

ABORIGINAL MINISTRIES IN CANADA



A special thank you to all who contributed to this study. The Rev. Mary Fontaine provided the liturgy and scriptures for this study, and each ministry provided a short reflection on their ministry. Our next study will focus on additional ministries which support Aboriginal Peoples within Canada. Study #4 and Study #5 will focus on our ministry with the Aboriginal Peoples of Taiwan.

Opening Prayer:

Ahow, Kohta'winaw, wi'ci'hin'an,
ki'timak'sinan. E'kiti'maksi'yahk oma
ayi'sino'wak ni'wahko'maka'nak.
Wi'ci'hinan ka'miyo'teheyak, kweyusk ka
totamak, ka'mam'tonetamahk. Sawem'nan
anohe, ka'nawe'minan. Wi'ci'hinan kakike
ka'nan'askom'tahk. Ki'nan'askom'tin'an. Hiy
hiy Kise'manto.

Creator (our Father), help us, have mercy on us.
We are poor in spirit, all my human relatives.
Help us to have a good heart, to do what is right
and to have pure thoughts.



Bless us this day, protect us. Help us to always have thankful hearts.

We honour and praise you. Thank you Great Spirit. ~ William Turner¹

Amen. (Amen is used to translate Ahow, a Cree greeting or expression, expressing solid agreement or when used before a prayer, it expresses deep humility and honour from the heart.)

Scriptures:

Read:

1 John 3:11–18

1 Corinthians 12:22–16

Malachi 2:10

Acts 10:34–35

Psalm 67:4

What do these passages tell us about love?

What do these passages tell us about God?

What do these passages tell us about God's relationship to all people?

How then should we live?

Ministries:

Cariboo Presbyterian Church: Nazko & Area Dakelh Outreach

Incarnation is the most apt word to describe the mission of the Nazko and Area Dakelh Outreach. Wikipedia tells us that **Incarnation** literally means *embodied in flesh or taking on flesh*. When we think of incarnation, of course we first think of Jesus taking on flesh and walking with the very ones he was a part of creating. We are led back to John 1 where we learn that the Word was with God and the Word was God and that everything that was made was made through him. The most exciting and mysterious part of this passage is in John 1:14, *The*

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Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighbourhood. (The Message) God loved us so much as to move into our neighbourhood, to live among us as one of us.

That central part of our theology needs to also drive our understanding of mission, especially among Indigenous peoples. Mission needs to be incarnational, being the flesh and bone presence of Jesus to those we are called to be with. Rather than bring First Nations people to where we are—into our churches and culture and ways of life, which was the approach that spawned the Residential Schools, we have been called to move

into the neighbourhood of our Indigenous neighbours and live with them, learn from them, and walk in their moccasins. That is the essential approach to ministry for us in the NADO ministry of the Cariboo Presbyterian Church.

By July 2000, Jon and I had been travelling three hours each way to the Nazko reserve on a weekly basis for six years. It was time to move into the neighbourhood. We have lived ever since in this remote community reaching out with God's love to those in our village and in our reserves. Being the presence of Jesus' love means coming with humility and respect to the Dakelh people and their culture and encouraging them to know Jesus through their traditional expressions. Some of the practical ways this plays out for us is having church in a circle in our living room; singing our praises in the Dakelh language and with chant on the big drum; passing a prayer stick when we pray; and engaging with their traditions around funerals and celebrations.

We seek to learn from the elders and leaders of the community to understand the subtle nuances of their values and culture, which are so different from the mainstream. If we are not aware of our own cultural biases, it becomes impossible for us to truly enter the understanding of another way of living and seeing the world. If Jesus is to be known to an Indigenous person, he comes to them as one of their own, not as a European. Our goal in ministry is to share Jesus from an Indigenous perspective. To quote our vision statement, *We will strive to be Christ-centered, Biblically-based, rooted in prayer, culturally honouring and socially transforming.*

Incarnational ministry does not separate 'church' or 'ministry' from the rest of life. We do not compartmentalize our lives. Ministry happens when we lead our after-school kids' program, teaching the stories of the Bible through our



Indigenous girl and boy puppets Beni and Soozie. It happens when we drive someone to town who was walking down the road. We are the presence of Jesus when we either attend or lead funerals for our young people whom we have lost to suicide, addictions, or violence. A cup of tea with bannock in the home of an elder, or working a deer hide with a neighbour are opportunities for us to affirm the culture while showing the love of Christ. Respect and acceptance can be hard won as the people have experienced the impact of the residential schools, and later the attempts by churches to evangelize them without taking time to build a relationship.

Our willingness to give the last 24 years of our lives to this community has opened doors so that people now welcome us into the struggles and joys of their lives asking



for prayer when they are hurting or afraid and teasing and joking while we sit around the fire.

Mission in Nazko is not about creating programs but building relationships. When people allow us to get deeper into their lives, we bring Jesus with us and they can discover that he has been with them all along. We are truly blessed to be called to 'move into the neighbourhood' of our Dakelh family, and blessed that the Presbyterian Church helps to provide for us to be here.

