

**ASSEMBLIES OF GOD
TRAINING PROGRAM FOR
MISSIONARIES TO THE NATIVE AMERICANS**

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**FOR USE BY
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD US MISSIONS,
THE INTERCULTURAL MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD,
THE NATIVE AMERICAN FELLOWSHIP OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD,
AND ANY WHO FIND IT BENEFICIAL FOR MINISTRY.**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	2
NAMES & TRIBES OF THOSE INTERVIEWED.....	3
RATIONALE FOR TRAINING	5
A BRIEF HISTORY OF & CONCERNS REGARDING NATIVE MINISTRY	6
SHORT OUTLINE OF PREPARATION FOR NATIVE MINISTRY	14
DETAILED OUTLINE OF PREPARATION FOR NATIVE MINISTRY	15
PHASE 1	15
PHASE 2 & 3	17
STATISTICS	18
MINISTRY AGE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THOSE INTERVIEWED	18
NATIVE CHURCHES & MINISTERS STATISTICS	19
INFORMATION ON MISSIONARY UNIT APPOINTMENTS	20
STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION	24
SOURCES CONSULTED	25

Research Methodology, Statistics, and Concerns

The research for this proposal includes readings from books on Native American history, Christian Native American writings, the writings of missionaries to the Native Americans, and texts on and by foreign missionaries. Attempts were made to contact 132 Native ministers and 155 Native churches in the Assemblies of God. A total of 106 Native Americans pastors, missionaries, and district appointed ministers in Native churches were interviewed in-depth as part of the research for this project. The interviews included 59 Native ministers. A total of 20 reservation areas were visited as part of the research for this project, as well. Each such visit included extended interview time with both pastors and Native lay Christians and generally included a guided tour of the area. Greg Mundis, the head of the World Missions Department and Anita Koeshall, described by Greg Mundis as his department's "training guru," were also interviewed as part of this research. Seventeen Native ministers and four missionaries with good reputations within the Native communities in which they minister were asked for feedback on the completed training proposal and training manual. Fifteen of the Native ministers and three of the missionaries provided input. Every reviewer agreed on the need to train missionaries to Native Americans before sending them into their ministry fields, all agreed with the training regiment outlined in the training proposal, and all agreed with the content and topics of the training manual. No substantial revisions were sought by any that interacted with either document.

Both the training proposal and training manual reflect the consensus of the Native ministers, nationally appointed missionaries, and district appointed ministers in Native churches in terms of the need to provide pre-field training and the subjects involved in these categories. By overwhelming consensus, the most crucial aspect of preparing a missionary for ministry among Native Americans is to make the first ministry year a mentorship year under a Native approved and proven minister in the area and among the people where the missionary seeks to minister. Of the 106 ministers spoken with only three did not think pre-field training was necessary. One of these is an "urban Indian" and missionary ministering in city areas. Another is a district official and card-carrying member of the Cherokee Tribe in an area of high assimilation. He notably did not think that there was a need for continued specialized ministry to Native people. The final dissenting voice was an aged missionary who stated, "You will learn when you get there and as you go along. There is nothing that you can do to prepare for Native ministry because it is so different."

Twenty-one contacted individuals who had self-identified as Native American in the AG ethnic census were not raised in a Native setting, had minimal Native ancestry, and when interviewed readily identified that they were not Native American. These had little to no knowledge of Native cultures, customs, or ministry. Their information was excluded from this survey's demographic tallies.

Names & Tribes of Those Interviewed

Names in bold print indicate significant voices in Native Ministries

Native Ministers in Native Churches/Ministry

Juan Armand - Hupa Valley Tribe

Marvin Begay - Navajo

Wayne (J.R.) Boyd - Dakota/Lakota

Art Brant - Mohawk

Virgil Brown - Cocopah/San Felipe Pueblo

Ken Bryant - Choctaw

Darrell Callahan - Lumbee

Joel Cornelius - Oneida

Gus Craven - Ogallala Sioux

Roger Cree - Mohawk (retired)

Esther Cree - Mohawk (retired)

Lillie Cummings - Pawnee

Vern Donnell - Sisseton Wahpeton (Dakota) Sioux

Raymond Doke Sr. - Creek (?)

David Downing - Cherokee

Steve Funston - Navajo (?)

Dennis Hodges - Lumbee

Jackie Holgate - Navajo

Augustin Jorquez - Apache/Yaqui (raised in city)

Mary Laungayan - Choctaw (but raised white)

George Kallappa - Makaw

James Kallappa - Makaw

Ernest Keplin - Chippewa

John Maracle - Mohawk

Ralph Morris - Tohono O'odham/Cherokee

Brenda Morris - Navajo

Bill Lee - Navajo

Eric Lee - Navajo

Christian Lent - Paiute

James Lopez - Cocopah/Mexican

Dustin Miller - Delaware

Marty Paxson - White Mountain Apache

Kathryn Pierce - Muskogee Creek

Jerry Randall - Choctaw

Stanley Rios (no longer AG) - Tohono O'odham

Treasa Sabo - Nez Perce/Sioux

Vernice (Cheri) Sampson - Pima

Chris Sampson - Pima

Lyda Thompson - Yakama/Blackfeet

Sonya Whitemountain - Lakota Sioux

Native Ministers Pastoring Non-Native Churches

Richard Cole - Cherokee

Jose Delgado - Tribe not given (WA)

Becky Dickenson - Chickasaw (NM Net Super's wife)

Robert Elkins - Choctaw

Jason Harris - Lumbee

Harry Jackson - part Cherokee

Nathan Lopez - Tlingit

LaWanna Bell - Creek

Native Ministers not in Ministry

Holly Behm - Oneida

Jonathan Belgrade - Part Chippewa

Ray Doke, Jr - Creek (?)

