



My People
 Nitiyiniimak
 Mon peuple
 k'l'aayitsuxadiidis
 Oyate Mitawa
 Ntmimajuinung
 Akonkwetashón:'a
 Δεφν06
 Mi Pueblo

Indigenews

My People International

Spring 2009
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Voice of Indigenous Advocacy

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A name to a Native American person is a very special thing, holding meaning and not just a p l e a s i n g sound. There often is a story behind someone's name.

Winona Yellowhammer



For Winona Yellowhammer the story is a long one beyond the scope of this article. Her names have been varied and many—each with their own significance and history. She has found something of her calling to be a voice for advocates for her people in her Lakota name Winona (first born daughter) Yellowhammer. She is an attractive strong woman of purpose and determination and Native American people are fortunate to have her on their side.

I met Winona at a Native American mission's conference in Franklin, Tennessee, where she lives with her young family. She heard about the struggle of my home community of Six Nations in its dispute with Canada over land. Her heart for Native people moved her to interview me on her Sunday evening Native American Hour radio program last year. She hosts the Mitakuye Oyasin program on 98.9 FM in Nashville with another Native American, Bill Patton who is married to a Choctaw woman and is also a great advocate for Native Americans.

Winona's father was Lakota from the Standing Rock Lakota Reservation in North Dakota. She grew up with adopted parents and not in touch with her Native heritage. When she was sixteen she began a journey to reconnect with her birth mother of Crow ancestry and learned of her colourful Lakota father, associated with the militant American Indian Movement. Though both parents are now passed away they left an indelible mark on her own activist soul. The last six years have been a steep learning curve as she has come more and more into her own calling on behalf of her people.

Winona has acted in independent films, been the MC for the annual Tennessee State Powwow, a spokesperson for the Native American Indian Association of Tennessee, a model, the Hostess of the Tennessee Eagle Award ceremony, and a Preschool Director for her home church. All of this experience is being called upon as she is pursuing her dream of hosting a television program advancing Native American issues á la Oprah Winfrey. Her grace and winsome style are perfectly suited for her media role.

Her crash course in Six Nations history eventually brought her to our Six Nations community. She has conducted video interviews with government officials, negotiators, activists, pastors, Six Nations members and neighbours, politicians, reporters, hereditary chiefs, researchers, lawyers, mayors and councillors, Native and non-Native alike. Penetrating and innocent questions have drawn a whole range of answers and insights into this long-standing (200+ years) dispute.

Many of the millions of people that live near the Six Nations community have strong feelings and opinions about Native land claims but know little about Native history. And since strong feelings combined with ignorance is a recipe for stupidity, the project seeks to inject some good information so people can have an intelligent discussion. As a Native person from outside of the Six Nations community she has an open door to people on both side of the dispute.

She is a quick study and has grasped complex historical and cultural issues with aplomb. She is hosting a DVD educational series and documentary being produced about the Six Nations land conflict. This has triggered creativity in her and opened a whole world of possibilities in Native American advocacy. She empathizes with women who have taken refuge in shelters and her own experiences make her a strong supporter of feminine dignity and vulnerable children.

I know that My People International has a good investment in the Native American future with her growing voice of advocacy. Winona is utilizing her desire for Indigenous advocacy working for MPI as Development Officer to secure long-term funding for its ministry

- Adrian Jacobs

PLEASE NOTE: Don't forget we have a new USA mailing address—see p. 4

Mon Peuple—Reprise

Many Christians are aware that the French-speaking population of Quebec is largely unreached with the Gospel message. But most would not be aware that this is even more true of the Native communities within the province that use French as their second language. Mission efforts of church and para-church groups in the past have not always produced the long-lasting results of a truly Indigenous church. Neither have they always been culturally sensitive in their presentation of the Good News.

Aware of this need, I felt led to do something about it. Using Terry LeBlanc's visit to Montreal as a rallying point, my husband Hector and I, along with our friends Francine Lemay and Daniel Lacasse, organized a day of teaching and idea exchange about how to reach these communities. Eighteen people accepted our invitation to participate in this gathering. Others, unable to attend, asked to be kept up-to-date. We were greatly blessed to have an Atikamekw couple enriching the gathering with their presence and input.



