



Witness

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A Moment for Celebration...

OR 'In the World of Witness'; OR 'Read Aloud Witness Minute'; OR ---

I recently received an invitation from a member of a church Missions Committee to provide stories for them to read out loud to their congregation, a story that would take no more than 1 – 2 minutes to read. We have decided to take up this challenge and will be providing you with a story each month through EQUIPPING. We invite you to create a tradition in which these life-giving and live-changing stories can be shared with your congregation. As we have not yet come up with a catchy name or title, feel free to send in your suggestion before next month's issue (Feb 9-04). In the meantime, we invite you to share the following story with your congregation.

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Native People Find Support and Empowerment for Ministry

Written by Donovan Jacobs,
Education facilitator for Native Ministry

Imagine that it's Saturday afternoon and for the third time this year you are sitting in a small classroom where over the last twelve months you have been discussing Anabaptist theology, sermon preparation and pastoral counseling (all at the college level). Imagine again that you are a First Nations person of Cree descent who has had a very limited grade school education and who's first language is not English. What are the first thoughts that come to your mind?

In the church of today, Natives such as Sam Ross and Lorna McIvor Ross are committing themselves to become equipped to serve in the ministry. However the challenges are significant. Mainstream Bible colleges and seminaries hold little appeal to adult learners such as the Ross'. Nor are the methods used to teach, able to overcome the cultural understanding that Lorna and Sam have as Native peoples.

In 2003, Mennonite Church Canada WITNESS Native Ministry began the **Native Anabaptist Missional Educational** program (N.A.M.E. for short). Its primary objective was to make ministerial training accessible to Native peoples. What it became was more than hoped for. Fifty three year old Sam Ross put it this way "I can say that now I understood everything that the teachers said . . . it will help us to know the Bible better and teach it better."

As facilitator of the program, I could find no more satisfaction than to look around the room and see the lights in the eyes of the participants knowing that what had been presented had hit home. When you see dialogue over certain ideas and theology, you see that learning has taken place, evidenced by how they are able to articulate their perspective. God has so graciously opened the door of opportunity for Native peoples. Let us pray and support Native learners who are called by their churches to serve and minister.

—brought to you by Mennonite Church Canada WITNESS