June LeBret - Spokane Indians (miss. to the Philippines)

Ryan Martinez - Cheyenne River Sioux

Theresa Norris - Apache

Janice Novick - Spokane Indian

Tina Poncho - Coshatta (recent M.Div grad)

Charles Tuckfield - Inupiaq

David Maack - Ojibwa

Mark Bagley - Cherokee

Non-Natives Listed as Native Ministers

Sonja Adams

Diane Ashley

Melvin Bass

Lawanna Bell

Karen Coon

Ethan Cox

Rocky Davis

Don Demurs

James Dickey

Roger George

Ramon Granados

Lawana Hahn

Joseph Harrison

Thaddeus Huff

Shane Nelson

Donna Noll

Ruth Ransom

Joan Schuette

Al Weeden

Don White

Roger Woodwell

Nationally Appointed Missionaries**Joan Craver****Ruth Droll****Mel Erickson**

Matt Golie

Marian Hartley

Sharon Jimenez

Austin Jones

Floyd Jones

Jeremiah Niemuth**Don Ramsey****Charles O'Dell** (Cherokee, but raised in city)**Andrew Torbett****Sharon Torbett**

Johnny Wade

Dianne Whittlesey

Terry Whittlesey

David Wilson

Randy Wren

Doug York**District Appointed Pastors & Others**

Jonathan Biffert

Leslie Bell

David Busby

Jamie Campbell

Gene Chewning

Sondra Colton

John Davis

Rocky Davis (listed as Native, but not)

Terrell Gino (Mescalero layman)

Gary Gribble

Lonnie Johnson

Vern Kube

Edith Kube

Paul Lanuza (no longer AG)

Vance Lindstrom

Nathan Lynch

Alvin Martinez

Rudy Martinez**Joyce Meunsch**

Ivonne Nowell

Tim Sizemore

Bob Smith

Eric Sutton

Robert Sylvia

Joel Toppen

Chris Verschage

Michael Vohs

Brandon Wegener

Gordon Williams

Steve Winn

RATIONALE FOR TRAINING

The Assemblies of God has sent missionaries into the Native ministry for 100 years. We have over 500 self-identified Native ministers in the Assemblies of God today, but only about 180 Native churches. Only about one-third of these Native churches have a Native pastor. Additionally, less than 5% of Native people claim to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Based on these statistics, primarily generated from the Assembly of God list of Native churches and Native ministers, we cannot call our work among Native people a success.

In the early 1920's we realized that we were failing in our approach to World Missions. We changed our tactics, adopting the Indigenous Church Principle espoused by Roland Allen, adapted for Pentecostals by Alice Luce, and eventually honed and turned into a full-scale training program by Melvin Hodges. We initially failed on the foreign field because we substituted culture for Christ in our approach to evangelism and discipleship (colonialism), and were unwilling to entrust and empower the indigenous people with church leadership (paternalism). Talk with almost any Native Christian today, and they will cite these issues in Native ministry up to this current day.

When we turned and began preaching Christ, grounding indigenous people in God's Word, and empowering them to reach their people, our missionary efforts became more productive. We raised sister denominations worldwide, and our daughter churches became our equals, picking up and furthering the work of the Gospel.

We never learned this lesson in US Native missions.

As late as the 1970s and 1990s Native Assembly of God ministers were still being told they were not the equals of white ministers and that there was no need to treat their distinctive cultures with the same respect and sensitivity espoused by the Assemblies of God and proven by the Indigenous Church Principle. The disastrous result of failing to use the Indigenous Church Principle among Native Americans is the same failure we initially experience overseas. The same tool we used to correct our initial missional failure must be picked up and wielded afresh today in Native Ministry. It is time to apply the Indigenous Church Principle to Native ministry and to begin training those we send to minister to Native people so that they will be equipped to reach and empower Native people for Christ.

Beginning today, let us provide cross-cultural training for those that feel called to enter Native ministry in the same manner that we already do to any who seek to minister to cultures that are not their own. Let us also determine to create policies that empower Native ministries so that they can be self-governing, self-sustaining, self-supporting, self-theologizing,¹ and self-contextualizing.²

¹ Self-theologizing refers to allowing an indigenous population to decide on their own how the Bible speaks into different aspects of their culture.

² Self-contextualizing refers to allowing the indigenous church to develop within its own space, place, context, environment, and culture.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF & CONCERNS REGARDING NATIVE MINISTRY

Depending upon whom you talk to and the criteria they use, today, somewhere between 1% and 7% of Native Americans are serving Jesus Christ as Lord. After 300 years of exposure to the Gospel and missionary activity, one must ask, "Why is this figure so low?" The Assemblies of God formed in 1914 with the expressed purpose of world evangelization; this included evangelization of Native America. After over 100 years of Pentecostal contact with Native people, one must ask, "WHY IS THIS FIGURE SO LOW?!"

American churches, including the Assemblies of God, must acknowledge that they are failing to make disciples among Native people. The problem cannot be laid at the feet of God, who desires all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (Jn. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4). The problem is not in the Gospel message. God's Spirit inspired and empowered message has been transforming lives, communities, and societies for two-millennium. The problem lies elsewhere.

In North America, European contact with Native Americans began in the early 1600s. The French explorer Samuel de Champlain explored and colonized in the Northeast, establishing the city of Quebec beginning in 1604. In 1607, Jamestown, VA became the first permanent English colony. The Mayflower arrived in Plymouth, MA in 1620. The European explorers of North America sought land to colonize and perpetuate their particular cultures and values. They desired to establish new domains for their countries and themselves. The explorers also hunted wealth in the form of gold, silver, jewels, and other material resources. Many of the explorers, and the colonies they established, also attempted to evangelize, or Christianize, the indigenous inhabitants they met. Christianizing Native people was generally viewed as part of "civilizing" them. Thus, early on in the history of North America European culture and biblical Christianity were confused as being virtually synonymous.

Evangelization should not be confused with Christianization. Christianization is to substitute culture for Christ in much the same way that the Judaizers of Paul's day substituted Jewish-Christian culture for Christ (Acts 15; Galatians). Evangelization allows for cultural adaptation of the Gospel that promotes the divinity and Lordship of Jesus while avoiding idolatry and immorality. Judaizing and "Christianizing" demand, "Become like us to become a part of us." As Paul said, this is not the Gospel; it is another Gospel, and as such, is a false gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). A false gospel is an accursed thing (Gal. 2:11-13, 21; 3:10-14), those who espouse a false gospel are accursed (Gal. 1:8-9; 3:1-5; 5:10), and those who buy into a false gospel come under a curse (Gal. 2:4; 5:2-4, 7). It is essential not to confuse evangelism with Christianization.

