

The O'Learys

Serving Indigenous Peoples in North America

Bringing Hope and Healing to Tribal People and Ministry in Alaska

In July, Ryan travelled with three others believers/leaders from a consortium church in the First Peoples Initiative to provide trauma training for the staff of an evangelical youth ministry in Alaska. This training involved taking this staff through a two full day long trauma seminar themselves and to also provide facilitators training for these staff to be able lead Native people through this trauma seminar themselves, so that tribal people can overcome and heal from their own trauma.

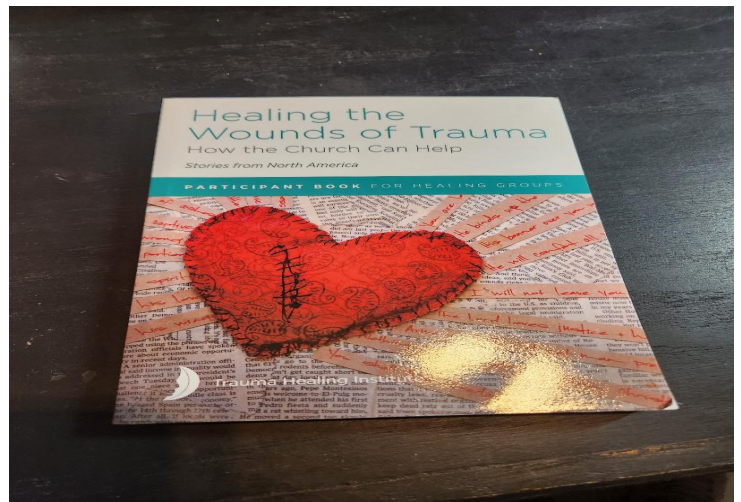
The core lessons that are a part of this trauma training answers the following questions and/or addresses the following topics 1) If God loves us, why do we suffer? 2) What is a wound of the heart? 3) What can help our heart wounds heal? 4) What happens when someone is grieving? 5) Bringing our pain to the cross 6) How can we forgive others?

After Ryan and this group of three others provided this training for this evangelical youth ministry of Alaska, this ministry is now bringing this trauma ministry to remote Native Alaskan villages and the feedback has been positive so far. For example, a Native Christian lady who is from a remote village in Alaska, who serves with another Native ministry, and who went through the trauma training herself had a very good report to share about the impact this ministry is having among the Native Alaskan people groups. Here's is what she shared about this ministry's impact so far in Alaska:

"I have been hearing over and over from pastors in Alaska how wonderful and life changing the Healing the Wounds of Trauma ministry has been. It has given them hope that trauma can be addressed in some of the most remote villages. I am working with one pastor in hopes that we can do the healing group and equipping in one village and people from surrounding villages can attend. I'm praying we are able to make this happen."

We're thankful to the Lord for how this ministry is bringing healing and hope among Natives in the great state of Alaska! Please pray that God would continue to do a great work through it and grow it!

At the end of the trip, the leader of this evangelical youth Ministry in Alaska asked if Ryan and another Native Christian leader would be willing to come back up and lead A trauma in this Native Christian lady's home village in Alaska. **(The picture to the right is of a Native Christian leader in Alaska and Ryan when Ryan was in Alaska recently).**



Reaching out to Tribal People with God's Love and offer of Reconciliation

Ryan was asked by a partnering ministry, a wonderful fishing ministry, to help with and share at one of their outreaches on the Leech Lake Reservation in July as well. It was a mostly sunny day as ministries and Christians partnered together to conduct this outreach on the rez. There was a good turn out of Native young people and their families at this event. Kids were provided fishing rods and reels and spent time catching a variety of fish from Leech Lake. A great barbecue lunch was also served. People relaxed and engaged in conversations with each other and got to know each other while kids fished. The outreach culminated with prizes being given out, and then Ryan shared a message from God's word based upon 2 Cor. 5 and how God has provided this world a purpose for living as well as a message to share. The purpose is to be an ambassador for Jesus and the message that we, the church, are to share is to implore people to be reconciled to God. Thankfully, God has made a way for this to happen and 2 Cor. 5 communicates this way. It states, "God made Him (Jesus) to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of Christ in God." It's through the cross and what Jesus did on it and our belief in this atoning sacrifice that we can be made righteous.



