to begin January 2011. LeBlanc, a Mi'kmaq from Canada, made it clear that the program features several innovative approaches to theological education and leadership development stating, “The program is deeply rooted in Native thought and reflects Native concerns.”

The courses will be written, directed and taught by an outstanding faculty of international Native scholars. Each course will incorporate Native worldview and values. The entire program is built around an andragogical approach that allows adult students to exercise greater creativity and flexibility as they learn in unique cultural and social contexts. “Finally, there is a program of study that is uniquely designed for us,” observed one student considering her enrollment. “It’s just brilliant!”



Randy Woodley, Distinguished Associate Professor of Faith and Culture and Director of Intercultural and Indigenous Studies at George Fox, pointed out that, “Since its inception ten years ago, NAIITS has delivered seven symposiums on theology and mission, published six journals (the seventh is going to print as this is written) and facilitated opportunities for graduate and post-graduate study for a number of Native students in partnerships with various seminaries.” As a NAIITS board member, Woodley will serve as a liaison between the two organizations. Woodley, a Keetoowah Cherokee, says “There is a lot of excitement about this partnership, with both parties having prayerfully undertaken their roles in light of several centuries of misunderstanding and broken treaties between our two communities.”

From her perspective as a College and Seminary instructor of many years, Board member Wendy Peterson said, “When NAIITS existed simply as a dream, we longed for this day. Along the journey, it remained a distant dream that seemed to me to be just beyond reach. I commend the hard work of those who have kept the vision of Indigenous scholars serving Jesus in a new way, for the enrichment of all.”

Shari Russell, Saulteaux and officer in the Salvation Army, has been on the board of NAIITS for about four years in total – her first stint was two years. Taking a year off to focus on some ministry demands, she soon yearned to be back. NAIITS was on the cutting edge of some things in education she wanted to be part of – so she called and said, “I’m ready to rejoin the board – do you have a vacancy?” NAIITS did and Shari has been back for just over a year. Unable to stay for the signing ceremony, Shari observed from Winnipeg that “This first agreement with George Fox is monumental, it affirms my intuition about the path ahead for all of us!”

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## NAIITS (cont'd from pg1)

Ray Aldred, Cree professor of Theology in Calgary, Alberta and incoming Chair of the NAIITS board, pointed out “Since our first symposium ten years ago we have hoped that something like this might emerge.” “This is the first time a distinguished group of Native North American men and women scholars – who are also ministry practitioners – have created such an innovative approach to theological education!” Ray and Terry were integral in the creation of the study program framework with contributions to the finished work coming from Randy Woodley and Richard Twiss.

Asked what further plans NAIITS has for Native North American education, Terry LeBlanc referenced conversations with several other institutions of higher education – both North American and European – which, if brought to the same conclusion as the Fox agreement, would provide NAIITS the ability to offer undergraduate, graduate and doctoral studies programs of various types in partnership with a variety of institutions. Seeking to minimize overlap in study offerings, each institution will be invited to take a specific focus. Whereas this first partnership with George Fox has created a degree in Intercultural Studies it is hoped that other partnerships, if successful, will focus their attention on Community Development studies, Anthropology, Biblical Studies and other aspects of Mission Studies.

According to LeBlanc, the NAIITS community is interested in filling a long-standing void for biblical, theological and missiological education delivered in cultural and social context that is clearly evangelical while simultaneously committed to holistic mission with Native North American and other indigenous peoples.

*Student applications for the new MA program will be available upon final approvals with links on both websites (<http://www.georgefox.edu/admission/index.html> and <http://www.naiits.com>). For more information about this new degree offering, contact Anita Keith, NAIITS coordinator, at Suite 428, 35 - 2855 Pembina Highway, Winnipeg MB R3T 2H5 ([office@naiits.com](mailto:office@naiits.com), [www.naiits.com](http://www.naiits.com)) or Terry LeBlanc, Executive Director, North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies ([terry@naiits.com](mailto:terry@naiits.com)).*

~Staff Notes~

## Notes from the Field... *A Celebration of Life*

The summer months are upon us and it is a reminder of all that is good about this land that is called Canada. And of course summer is the time for camps. Growing up I looked forward to the summer when we would leave our home and live in a tent and camp for a few weeks by a lake or river and we would enjoy fishing and swimming. It is when we are connected with the land that we understand that there is something much greater than us at work all around us.