The Assemblies of God formed in 1914. One of the prime motivators in its founding was the evangelization of the world. Early, the AG adopted the indigenous church principles articulated by Rolland Allen in his books *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (1912) and *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes Which Hinder It* (1927). Alice Luce wrote a three-part series in the Pentecostal Evangel in 1921 based on Allen's works but added the dimension of the Baptism and empowerment of the Spirit. These works discuss how to

develop self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing churches in foreign cultures. They also address the problems of missionary colonialism and paternalism that rendered impossible the establishment of genuinely indigenous churches in other cultures. In 1953 Melvin L. Hodges published his first edition of *The Indigenous Church: A Complete Handbook on How to Grow Young Churches*.³ This book built on the works of Allen and Luce and became the standard for training foreign missionaries. The implementation of the Indigenous Church Principle⁴ represents a turning point in the Assemblies of God's effectiveness in world evangelization.

Although the Indigenous Church Principle is espoused, we have not systematically taught or implemented it in Native American ministry in the United States. A few stories should suffice to illustrate the point.

In 1956, missionary to Native Americans Alta Washburn and her husband met with district officials from numerous southwestern districts to launch a Bible school for Native Americans that God specifically called Washburn to establish. These district officials questioned the intelligence and capability of Native Americans, addressed concerns that they were already spending too much money on Native ministry, and concluded that such a school should only be a local school that would not be equal with other Assemblies of God colleges or ever be allowed to accumulate course credits for transfer to other Assemblies of God colleges. The primary purpose of the school was to indoctrinate Native American students into Assemblies of God teachings, so they could help the missionaries pastoring their churches.⁵ Although with time, all these strictures were overcome, the attitude and actions of these officials stand in direct contradiction to the indigenous church principle espoused by the Assemblies of God. An ordained Native minister and nationally appointed missionary in the Assemblies of God became president of the college in 1998 and served in that capacity until 2004.⁶ Shortly after his installment, a white member of the school's board of directors took him aside and spoke to him in such a way as to imply that he needed to remember that it was their school – indicating the white controlling members of the school board, rather than Native people. Though this individual did not formally represent the board of directors, the fact of his prejudice, his lack of concern for the Indigenous Church Principle, and his controlling mindset are noteworthy.

Mohawk minister Andrew Maracle (1914 - 1999), in a 1992 interview, discussed attitudes and practices of fellow AG ministers. He tells of a New York District convention he attended in the 1940s, where foreign missionaries wearing African wardrobes laughed at him for wearing

³ Hodges emphasizes the three-self principle throughout his book and speaks at length about each of the principles in separate chapters. Among his many relevant discussion items he notes that missionaries need to bear in mind that they are: 1.) Primarily church planting evangelists, 2.) Temporary workers, 3.) and so must avoid getting bogged down in doing routine maintenance work, 4.) Take care not to undermine already existing indigenous works, 5.) Refuse to occupy positions that a national could fill, 6.) Should avoid jealousy over authority and position, and 7.) Take care to withdraw from a church plant neither too soon or to stay too long. Hodges, Melvin L. *The Indigenous Church: A Complete Handbook on How to Grow Young Churches*. Gospel Publishing House, 1953, 3rd ed. 1976, 126-128, Print.

⁴ The Indigenous Church Principle is the idea that churches should be self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing.

⁵ "Notes on Meeting of June 2, 1956, at Phoenix, AZ on the proposed Indian Bible school (sic) in Connection to Mrs. Alta Washburn's work." Phoenix, AZ: NP, 1956.

⁶ Information from a personal interview in December 2014. The name of the interviewee has been withheld for protective purposes.

traditional Native dress. They asked him, “When are we going to start having missionaries to the cowboys?” In the 1958 General Council, Native ministers put forth a proposal for a Native branch of the AG that would establish a Native American general presbytery while remaining under the umbrella of the national office. This intention of this proposal was to handle Native American missions in the same fashion that the AG managed its foreign missions. Maracle noted that this proposal was “turned down flat.” During the 1989 General Council Native ministers and missionaries resurfaced the proposal. In this instance, Maracle reported that more than one-third of the white ministers walked out openly laughing at it until the General Superintendent, Rev. G. Raymond Carlson, stopped them. A black minister stood up in support of the motion and was told he was out of order.⁷

In the early 1980s, a trained, credentialed Assembly of God Sioux minister pioneered a Native church in South Dakota. When it grew to 65 people, the district stepped in and removed the credentialed founding Native minister, telling him, "He was not qualified to set in order or pastor the church." The district appointed a white missionary in his stead.⁸

Stories like these abound and are contradictory to the Indigenous Church Principle articulated by Melvin Hodges and practiced in the Assemblies of God. Today, many churches on Native reservations remain small and are pastored by aging missionaries,⁹ or by district appointed white ministers,¹⁰ to keep the church from closing. Often, when trained Native pastors minister in Native churches, the churches grow. An Apache graduate of American Indian College in Phoenix, AZ returned to his home reservation in 2014, accepting an associate pastor position from the long-time missionary-pastor of the church. The missionary eventually left the church, and the church voted the Apache pastor in as their new pastor. This pastor reports that in three years, the church grew from under one hundred people to nearly four hundred and continues to grow today.

One crucial reason that Native churches fail to thrive is our failure to teach and implement the Indigenous Church Principle articulated by Melvin Hodges and those that went before him. The result has been a tendency for missionaries and non-Native ministers to treat Native people in a condescending, paternalistic, and colonialistic manner. This is not true of every missionary or non-Native pastor in Native churches, but it has been and continues to be all too often true as a generalization. Colonialism is the substitution of culture for Christ. Paternalism is the belief or practice of treating an individual or group as inferior and not capable of making sound choices for themselves. Paternalism includes the unwillingness to release authority and control to the evangelized group. The hard truth is that from a Native American perspective, the Assemblies of God has been and often continues to be guilty of both these faults.

⁷ Andrew Maracle, interview by Wayne Warner, Springfield, MO, March 17-20, 1992. *Home Missions* Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, ND, CD.

⁸ This information is from a personal interview in March 2014. The name of the interviewee has been withheld for protective purposes.