The day began with introductions and a time of sharing about our interest in First Nations communities, followed by two teaching sessions by Terry. He gave some background on Native ministry, and challenged us to seize the opportunity created last June by the Prime Minister's apology to the survivors of the residential schools, which has brought about a new openness for reconciliation and healing. He asked us: "Will the Church seize this opportunity to present the Gospel in a new, contextualized way, or will it just continue with business as usual?"

During the discussion time which followed, people expressed their desire for other similar gatherings for the purpose of learning more about Native issues and culture, as well as to exchange ideas and consider possible networking opportunities. Many also shared with us that the gathering had met a need, and that they looked forward to having other such gatherings in the future.

The contacts between people were really the highlight of the day. One young man (Innu/French), who is starting up an organisation to reach the French-speaking Native communities, was able to connect with Terry and MPI and will be working together with MPI on an ongoing basis. Two other participants, from a ministry to university students, were able to connect with this young man and a missions trip to one of the Innu communities is in the works for this spring. Several more people expressed the desire to exchange information and keep in touch with each other.

We are presently considering what will be the next step in this journey. We would like to have another meeting in the coming months to continue the networking and sharing of information. We are looking forward to seeing what the Lord has in store for us and for our French-speaking Native brothers and sisters.

~Celine Genest~

Emergence: *means...the way complex systems and patterns arise out of a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions...*



Last issue, we talked about the emergence of the next generation on an international indigenous level—a level we are deeply engaged with. In this issue we hear from Roger Boyer, MPI staff working with reserve communities in Southern Alberta (with involvement in other Canadian and US ministry as well). Roger's recent ministry report include the following...

The third week of February was full of ministry and opportunities for the youth and young adult focus of MPI. On the Sunday, I was asked to come to Calgary's Brentview Baptist Church. Together with Dr. David Spate, we were able to present the history of Treaty 7 Territory (much of Alberta) as well as discuss a relational framework to engage First Nations people. This was a great experience for me to go back to the first church that I attended in Calgary and have them open up their arms and accept me as a young First Nations man. This was great!

Tammy and I travelled to Eden Valley to participate in a training session on Native Spirituality and the Medicine Wheel. Sheri Little Chief had asked us to come down and share with a group of Bow Valley College students the importance of educating oneself about how to deal with the "bad" medicine of the reserve. I was able to share with them the importance of living a good and balanced life, infusing the Jesus Way into the talk.

Eden Valley has recently constructed a youth centre and 9 of the Bow Valley College students will be leading this centre in different capacities. So, the last part of our time together was to discuss some practical events or tools of engagement to get the youth and young adults off the couches and out to the centre.

Pray for Roger as he connects with young people from teens to twenty and "thirty-somethings"—on and off-reserve. Pray also as he gives joint leadership to this year's culture camp program in partnership with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

~Roger Boyer~

Quotables...

"Wisdom is learning how to use profound knowledge to help the community. If knowledge is gained but is not used to help the community, it is meaningless."

~ Frank Rowland, Cheyenne scholar ~

Beyond the problem...

A recent conversation made clear that, for many church folks, Native peoples continue to be perceived as a problem to be solved.

The exchange happened during one of the breaks at a conference I attended. The people with whom I spoke demonstrated a strong desire to reach out to aboriginal people; the perception that we seem to be an un-reached people group, however, appeared to be the primary motivator.

At one point during the event, a person from an identifiable ethnic minority asked me what the difference was between them and Aboriginal people their age (they were College age). I said that at their age a high percentage of Aboriginal people would have experienced the loss of a close relative by a tragic death and that the pain of grief is the common feeling for them. They would probably have been raised by a single parent. They would likely live in an overcrowded household. It would be just as likely that they dropped out of high school to help raise younger siblings, or even provide money to help their family. They would almost certainly live at a lower economic level and have all the attendant difficulties of that to face.

At the same time I said that Aboriginal people love deeply, to the point that they would sacrifice everything to make a new friend feel comfortable or provide for their family. They have little attachment to material things and are looking for something that translates into real relationship (even though we struggle to make those relationships healthy).

