

Missionaries Target Native Americans With Gospel

It's been more than 500 years since the first **missionary** attempted to reach Native America with the gospel. Yet only 5 percent of the current Native population in North America knows Christ.

"The very first people that we tried to reach are now, perhaps, the last missions frontier on this continent," notes American evangelist Ron Hutchcraft. "If you look back, the very first missionary to America, the very first Bible translation, was for Native Americans. We've done better and know more about missions around the world than we do right here on our doorstep."

But why, after five centuries, is there so little fruit to be shown?

Hutchcraft says there are a number of reasons that **evangelistic efforts** have failed, but the most prominent has to do with Christ being viewed as "the white man's God." Many ministries worldwide are working to have fewer **foreign missionaries** and more native ones. In North America though, white Americans are still typically the ones trying to reach Native Americans.

"There's been a tremendous shortage of Native Americans who would be the leaders of the **Christian movement**—be the face of Christ, be the **voice of Christ** for their people over all these years," explains Hutchcraft.

It's a problem that's kept a people away from even considering Christ for centuries. Yet over the last 20 years, change has been on the horizon. Twenty years ago this month, Hutchcraft says, the Lord laid the plight of Native America on his heart. Thus spring On Eagles' Wings, a ministry outreach specifically

to Native American youth.

On Eagles' Wings has since "demonstrated that there are historic breakthroughs when Native young people are the messengers to Native young people," says Hutchcraft.

At On Eagles' Wings Warrior Leadership Summit conferences, youth from more than 90 tribes gather and hear about Christ. From there, a few dozen students choose to spend their summer moving from reservation to reservation, sharing their testimonies of how suicidal thoughts, drug abuse, sexual abuse and depression turned into lives of **joy in Christ**.

More and more of these summer "warriors" are moving into full-time ministry to Native youth though. One On Eagles' Wings alumna has begun a new **youth ministry** on the reserves of Canada. Two others are leading The Path youth ministry on the Hopi Reservation. Another is on the staff of a Native Bible School, discipling Native young men for ministry. Twenty-eight out of 60 "warriors" from last summer are now going to Christian colleges on scholarship provided by On Eagles' Wings to learn how to do outreach.

These formerly lost Native American youth are now paving the way for **unprecedented ministry**, says Hutchcraft. "They are, I would say, the face of hope for Native America for the future, and why I believe there is really hope of a Jesus generation finally coming."

Native believers are being multiplied, but now so is Native leadership. Hutchcraft says, "People who've been way too long overlooked, and way too long forgotten, and way too long unreached" are finally being reached effectively.