⁹ See *Table 1* and *Table 2* on page 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

An additional stumbling block to the Gospel in Native lands represents a second failure to engage the Indigenous Church Principle. When asked, nearly every Native Assembly of God pastor and Native Assembly of God Christian forty years and older testify that when they came to Christ, they were told they needed to give up everything in their culture to become Christians. This generally included Native language, Native style music, Native style dance, and a host of other items. To be sure, Native spirituality and cultural are often closely intertwined, and there are Native spiritual practices that must be avoided and rejected. However, many of these same Native Christians and pastors testify that discussions around what might be neutral, helpful, or hostile to the gospel in their culture never occurred. In other words, very little work has been done to contextualize the gospel in Native cultures. This approach to evangelism and discipleship has resulted in Native people being separated from and rejected by their people and their natural communities as they entered a new artificial church community. The failure to contextualize the gospel was an early failure in Assembly of God foreign missions. When we addressed this failure with cross-cultural and contextualization training, the Assemblies' foreign missions began to win souls and make disciples for Christ effectively. It is time, and past time, to apply the Indigenous Church Principle to Native ministry, including the principles of self-theologizing and self-contextualization.

These testimonies bear witness to the substitution of culture for Christ in Native ministry. While we must avoid syncretism, it is a mistake to ignore the smudge of God in culture. As the Apostle Paul stated, "In the generations gone by, He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness..." (Acts 14:16-17 NASB, emphasis added). Likewise, when in Athens, Paul made use of the idol "to the unknown god" and a Greek poet's words to present the Gospel at the Areopagus leading to the salvation of one of the important community leaders, Dionysius the Areopagite, (Acts 17:22-34) who later became a bishop of the church. In order to stop substituting Western culture for Christ, it is necessary to begin cross-cultural training for those led to minister to and among Native people. We must teach outsiders entering Native ministry how to contextualize the gospel and the biblical precedent for this. They must be taught to live with the people and to embrace the things of the indigenous cultures while avoiding idolatry and immorality. They must also be taught to ground people in the culture biblically and allow them to discuss and think through the intersection between their culture and God's Kingdom culture. The True Gospel never obliterates culture. The True Gospel embraces and celebrates cultural differences as is abundantly clear in Revelation, where the Apostle John notes he saw people from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; cf. 13:7; 14:6). This repeated phrase means that John heard distinct languages and that various cultures and sub-cultures were unmistakably visible in God's perfect church in heaven. We need to embrace God's vision of His church, not the aberrant human vision that demands, "become like us to become a part of us."

Biblically trained Native leaders have often been prohibited from biblically examining the things of their cultures, and traditional spiritual beliefs, in a way that fosters self-theologizing and the use of cultural items like Native music and dance that could further genuine indigenous churches. Cultivating self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating gospel communities

is critical, but it is possible to have these three items without actually developing an indigenous church.¹¹ As former Assembly of God missionary to Cambodia Jean Johnson notes:

When Western missionaries use their ethnocentric influence and economic affluence in ministry, they inevitably birth ministries that are carbon copies of their expensive, Western forms of Christianity. This action makes it nearly impossible for local disciples of Christ to implement effective evangelism, discipleship, worship, acts of compassion, leadership training, and church planting by mobilizing their own local resources and cultural expressions.¹²

If one visits the typical Native Assembly of God church, one will discover a building that looks like any other church building in the dominant culture.¹³ The structure is the same. The sanctuary is set up in a lecture hall style as in dominant culture, separate rooms are set aside for Sunday school, children's ministries, youth ministries, etc. The lecture hall sanctuaries generally include a raised platform, lecture podium, contemporary dominant-culture musical instruments, sound systems, and PowerPoint projectors. None of this is wrong in and of itself, but this approach does not generally reflect anything that helps the church to be a genuinely indigenous Native church. Such approaches to ministry are not likely to foster self-propagating Gospel communities since the church operates as a foreign rather than an indigenous entity.

Furthermore, Assembly of God policies that are helpful in mainstream America often hinder the development of self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating Native churches. The hindrances come in numerous forms.

First, many Native churches are small and do not meet the numerical requirements to be considered sovereign churches. Instead, they remain district affiliated or PAC churches. At a practical level, this means that the district must approve the decisions of the local Native church board. As a result, many Native pastors and nationally appointed missionaries note that it is tough to recruit and retain board members (church leaders!) because they believe the decisions they make are meaningless since they are subject to the approval of others. The result is that this non-missional approach undermines the development of self-governing Native churches. To foster Native church growth, Native ministers and Native Christians must be empowered and allowed to make their own governance decisions and allowed to take responsibility for both the fruits and failures of their choices. This is not to say that help and guidance is unnecessary or undesirable. However, freedom and genuine responsibility must be extended for an indigenous work to become genuinely indigenous.

¹¹ Jean Johnson, *We Are Not the Hero: A Missionary's guide for Sharing Christ, Not a Culture of Dependency*. Sisters, OR: Deep River Books, 2012, 16-17.

¹² *Ibid*, 17.

¹³ "Dominant culture" is the expression used by many Native people to describe mainstream America. This term is used both to reflect Native terminology and because it illustrates the Native sense of suppression by dominant culture and foreignness between dominant and Native cultures.

Not only has self-governance been hindered in Native ministries, so has the development of self-supporting Native churches. This hindrance takes various forms, and we must acknowledge that some reservations are particularly lacking in material resources. Establishing self-supporting and self-governing churches in such areas may require a different model than is used in dominant culture. In addition to the issue of poverty, is the problem of learned helplessness and learned dependence on many reservations. Learned helplessness and dependence is the unfortunate result of a long list of government and ecclesiastical policies that have undermined Native societies and individuals within those societies. Suggestions for possible alternatives must wait for the moment. However, it is vital to recognize that formal missionary activity has often perpetuated an unhealthy dependency in Native ministry. What should be acknowledged within these created problems of poverty and learned helplessness is that such problems do not thwart the Lord God Almighty, His Gospel, and the work of His Spirit. The earth is the Lord's as is the fullness thereof (Ps. 24:1; 1 Cor. 10:26). The Israelites had been forced into poverty and learned helplessness during their slavery in Egypt. God not only delivered them from bondage but also turned them into a sovereign and formidable nation as they learned dependence upon Him. God is capable of doing the same thing in Native country today.