~ Rev. Shannon Bell

Cedar Tree Ministries

Cedar Tree Ministries is working to respectfully form relationships with the First Nations People across Vancouver Island and find culturally appropriate ways to share the Good News that we have received by the power of the Spirit, the news of our loving God's longing for reconciliation with all people, and the work of Jesus Christ to reconcile us to God and to one another.

The Rev. Joey Cho and his wife Kelly, together with their family, have spent the past 17 years deeply involved in outreach to the Cowichan and other First Nations people in Vancouver Island.

Cedar Tree Ministries' vision and goal is to extend its ministries to First Nations communities across Vancouver Island by restoring and starting churches on the reserves.



In June 2007, Cowichan Grace Church was established in the Cowichan Tribe. Along with Sunday morning worship and Sunday school (where 50 adults and 15-20 children attend regularly), the Cowichan Grace Congregation has been active in many ministries, such as the Scholarship Committee, Helping Hands Ministry, Mini Food Bank, Serving with Community Dinner, and providing a mid-week children's program.



The ministry of hospitality is also practised weekly during their Tuesday Sharing Day Drop-in Centre, where free clothing and household items are made available, along with a meal (recently changed to Mini Food Bank). On Thursdays, the church opens its doors by hosting, Healing Our Spirit, which provides counselling and a meeting. On Fridays, we host a youth meeting for children and youth. During the summer, we hold a Vacation Bible School (VBS) for 50 children.

We have also been active in other areas. In June 2015, we were invited to begin holding worship services on the Malahat Reserve, Mill Bay, BC, south of Duncan. At first we had Sunday services on the beach or within a home. Now, we are holding services in the Treaty Centre.

In September 2016, we began having a Family Service and Kids Bible Club on Tuesdays within a home in Kulleet Bay, which is on the Stz'uminus Frist Nations in Ladysmith, BC.

In October 2017, we began Kids Ministry once a month at the Youth Centre- Soaring Eagle on the Huu-ay-aht First Nation Band in Bamfield, BC.

In July 2018, we had our first VBS at the Pacheedaht First Nation Band in Port Renfrew, BC, and now we have Kids Bible Club at the Yellow House Youth Centre each month.



Cedar Tree Ministries share God's heart for justice to the First Nations around this area, and recognize the sad legacy left from residential schools and other aspects of First Nations life in Canada. We see great hope and opportunity for the spreading of the gospel and much healing and reconciliation through the work of Cedar Tree Ministries and hope that you do too.

~ Rev. Joey Yongwan Cho, Executive Director

Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry (SNCM)



It is difficult to know what can be done about the growing homeless situation in Saskatoon. During the winter months, the homeless shelters are filled to capacity and they are turning people away into the cold nights. We hear stories about families who live outdoors in subzero weather. Some of them try to keep moving, to keep on walking so that they don't freeze to death.

During the day, these folks come to our missions to take a

little nap after they have eaten one of our sandwiches. They sleep while sitting up on their chair in our dining area. One fellow who drops in on a regular basis has been homeless for several years now. He says that it is almost useless to try to help him with handouts of blankets and clothing because other homeless people steal his things, when he leaves them behind in his tent along the river for any length of time. I mean, how cruel can life be when society steals from a homeless man!

However, we do the best that we can with the resources that are provided for us. Indigenous families who grew up in poverty and in abusive situations have lived through some tough times. And they have raised their own children and done their best with what they had. We need to continue to support them in every way we can. At SNCM, we are serving and feeding an average of 150 homeless and street people four times per week, and we are establishing healthy relationships with the people of the inner city. Our goal is to invite these folks to attend worship with us and that is exactly what is happening. On some Wednesdays, we have as many as 30 people attending our mid-week afternoon worship service. Our goal is to bring people to Christ and to be part of his great commitment. And your support has helped us to continue on a road that is leading us to our goals. We also offer an excellent art program, a food program, spiritual counselling and prayer, and a small clothing depot.

Over the past 13 years, I have seen a couple of people turn their lives around. They used to be chronic alcoholics who drank anything and everything that contained alcohol.

Now they are completely sober! I like to believe that our kindness and guidance has helped them to change their lifestyles. They still hang around their friends on 20th Street who continue to suffer in their alcoholism, but they just tag along and they take care of their friends. It is good to have sober friends





who can watch over you and make sure you make it safely through the day in these sub-zero winter temperatures. God is kind and he is merciful.

Every Indigenous ministry in the PCC will tell you that they are struggling financially. We operate on deficit budgets. We all do very good and necessary work but it is a struggle to stay afloat in these times of poverty and turmoil in the Church and in the world. So, I pray that we will find a way to meet the goals of our budget for next year and that we will always be here for the people. God bless all of you as we move into another season of giving and sharing.

~ Rev. Stewart Folster.

Closing Prayers:

O Great Spirit whose voice I hear in the winds, I come to you as one of your many children. I need your strength and your wisdom. Make me strong not to be superior to my brother, but to be able to fight my greatest enemy: Myself.

~ Chief Dan George

When you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced. Live your life so that when you die, the world cries and you rejoice. ~ White Elk

¹ Translation of prayers prayed by William Turner, my late Mosoom, a Nehiyaw elder from Mistawasis Nehiyawak, Saskatchewan, was provided by Mary Fontaine.)