Training the Church in North America about Contextualized Christian Ministry

During this past quarter of 2024, Ryan attended the United in Christ Native ministry conference here in Bemidji. This conference brings believers and Christian leaders together from various parts of North America. The day before the conference, Ryan led a business leaders gathering as a part of the First Peoples Initiative to discuss ways in which to increase business development among tribal people. Jesus has directed us to love God and to love our neighbors, and the FPI focuses on loving Indigenous people holistically. A part of that includes addressing some of the economic and unemployment issues among tribal people. Our group had a very good discussion about how to create business activity among tribal people and some great networking/relationship building took place.

After this business gathering, the United in Christ conference started. On the last day of this conference, Ryan and a SIL missionary who we (Ryan and Kristen) are friends with co-led a seminar about the use of Indigenous languages in Indigenous Christian ministry in North America.

Ryan started the seminar by sharing how someone introduces him or herself in the Ojibwe language. After introducing himself in Ojibwe and translating what he said, he provided a biblical/theological foundation for the use of Indigenous languages in Christian ministry among Indigenous people in North America. For example, Ryan shared about the Tower of Babel, and how Jesus didn't remove Languages from people in this OT context; He only confused peoples languages. Then, at Pentecost, God gave diverse human languages. Nowhere in Scripture do we ever see God removing languages from people, unlike what occurred in Indian Residential Schools in the United States as children were removed from their families on reservations and reserves, were placed on these boarding schools, and were forced to not speak their languages. Carletta, the SIL missionary we are friends with, then shared more about how to help Indigenous peoples groups revitalize Indigenous languages and how the church can help in this process.



Languages matter because people matter.

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Leading the First Peoples Initiative and the National Association of Native Evangelicals

Ryan continues to spend time and focus on leading both ministries. This involves having regular board meetings for the National Association of Native Evangelicals as well as leadership team meetings for the First Peoples Initiative. We see both ministries making some progress. For example, we have identified some potential church planters and are working at mobilizing these church planters to eventually plant churches in tribal contexts.

Kristen also continues to be active as much as she can in the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women in that she has attended various events and training that help in the area of MMIW.

Ryan and a group of other Christian leaders have committed to having a Christian hockey camp in Alberta next summer and have begun having regular planning meetings for this hockey camp. The planning team consists of leaders from Athletes in Action and the Native Evangelical Fellowship of Canada as well as another Christian leader in Canada and Ryan. We are looking to raise the necessary funds to offer this Christian hockey camp for First Nations young people in Alberta and to build our team. If you're interested in helping to fund this hockey camp, please get in touch with us and let us know. We are looking, within the FPI, to raise approx. \$5000 on our end to help provide the total funding to make this camp happen. As a leadership team that is planning this camp, we are motivated to have this camp because it's an excellent way to connect with young people and to share the gospel with them. We as a leadership team agreed that evangelize is the focus of this camp. Please pray for this camp and that the Lord would open hearts and provide the people and funds necessary to make this camp spiritually fruitful.

We have so much more than we could share about what God has done this past quarter that we have found deeply encouraging. One of specific encouragement for Ryan and Kristen both is that Ryan was selected as the Bethel Seminary alumni of the year. While we focus on working for a reward that the Lord will one day give us in heaven, it's nice to be honored in this life for the work we are doing as well and for our service. We are thankful for your partnership with us in ministering to First Peoples groups in North America. We are also encouraged in that there are new people who have been identified as potential workers within the First Peoples Initiative, and they have started the process of potentially being appointed as full time workers in the FPI.