At an earlier time, many Assembly of God missionaries to Native Americans were sent out and established many Native Assemblies. Native ministers also took their places as Native pastors and missionaries to Native people. Even so, one early and on-going complaint is that when a dominant culture missionary leaves a Native church, they take the resources they bring to the work with them, thus leaving the church without the resources required to continue in the fashion to which it had become accustomed. Often, missionaries would purchase a mobile home to live in on the reservation and place it on the church property. Many reservation churches must include housing, because many reservations do not allow outsiders to live on them, unless the church provides accommodations. When the missionaries left, they often took the mobile home with them, so the next pastor had no place to live. Any time a church becomes dependent on outside resources, such as Speed-the-Light vehicles and other forms of outside material support, an unsustainable dependency is created.¹⁴ We have too often advanced an unsustainable financial dependency that Jean Johnson warns against, and that flies in the face of developing self-supporting churches.

We must develop Native churches that rely primarily on local resources. In some situations, this will mean that the form the Gospel community takes will look significantly different from what the church looks like in dominant culture. Again, this is not to say that Native ministry cannot benefit from outside resources. However, to help develop the infrastructure needed for healthy churches and gospel institutions, we must strategically deploy resources in the same manner as in foreign missions.

¹⁴ Roger Cree, "The Cree Report," NP, ND, 5. This document, written by Mohawk minister Roger Cree, represents the thinking of a consensus of Native ministers. The Native ministers presented the document to the General Council of the Assemblies of God after its creation. The document does not have a title and the writer does not identify himself. Instead, the title is "dubbed" and those who were involved in its creation know its authorship.

An additional issue connected to the principal of developing self-supporting churches is land ownership. Every Native nation/tribe is sovereign. Particular laws and approaches to civil government vary from mainstream America on reservation lands and vary from tribe to tribe. At the same time, every Native nation/tribe is subject to the governance of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Department of the Interior, and Congressional oversight. These agencies exercise a great deal of control over Native lands and funds. Often Native land cannot be purchased by or given to outside individuals or organizations. Sometimes this is the result of tribal laws; at other times, it is the result of federal regulations. This means that legal corporations like the Assemblies of God, or any of its subsidiaries, often cannot own Native property. The tribe, or a tribal family, may allow the building of a church structure. However, churches on reservations must lease land, and when the lease runs out, or the church group ceases to exist, ownership reverts to the tribe or family. In most instances, the building and fixed chattel must be left behind. This legal situation is contrary to the reversion clause¹⁵ that is a part of all churches within the Assemblies of God, but must be understood and accepted regarding building projects on Native lands.

Additionally, Native people find it reprehensible when an individual or corporation desires or seeks to own Native land. This strong emotional disgust is part of the historic wound still felt by most Native people and is connected to the theft of Native territory over the last three hundred years. It is offensive to suggest, or attempt, to own land that belongs to a tribe or family within the tribe. Native people view such behavior as one more attempt in a long list of governmental and church led reduction of Native territory. A missional approach to establishing indigenous Native churches must include the concept of Native ownership and investment into Native ministry, as a gift that will not revert to the giver but is offered freely to the Lord to establish God's Work.

Since practices have been engaged in that undermine the development of self-governance and self-support within Native churches, it should come as little surprise that there is also a struggle to develop self-propagating churches. Since there is no real ownership, and since resourcing can dry up or disappear as leadership changes, why should a person become a part of or invite others to become a part of such an organization?

We suggest the following approach to training those that want to serve as missionaries to Native people. The goal is to develop sustainable Indigenous Native churches in America according to the practices articulated by R. A. Allen and Melvin Hodges and implemented by the Assemblies of God for nearly a century in world missions. In a nutshell, those seeking to become missionaries to Native people, whether in pastoral positions or teaching positions at the remaining Native Bible colleges should be trained in:

¹⁵ I.e., Normally, the last clause in a church's by-laws specifies that should the church cease to exist the property and chattel legally transfer to another religious non-profit organization. In the Assemblies of God, the designated entity is usually the district the in which the church is located.

1. Cultural awareness, including:
 - a. A panoramic overview of Native histories and cultures in the USA.
 - b. Learning about the particular Native culture and its history, including the historic wounds and particular wounds associated with the church.
2. Cross-cultural communication, including
 - a. Developing a general awareness that other cultures have different value systems and approaches to communicating.
 - b. Developing a particular awareness of the specific Native culture's values and approach to communication.
3. Language: addressing the importance of learning some of the target culture's language as part of fruitful ministry. This should include both oral and non-oral communication.
4. Mentorship by proven Native ministers and missionaries that have come to understand and are accepted by the Native people whom they minister to and with.
5. Intentional Internship before release to independent ministry:¹⁶
 - a. By a proven Native minister or missionary as described above.
 - b. For one year among the target Nation/Tribe.
 - c. Readiness and release to ministry acknowledged by the mentor and a group of US Missions leaders to include National Native leaders and Native leaders from the target area.
 - d. **An intentional internship and mentorship are the most important of all the training pieces.**

¹⁶ This is the most important of the training pieces and is often the first item mentioned in my interviews with Native pastors, missionaries to Native people that are currently on the field, and even those simply sent into a Native work by a district.

SHORT OUTLINE FOR PREPARATION FOR NATIVE MINISTRY

Phase 1:

1. Recruitment
2. Initial Springfield Meeting
 - a. Meeting of missionary candidates with US Missions officials for Q&A and initial acceptance as missionaries.
 - b. Initial acceptance
 - c. Week of Training.
3. The first year of itineration
4. One week of Training in Native Country
 - a. Pre-meeting assignments in preparation for Native ministry and the week of training.
 - b. Training includes hands-on ministry and class style discussions.
5. Debriefing

Phase 2

1. The second year of itineration
2. 1-week of follow up training.
3. 1-year mentorship under a Native leader or approved missionary on the candidate's specific field after itineration is complete and before beginning independent ministry.
4. Debriefing
5. Final Approval for Ministry

Phase 3

1. Release to independent ministry
2. On-going mentorship
3. 4-year ministry review

The internship must be among the particular group to whom the missionary proposes to minister. The internship mentor should also be the person assigned to mentor the missionary candidate at the beginning when the candidate is initially accepted. The mentor should act as an on-going resource of help and guidance once the missionary is on the field.