As I have said many times to many people, some of these circumstance make life a significant challenge for Aboriginal people—and we are trying to figure out how to overcome them. Others—like our commitment to relationship and different perspective on the material world—can contribute much to the wider societies in which we live if we are perceived as something other than a problem to be solved.

~Ray Aldred~

Up-and-coming

Street Level—Ottawa, ON, March 25-28, 2009

Street Level is a national conference designed to network, resource, encourage and equip those who work among homeless and street-involved youth and adults, or are interested in engaging in relevant social justice issues. This conference is presented by Street Level: the National Roundtable on Poverty and Homelessness. Terry is presenting on the 26th and 27th.

American Theology of the Land—Newberg, Oregon, April 17, 2009

Terry will be presenting one of several lectures at George Fox Evangelical Seminary in a series on culture and faith. This series deals with First Nations' perspectives of land related to God's redemptive work in Jesus. If you're in the area, come and join us. For more information email: jborgman@georgefox.edu

Dancing the Way—Little Earth, Minneapolis, MN, May 20,21

Joining Nicole is her sister-in-law, Vanessa and Sandra Crazy Bull who will be at Little Earth this year, May 20, 21, 2209. Contact Laurie Conway at conway752@msn.com for further details.

Indigenous Church: Expressions of Community—TWU, Langley, BC, June 4-6

The North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies (NAIITS) 6th symposium on Native North American Mission and Theology is being co-hosted by Trinity Western University in Langley, BC, Canada this year.

Inenimowin and Nestooak changes...

Please NOTE that the economic situation has put a crimp in some of our planned activities including the spring Inenimowin Circle and Nestooak in the Midwest. We are working to reschedule these and will have the alternate dates up on the website as soon as we have them confirmed...

Thanks for your patience and prayers as we make efforts to keep our commitments in the face of the economic challenges.

Prayer Needs

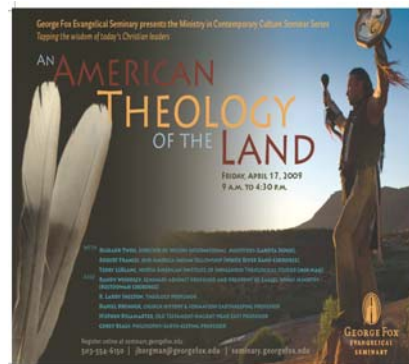
⇒ ...for the MPI staff—January's meeting laid out a gruelling course of ministry and fundraising to keep ministry going in the face of the loss of a major donor's grant of \$80,000

⇒ ... 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 28-Aug 1 ...pray for a good time of ministry

⇒ Marc as he gives leadership to the francophone ministry we have been privileged to connect with



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**PLEASE NOTE: our new US
Mailing Address**

Check out our website!

**www.
mypeopleinternational.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.”

Stories of hope...

“I do appreciate all that happened since 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)

March 25-28—Street Level, Ottawa—Terry
April 17—American Theology of the Land, George Fox Seminary, Oregon—Terry
May 3,4—Alderville First Nation, Six Nations, Toronto—Adrian, Terry, Winona
May 5,6—Kahnesatake, Montreal—Celine, Terry, Winona
May 7-10—Mi’kmaq community ministry—Terry, Winona, Roddy Gould
May 26,27—Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast
July 28August 1—Kids Camp at Sundre, AB partnered with IVCF

Training Events—Dates and Places...

March 30-Apr. 3—Dehcho Nation workshops, Fort Providence, NWT—Terry, Adrian
TBA—Inenimowin Circle—Winnipeg, MB
October, 2009—Nĕstooaak—Sioux Falls, SD in cooperation with Sioux Falls Seminary (final dates TBA)
June 4-6—NAIITS symposium, “Indigenous Church: Expressions of Community,” co-hosted by Trinity Western University with: **The MPI staff, Brian McLaren, Tom & Christine Sine, an Indigenous Youth Panel and much more...** Contact Anita Keith at naiits@shaw.ca for further info and to register.

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