Kristen O'Leary

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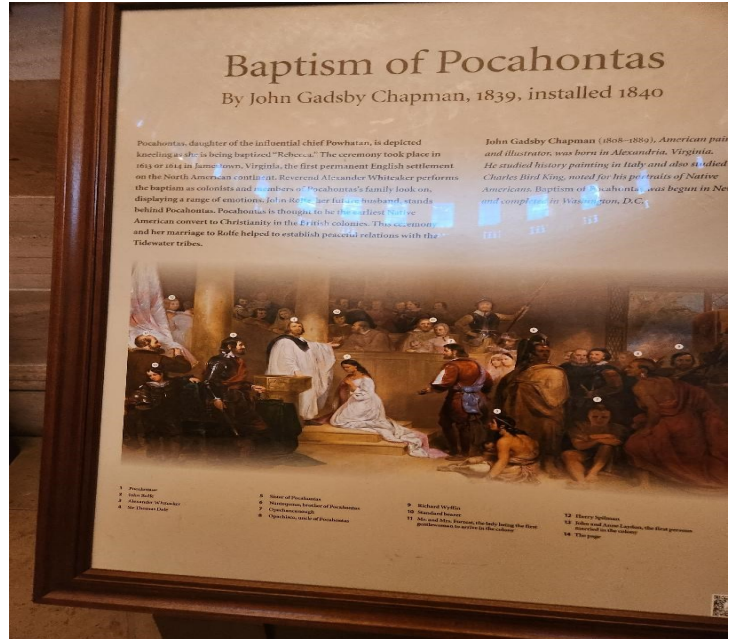
This third page of our newsletter is intended to be a “picture” page that gives you snapshots of our ministry. Also, we have set up a First Peoples Initiative Facebook page.



The **above pictures** are with two Christian leaders Ryan met at a church planting conference at a church in Boca Raton, Florida. Ryan was one of four leaders who were sked to participate in a panel discussion made up of global network leaders at this conference. Ryan shared about discipleship in a First Peoples context. Afterward sharing, a number of church planting pastors and leaders in general shared with Ryan how much they appreciated what he shared and a few asked to take pictures with Ryan. The church planting pastor at this church is on the FPI leadership team, and we continue to work at raising up Native church planters..



This is a **picture above** of Ryan with a Native Alaska Christian leader. When Ryan and the rest of the team showed up to offer the trauma ministry, this Native leaders’ eyes welled up with tears because he has longed and prayed for trauma training to be offered in Alaska and us coming and offering this ministry was a big answer to prayer for him. His name is Joshua, and it was a blessing to meet with him and begin getting to know Him more.



When Ryan recently attended the National Association of Evangelicals Board of Directors meeting in Washington D.C. the board took a tour of the United States Capitol. While Ryan has taken this tour various times before, he was particularly impacted by the picture of Pocahontas getting baptized that is hung in the Capitol building. **This is the picture above on the right side.** Ryan reflected on how the history of Christianity in the United States and Canada for many years wasn’t positive and life giving. In fact, the misuse of Christianity created significant trauma. For example, European settlers came to American and believed they had the right to remove Indigenous peoples from their lands because these European settlers believed they were Christians and that Indigenous people were not.

The federal government and the church also worked together for over 100 years to forcibly remove Indigenous children from their homes and parents on reservation and reserves and placed these children in distant boarding schools to assimilate them. Various abuses occurred in these schools while the children were largely taught Christianity in these schools, and the schools were run by the church as well as the federal government. We are now focused on changing the negative narrative among millions of Indigenous people about Christianity. The way we change this narrative is by educating Indigenous people about the truth of who God is as many have a distorted view of Him based upon what has happened in history and how Christianity is implicated in this traumatic history. Part of the answer is also something we already shared about in this newsletter, which includes having a culturally contextualized ministry among tribal people, including the use of Indigenous languages and that Jesus came from his own tribe, that being the tribe of Judah. In conclusion, any contextualized ministry always includes being faithful to Scripture. This includes baptizing people like what Pocahontas experienced in the above picture.