DETAILED OUTLINE FOR PREPARATION FOR NATIVE MINISTRY

Phase 1:

1. Recruitment
 - A. Promote Native Ministries and seek out people to go into the field.
 - B. Individuals contact Springfield and start the missionary application process.
 - C. Individuals fill out all the required paperwork, etc. required by Springfield.
 - D. Acceptable candidates go to Springfield for personal interviews along with other US missionary candidates.
2. Initial Springfield Meeting
 - A. Meeting of missionary candidates with US Missions Intercultural Ministries Director for Q&A and initial acceptance as missionaries.
 - B. Initial acceptance
 - 1) Some candidates may be weeded out.
 - 2) Assign mentors to candidates. Mentors should be from the specific target nation/tribe.
 - C. Week of Training. Topics to include:
 - 1) Fundraising & funding maintenance
 - 2) US Missions paperwork and expectations
 - 3) Itineration & Missionary Ethics
 - 4) The Indigenous Church Principle
 - 5) Intro to Cross-cultural communication
 - 6) Intro to contextualization
 - 7) Field Issues
 - a. Understanding and embracing the Native culture
 - b. Contextualizing the Gospel
 - c. Isolation
 - d. Resistance & developing acceptance
 - e. Spiritual warfare
3. The first year of itineration

4. Week of Training in Native Country
 - A. Pre-meeting assignments in preparation for Native ministry and the week of training.
 - 1) Indigenous Church Principle Readings – Melvin Hodges *The Indigenous Church Principle* & R.A. Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*
 - 2) US Native History – Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*; Ken Burns, “We Shall Remain” – film series
 - 3) Specific Nation/Tribe – varies, see the reading list
 - 4) Native Christian perspective – Craig Smith, *Whiteman's Gospel*.
 - B. Topics
 - 1) Review of fundraising and US Missions expectations.
 - 2) Native History & Culture
 - a General Native history and trauma and its on-going effects
 - b Specific nation/tribe's history up to the present day.
 - c General cross-cultural understanding and principles
 - d Cultural training specific to the target nation/tribe/rez.
 - 3) Contextualization & syncretism
 - 4) Establishing an Indigenous Church/Work
 - a Goal: Self-governing, self-supporting, self-sustaining, self-theologizing, indigenous worship, self-contextualizing.
 - b The intentional missionary:
 - i. Establish the work and turn over the keys.
 - ii. Preliminary tasks: Evangelist, disciple-maker, team-builder, leadership-trainer, mentor.
 - iii. Recognizing and developing motivated people
 - iv. Intentional biblical training of leaders.
 - v. Turning over the work in a timely fashion.
 - vi. On-going mentorship vs. paternalism.
 - 5) Spiritual issues
 - a The nature of the enemies attack
 - b Forms of the enemies attack
 - c Biblical warfare weapons and attitudes.
 - 6) Native legal issues
5. Debriefing
 - A. Discussion with individuals/ couples with trainer and mentor regarding strengths, weaknesses, God's leading, and entry into Native ministry.
 - B. Some candidates may weed themselves out; mentors and trainers may weed others out.

Phase 2

1. The second year of itineration
2. 1-2 weeks of follow up training.
 - a. Further readings and films/documentaries to be watched during the year of itineration to prepare for this meeting.
 - b. Further discussion on the topics previously discussed, but more in-depth and focused on the specific culture, history, and issues of the target group.
 - c. Distribution of reading and viewing lists focused on the target group.
3. 1-year internship
 - a. Mentorship under a proven Native minister or missionary who has been accepted by the target tribe and proven effective in ministry.
 - b. Guided hands-on service and ministry among the particular nation/tribe.
 - c. Ongoing discussion of indigenous ministry topics.
 - d. Release to pulpit and teaching ministry under the guidance of the trainer/mentor.
4. Final Approval for Ministry
 - a. By the recommendation of Native trainer/mentor
 - b. By the consensus of the Intercultural Ministry team.

Phase 3

1. Release to Ministry
2. The mentor should remain a resource for guidance and counsel.
3. The 4-year follow-up and evaluation by the Intercultural Ministry Department and the missionary's mentor.

Statistics

Ministry Age Demographics Statistics of Those Interviewed

AGE	Natives Ministers in Native Churches¹⁷	Native Ministers in Non-Native Churches	Native Ministers Not in Formal Ministry	Nationally Appointed Missionaries	District Appointed Non-Native Ministers in Native Churches
20-29	0	0	0	0	0
30-39	3	0	1	3	4
40-49	5	2	3	1	3
50-59	11	2	1	1	6
60-69	5	3	2	1	9
70-100	10	1	2	14	7
Not given	3	0	1	0	0
TOTAL	37	8	10	20	29

Table 1

Age	Natives Ministers in Native Churches	Nationally Appointed Missionaries	District Appointed Non-Native Ministers in Native Churches
Total % in Native Churches	43%	23%	34%
% 50 yrs. and up	70%	80%	76%
% 30-49 yrs.	22%	20%	24%
% age not given	8%	0%	0%

Table 2

The statistics in *Table 1* and *Table 2* indicated an aging population of ministers in the Native churches in the Assemblies of God. This represents a severe threat to establishing durable Native churches in the Assemblies of God. Native ministers represent 43% of all ministers in Native churches and are thus the largest ministerial demographic. However, this low percentile, after 100 years of missionary ministry to Native people, suggests a grave problem in fulfilling the mandate to develop indigenous Native churches. It is disconcerting that 70% of these Native ministers are fifty years of age or older and that 41% are seventy years of age or older. This aging population, with only 22% of Native ministers below the age of forty-nine, suggests a problem in the approach to raising, empowering, and

¹⁷ The respondents indicated in this column include some Native ministers that are no longer actively engaged in church ministry.

entrusting ministry responsibility to the current and future generations of Native ministers.