A few weeks back Elaine and I had the privilege of attending the graduation of our youngest daughter from Columbia Bible College. This fall she is heading to McGill to pursue biblical studies as well as some classes in linguistics. She hopes to be part of a growing group of young people with aboriginal ancestry who are pursuing God's best. She needs our prayers because it is a daunting task.

While we were in British Columbia we also had the opportunity to dedicate our granddaughter Lily Sanders to Jesus. Our son-in-law Sean and daughter Jenny attend a wonderful church called Emmanuel Christian Community and I was given the opportunity to say some words and the following is what Elaine and I said:

I want to thank you Emmanuel Christian community for taking care of our children and our grandchildren. This is my granddaughter and we are from the Cree people and from the Mohawk people. I want to ask that you would pray for my granddaughter. I ask that everywhere she goes that the land itself would welcome her and would always remind her of our Creator, Jesus Christ. I ask that the sky and all the stars would always guide her home to the direction between her and you and when she looks up and see the great bear she would remember her Mushum and Kokum and all her ancestors who God put in the North land. And she would remember her Creator who has given her such a good father and mother. I ask that you, O Lord, would give us many years to see our granddaughter's daughters. Not because we deserve it but because you are a good God and merciful.

After the service someone came up and thanked me for the words because it was a First Nations person who was being true to First Nations traditions and also pointing out the primacy of Jesus. In other words presenting Jesus in a Native North American way, which is what My People is all about.

I share this story for two reasons. First, it is camp time and we want to continue to put on a camp to help children connect with the Creator in the midst of His creation. This is the tradition of the First Nations people and something that is worth remembering. Second, My People continues to train and teach to implement programs so that the circle of teaching and learning and connectedness between the generations can continue so that people's identities are strengthened. So that when ever any person looks around, creation itself reminds them of the Creator and always points them home.

~Ray Aldred~

## Reflections on an Apology...

Responding to the Canadian Prime Minister's apology to First Nations peoples June 11, 2008, and to other responses to that apology, My People staffers Ray Aldred, Terry LeBlanc and Adrian Jacobs wrote a reflection, excerpted below which appeared in two Canadian magazines recently, *Christian Week* and *Faith Today*.

Repentance, not just apology, must precede forgiveness. True reconciliation between Canada and her First Nations cannot happen overnight.

Working through the abuse can be a long and difficult journey. The real and full hope is that Christ is with us on the journey and even if we do not get there, even if we live half-way in our mourning, Christ the creator is with us, and He likes us. Luke's gospel makes clear that there is a relationship between repentance and forgiveness. In fact, it is called the gospel of repentance and forgiveness—not apology and forgiveness, but repentance and forgiveness. So for Canada and those who are part of her political, maternal care, the question is not about the survivors of abuse forgiving them; it is about abusers asking, "What does repentance look like for us?" Or, even more pointedly, "What does 'not assimilating' First Nations people look like for us?"

### Repentance before forgiveness

In all of this, what causes us the most consternation is that the Canadian government does not appear, after all this time, to be doing more than just saying some words in the House of Parliament. They and the wider Canadian society need to actually repent and change how they treat aboriginal people...

For the full text of this article go to: <http://www.christianweek.org/stories.php?id=937>

~ Tim Stime~

## Stories of Hope...

This year being the 20th anniversary of the infamous Oka Crisis, the various media are pulling old footage out of the archives to show them once again on our television screens. They are recounting the events that centered that fateful and tragic summer of 1990 around the standoff between the Mohawks of Kanehsatake and the Sureté du Québec (the Quebec provincial police force), and later by the Canadian army. It had begun when the town of Oka had called in the SQ to remove a roadblock on a dirt road leading into the pine-covered land claimed by the Mohawks onto which the town was planning to expand a private golf course. This intervention resulted in a 20 second shoot-out during which ninety-five shots were fired, one of which hit and killed Corporal Marcel Lemay.