Additionally, although there are some district appointed non-Native ministers among those interviewed who evidence understanding and commitment to minister to Native people, a majority were appointed by the districts to keep the churches from closing. This category represents 34% of the ministers filling Native pulpits, and further suggests a lack of strategic intentionality in the Assemblies of God missional approach to reaching Native Americans. Finally, only 23% of those ministering in Native churches are nationally appointed missionaries.¹⁸ Statically, 80% of these are fifty years of age or older, and 70% are seventy years of age or older. This statistic also suggests a lack of strategic intentionality for Native America ministry in the Assemblies of God.¹⁹ This discussion is not intended to lay blame. However, these statistics suggest a current and coming crisis in Assemblies of God ministry to Native Americans.

Native Churches & Ministers Statistics²⁰

Native Churches on the AG Role	Native Churches apparently closed or no longer Native	Adjusted Native Churches	Native Ministers on the AG Role	Listed Native Ministers not actually Native thus far	Adjusted Native Ministers	Ratio of Native Ministers to Native Churches	Ratio of Native Ministers in Native Churches contacted
181	34	147	541	21	520	3.7/1	0.43/1

Table 3

Table 3 reveals several significant statistical items. First, after one hundred years of Assemblies of God ministry to Native Americans, only 1.5 - 1.8 churches have been planted and remain per year. This represents a severe failure in the Assemblies of God's missionary and discipleship efforts among Native Americans. Second, after adjusting Native ministerial

¹⁸ This category does not include Native Americans that are also nationally appointed missionaries. Their statistical information is recorded solely under the Native minister category.

¹⁹ These statistical findings were not developed during the interview process and were not shared with those interviewed. It is noteworthy that many of the Native ministers interviewed talked about the lack of practical concern for Native ministry during conversations with them. Those interviewed interpreted the lack of strategic intentionality as a lack of care for Native ministry and developing indigenous churches in the Assemblies of God.

²⁰ The statistics in *Table 3* were generated from a list of Native American churches and a list of Native American ministers in the AG provided by the Intercultural Ministries Department of the AG. Adjustments to these lists are based on actual phone contact, as well as church listings that indicated no pastor or which lacked phone and e-mail contact information. The adjustment to Native ministers who are not Native reflect actual conversations. In all probability, both adjustments are lower than continued research would discover.

statistics to accommodate for the ministers who self-identified as not truly Native Americans, there are nearly four Native ministers for every Native church, more than enough to fill every Native pulpit with a Native minister. Even so, based on the statistics generated by this study's interviews, less than half of Native churches have a Native minister in the pulpit. As has already been noted, 70% of the Native ministers interviewed were fifty years of age or older, indicating that without intentional intervention, a continued decrease in Native ministers serving in Native churches can be expected. Finally, the above statistics suggest that we must seriously re-evaluate and revise our approach to training and empowering Native ministers if the Assemblies of God wishes to maintain a gospel witness in Native communities.

Information on Missionary Unit Appointments

Missionary Units	Serving in Colleges	Serving in Alaska	Serving in Lower 48	Total	Appt. 1960-1980	Appt. 1990s	Appt. 2000s	Appt. 2010s
Appointed	5	4	4	13	0	3	5	5
Associates	1	3	6	10	0	1	2	7
Retired Active	4	4	16	24	13	6	4	0
Candidates	0	0	3	3	NA	NA	NA	NA
Total	10	11	29	50	13	10	11	12
% of Total	20%	22%	58%		26%	20%	22%	24%

Table 4

A total of fifty missionary units²¹ currently serve as nationally appointed missionaries to Native Americans in the Assemblies of God. Three of these units were still in candidate status in 2018, but each was in the ninetieth percentile of fundraising completion. Nearly sixty percent of all missionaries to the Native Americans serve in the lower forty-eight states. However, when one notes that sixteen of the twenty-nine units (55%) in this category are "active retired" missionaries, the dilemma of aging missionaries becomes evident. It is also noteworthy that the number of retired active missionaries in continental America is four times larger than those serving in Alaska or the two remaining Native colleges. The interviews with those serving in Alaska suggests that this field is the most difficult of all the Native fields and that an even more specialized training and screening

²¹ Missionary units represent missionary couples. Each unit is counted as "1" in Table 4. In the Native Bible colleges, normally only one of the people in the unit serves as a working missionary. However, at Native American Bible College in North Carolina, both the husband and wife in three of the units actively serve at the college. The information for Table 4 comes from a listing of missionaries from the fall of 2018 provided by the Intercultural Ministries Department of the Assemblies of God.

process should be employed for Alaskan missionaries. Finally, at one time, the Assemblies of God had four Native American Bible colleges; today, only two remain.²²

At American Indian College (AIC) in Phoenix, AZ, there is only one Native teacher and one Native administrator. With the exception of the Native instructor, the instructors and administrators,²³ missionary or otherwise, are not vested in an explicitly Native ministry focus for the college. None of the current missionary instructors, including the Vice President of Academics, has served on a reservation.²⁴ These statements are not intended to be derisive. They are simply an acknowledgment of fact. Native American Bible College (NABC) has no Native instructors or administrators and openly declared that it would no longer make Native ministry its main target some years back. It now calls itself a "multi-ethnic" college.²⁵ NABC is located among the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina, and its Native students tend to come exclusively from this tribe. The proximity of the school to the people has benefited the Lumbee people. The evidence of training at NABC can be seen among some of the Lumbee ministers. In contrast to Native pastoral presence in Native churches nationwide, Lumbee ministers pastor all twenty-three Lumbee Assembly of God churches. There are three main reasons for this. First, Lumbee people tend to highly respect the gospel and church members view serving as ministers as something highly desirable. Second, Lumbee ministers, especially a few key ones, mentor those that feel called to ministry. These pastorally trained disciples often pioneer churches, though some take established churches when they open. Finally, the North Carolina district has generally granted broad latitude to the Lumbee churches allowing them to develop more autonomously than Native ministers experience elsewhere in the country.²⁶

²² The two remaining Native Bible colleges are Native American Bible College (NABC) in Shannon, NC and American Indian College (AIC) in Phoenix, AZ. Although NABC continues to use "Native American" in its name, it declared some years ago that it was, and intended to be, a multi-ethnic college. Likewise, AIC has struggled with its identity and emphasis as a Native college for some years. In 2013 AIC lost its accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission, engaged in its "teach-out" under Southwestern Assembly of God University (SAGU), and in 2016 became a branch campus of SAGU. Whether it remains a college primarily concerned with serving the Native American communities remains to be seen.

²³ The current president of AIC, David Moore, was initially vested in the Native focus of the college, but since the merger with SAGU, this is less evident. Dr. Moore intends to retire at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. SAGU was not contacted as part of the research for this project regarding the future Native ministry focus of AIC.

²⁴ The current president of AIC served on an Apache reservation for six months to a year many years ago. He will be retiring at the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

²⁵ The information in this paragraph is based on first-hand knowledge and discussion with the administrators and instructors at both colleges.

²⁶ Most ministers in Native churches, Native or otherwise, describe a paradoxical situation. They consistently describe being installed in the church by a district official, being wished well, reminded to send in the required district offerings, and then having little to no contact from the district afterward. At the same time, these ministers discuss the need to receive permission from their district to make financial and governmental decisions because of being too small to gain or maintain a "sovereign" church status. Many articulate the difficulty this causes in raising and keeping church leaders and board members because they feel the

A common concern expressed by Native American pastors regarding AIC is, "We send you our students, but you do not send them back." Based on the statistical information gathered in this study, this statement is very accurate. Some have also noted that those that come back are no longer Native in their approach to thinking and communicating. Melvin Hodges in *The Indigenous Church Principle* pointed out the same problem in South America when the brightest and the best of the college-age Christians were sent to Western schools for Bible training.²⁷ It may be advisable to review his best practices and apply them to Native ministry regarding training indigenous ministers and establishing genuinely indigenous churches among Native Americans.

One final area of concern that is not indicated by the statistical research, but was a common theme discussed by those interviewed is loneliness and isolation. This was an unexpected category, and so no statistical data was garnered, and those interviewed were not asked for suggestions on how to address the issue. Although many ministers in mainstream Assembly of God churches will acknowledge a sense of loneliness and isolation in ministry, this issue was especially prominent in the conversations with both Native ministers and non-Native people serving in Native ministries. The underlying reason for this sense of isolation and loneliness goes beyond the usual issues of church leadership. In many reservation areas, the people do not live in close geographic communities and may have little contact with one another throughout the week. Geographic isolation, spiritual isolation, ethnic isolation, and cultural isolation appear to combine to create a more profound sense of isolation and loneliness than in other ministries. Such a profound sense of isolation and loneliness is likely to cause burnout and withdrawal from Native ministry.

One possible approach to addressing this sense of isolation and loneliness might be to begin sending 3-4 missionary units into a given area. This was the missionary approach of the Apostle Paul. A careful reading of Acts and his epistles indicates that he always had a missionary entourage with him. He trained young ministers in this fashion but also used his ministry group as a resource for pastoring the churches he founded and providing indigenous ministers. Mutual fellowship and problem-solving would have been a natural function of Paul's missionary entourage. Should such an approach be adopted in Assembly of God Native ministries the missionaries would need to be intentional in their outreach to the Native community and not isolate with one another. However, the ability to lean on each other's wisdom and talents could greatly facilitate the development of a church planting work. Additionally, each team member could be splintered off to undergird or plant other works nearby, and the dilemma of leaving a church plant for a prolonged time to itinerate would be alleviated. This method was Paul's method, but it was also a method

decisions they make are liable to be over-ridden by the district. Again, these statements are not meant to be derogatory but are instead descriptive of concerns raised by those engaged in Native ministry.

²⁷ Melvin L. Hodges, "Developing Leadership" in *The Indigenous Church: A Complete Handbook on How to Grow Young Churches*. Gospel Publishing House, 1953, 3rd ed. 1976, loc. 840 - 1119, Kindle.

effectively employed by St. Patrick, whom God used to establish a genuinely indigenous Irish church.²⁸

In summary, the findings generated by demographic and statistical information, as well as through interviews and reservation visitation suggest the need to intentionally reconsider and revise the approach to Native ministry in the Assemblies of God if an Assemblies of God gospel witness is to remain and expand on Native reservations and in Native country. The following page suggests some strategic suggestions to facilitate Assemblies of God presence in Native ministries.

²⁸ Cf. George G. Hunter III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West ... Again*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000, 2010. Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*. New York, NY: Doubleday Publishing, 1995.

Strategic Implementation

In light of the statistical findings and the concerns and desires expressed by the Native ministers, missionaries to Native people, and districted appointed ministers among Native people, the following suggestions have been accepted by the Intercultural Ministries Department of the Assemblies of God.

1. Create and initiate a program for training both nationally appointed missionaries, and district appointed ministers to the Native Americans.
 - a. This training should include all the elements previously discussed in this document.
 - b. The one-year mentorship in the proposed area of ministry under a Native pastor or a seasoned outside minister approved by Native people is not only the capstone but also the most essential piece of the training process.
 - c. Those serving in the Native Bible Colleges should also engage in the one-year mentorship. A Lumbee minister in Robeson County, NC, should mentor those serving at NABC. Those serving at AIC could choose a Native nation/tribe from among the demographics of the Native students attending the school and an approved pastor selected from the area selected.
2. Create localized structures for training Native Americans that utilize Native instructors, incorporate Native approaches to learning, and lead to Assembly of God credentialing.²⁹
3. Consider a team approach to missional ministry among Native people.
4. Initiate a vigorous new push to encourage Native American missions among those going into ministry and missions.
5. Create an approach that allows Native churches to become self-governing as rapidly as possible, so that district approval of local decisions does not hinder leadership development.
6. Foster financial/resource independence among Native churches by
 - a. avoiding practices that cause unsustainable financial dependence.
 - b. creating approaches to resourcing local Native Assemblies that remain with the church rather than following the missionary or district appointed minister when they leave.
 - c. encouraging growth based on available resources in the Native area.
 - d. creating policies that allow for the investment of resources without controlling or attempting to "safeguard" a worldly reversion of such resources.

²⁹ The Centers for Native Leadership Development (CNLD) could serve this function. The General Council of the Assemblies of God has approved the CNLD, but needs to be manned and implemented. It might be expedient to require every nationally appointed missionary, who does not serve the Bible colleges, to establish or be involved in such localized training.

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