Francine Lemay and Mavis Etienne at book launch July 11th

But this year, a new angle has emerged to the story. The sister of Corporal Lemay, Francine Lemay, after a long journey down the path of reconciliation, has translated a book on the history of the Mohawks of Kanehsatake. The original English version of this book, *At the Woods' Edge: An anthology of the people of Kanehsatake*, lent to her by friend and MPI associate staff member Céline Bastien-Genest, helped her to understand the history of the community and all the injustices they had suffered over the centuries. This enabled her to see past her own suffering to that of the people of Kanehsatake. Through a series of events, she met Mavis Etienne, chairperson of the Mohawk Bible Translation Project, who had been one of the negotiators during the crisis. Each asked forgiveness of the other for the prejudices they had had towards the other's community and a bond of friendship developed between the two. The Lord has now placed on Francine's heart the desire to see the two communities, Québécois and Mohawk, journey down the same road to reconciliation.

### Book Launch

"There are still barricades in the hearts of people, even though the original barricades were torn down that summer", she explains. "The first step to reconciliation is knowledge, information, so I want to inform the Québécois about the history of the people of Kanehsatake". So she spent more than a year translating into French the book which had helped her on her journey towards understanding and reconciliation.

(cont'd on pg 4)

**NOTE...** Rick Martin will be taking his sabbatical this year from August 1 through October 31. As part of our policy, whenever possible we encourage a sabbatical for personal renewal and refreshing. Linda will continue with her duties throughout as Rick takes time off. Please keep this in mind and respect Rick's time :-)...

## Prayer Needs

- ⇒ ...for the Grahams as they move to a half-time role with MPI
- ⇒ ...for children and staff attending Culture Camp 2010 and for the backpacking camp in Montana
- ⇒ ...for Ipaityoyoop youth ministry on the Rez in Browning, MT
- ⇒ ...Adrian, Terry and Ray for the still numerous writing and speaking assignments.
- ⇒ For Jen Cole as she joins the staff as Director of Advancement. Jen comes to us from Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. She brings much needed Development expertise to the MPI staff.

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**Dates and Events ...**

More news at...

www.

mypeopleinternational.com

and

www.naiits.com

**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.”*

**Upcoming Staff Events—Dates and Places ...**

August 18-22—**Kids Culture Camp**—Sundre, AB—Tim, Yin Mooi and staff  
September 9-16—**iEmergence indigenous youth gathering**, Shillong, India—Matt LeBlanc with Dancing the Way  
November 11-14—**Aboriginal Ministries Council Meeting**—Terry, Ray and Adrian attending

**Training Events—Dates and Places...**

September 9-15—**iEmergence facilitates its first gathering** of indigenous young adults in Shillong, NE India.—Matt leads  
October 16-26—**Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization**—Terry is a delegate  
November 4-7—**Nĕstooāāk and Dancing the Way**, St Paul, MN—Terry and MN Team  
November 12-13—**Nĕstooāāk and Dancing the Way**, Edmonton—MPI staff and Dancing the Way, Western team

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



**Jen Cole** joins the staff as our Director of Advancement as of July 1! Jen brings a wealth of experience from her many years with Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. Jen will be connecting with all MPI staff and supporters over the course of the next months as she acclimatizes to the ministry and begins to chart direction forus in their crucial area of need for MPI’s growth and development.

Welcom Jen!!!

~ Terry LeBlanc~

**Stories of Hope** (cont’d from pg. 3)

The official launch of the French translation of the book, entitled *À l’orée des bois*, took place July 11, date of the death of her brother and the beginning of the crisis. The launch happened in the community of Kanehsatake, at the Rotiwennakéhte Immersion School. Previously, on June 18, a pre-launch event took place, also at the Immersion School, as part of the yearly *Présence autochtone (Native Presence)* festival activities.

**For more information on Francine's journey to reconciliation or on how you may obtain a copy of either the French or English version of the book, please visit Francine's website at: [www.francinelemay.com](http://www.francinelemay.com).**

~ Céline Genest~

