

Real People. Real Life. Real Hope!

SPRING 2024

# TRIBAL TRAILS

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# News & Views

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A department of  
NORTHERN CANADA EVANGELICAL MISSION



## Delivered in a Big Way

by Gilbert Plante

*When our Tribal Trails recording team did interviews in Winnipeg, Gilbert Plante was one of several who shared stories of God's intervention and saving power.*

Raised in a Métis home in Winnipeg, I grew up hearing about God. But into my teens I started to think, "Well, if I'm not going to make it to heaven anyway, I'm going to live life the way I want to." I started smoking marijuana, and doing all kinds of other rebellious things. I became an alcoholic early.

I was pretty young when I got married, and my party lifestyle carried on. Laurie and I moved from place to place to place. Every time I got out of jail I would say, "Let's make a fresh start, honey. It's time to move." We eventually ended up on the west coast. I stayed out of jail, but was still partying, getting drunk every weekend. I started using heavier drugs like cocaine.

I was working for a global corporation, and took a transfer back to Winnipeg. It was a high paying job, but with it came evening and all-night shifts, so I missed a lot of my children growing up. After work I would go out partying, and got involved with some individuals that I shouldn't have. Because of my drug use and my new friends, I lost my job. I started selling drugs, but then began using all the drugs I was supposed to sell. I accrued a big debt, so I had to find work to pay that off.

Then, in 2004, I was introduced to crystal meth. I had done all kinds of drugs, but crystal meth, by far in my opinion, was the most evil of them all. It keeps you awake, and it suppresses your appetite. So you're staying awake, you're not eating, and eventually with all these things, hallucinations begin. I started losing weight, and was soon down to 140 pounds.

**"I started to think, 'Well, if I'm not going to make it to heaven anyway...'"**

Finally, Laurie said she'd had enough. She said, "You need to make a choice here. You need to clean up or you need to get out." I chose to leave.

I had nowhere to go, and was basically homeless. My sister was working with the Métis Federation at the time. She told me about a program that would put me through school. I enrolled in a carpentry course and was told that, if I graduated, they would help me find a job. The Federation put me up in a hotel where I was getting three meals a day. I was going to school during the day. It was an amazing opportunity to get back on track.

But I just wouldn't give up the drugs. One morning I was at school, and I decided to walk back to the hotel for a warm lunch, even though I had brought a bag lunch with me. I was walking down Ellice Avenue, and a taxi cab came driving by, slowed down, and the window rolled down.

In a rather strange and supernatural encounter, the taxi driver gave me a ride to my hotel, then told me, "Do the right thing. Jesus

loves you.” I was so perplexed that I did the only thing that I knew how to do back then – I ran upstairs and got high. Even as I was getting high, I started thinking about what little I knew about Jesus from my upbringing. I had always thought that if this man called Jesus was really God’s Son, then why would He want anything to do with a loser like me?



**“I literally kicked his door open and said, ‘I hear you’re a pastor!’”**

However, I still wasn’t willing to give up drugs, and got kicked out of the program. I called my wife, crying. She said, “You know what you need to do? You need to smarten up and straighten out. You need to come home and be a husband. You need to come home and be a man and be a father.”

So I moved back home, but life wasn’t easy living in the city’s North End. I was insistent that I was going to stay clean and sober, but it was hard. One day I was upstairs in our house and the urge for drugs came so heavy. I picked up the phone

to get some. When I realized what I was doing, I threw the phone against the wall. I shook my hands to the heavens and said, “If there is a God, you need to do something because right now I just want to get high!”

In the midst of my screaming, there was a knock on the door. I ran downstairs, and there was this fellow standing there. He knew my name, but I didn’t recognize him. He said, “I’m Officer Cal.” I thought, “I just asked God for help, but I don’t think he’s it!” He said, “About a month or two ago you were in the back seat of my police cruiser.” I had been in the back of many police cars, and didn’t remember him. He said, “You were absolutely, well, crazy. You were talking nonsense. But the one thing that struck home with me was when you said, ‘How could God ever love me?’”

He continued, “You know, in my 25 years of being a police officer, I have not once looked anybody up who I had previously arrested to see how they’re doing. But the Lord has put you on my heart.” He handed me a New Testament entitled, “How to Find God: For Those Who Thirst.” I invited him in, and we chatted for quite some time. He told me about Jesus and His plan for my life.

A couple weeks later I was upstairs alone, while Laurie was out of town visiting her mother. It was about three a.m. and something woke me up. It was like I could hear a gentle voice. One side of the bedroom was dark, but on the other side there was some light coming in. And it just hit me ... “I need to go to the Light.” I fell to my knees crying like a baby. I said, “I don’t know how or why, Lord, but I need you.” Right then and there, it was like a ton of bricks fell from me, like shackles falling off.

Many people wanted me to get into an addictions program, like the recovery program at Union Gospel Mission. But at that time I thought, “I’ve been away. I’ve missed so much.” So I just put my faith in God to stay clean. God said, “I will never leave you or forsake you,” and I claimed that promise.

Just up the street from where I was living there was a church. I was still not working, so I started going there every morning just to sit. The people there started telling me about Bible passages that I should be reading. That helped, and the more I read, the thirstier I got for the Lord, and the more I wanted to know. I eventually got a job, and was reading my Bible at work on breaks. I heard that one of the company’s leaders was also a pastor. So being my impulsive self, one day I literally kicked his door open and said, “I hear you’re a pastor!” He looked at me with big surprised eyes and said, “Well, yes I am.” I said, “Well, that’s good, because I’ve got some questions for you!”

Our friendship took off from there. He took me under his wing, and we started studying the Scriptures together. I also took some online Bible studies. My new pastor friend invited me to his church to share my testimony, and I have never left that church! Along with more training, eventually I was asked to be an associate pastor. So the Lord has saved me and delivered me in a big way!●

*Adapted from our interview with Gilbert. Along with being an associate pastor, Gilbert has been serving as Family Ministries Manager at Union Gospel Mission in Winnipeg since 2011. Gilbert and his wife, Laurie, have three adult sons and six grandchildren.*

## FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR'S DESK

**-- By: Brent Wahlstrom**

NCEM associate missionary, Laureen Pattison, had heard many stories of lives changed through the ministry of Union Gospel Mission in Winnipeg. She serves with our Tribal Trails spiritual helpline phone ministry, and regularly volunteers at UGM, keeping their literature racks filled with Gospel materials.

A number of the people who have come to Christ through this downtown ministry now serve on staff at UGM, helping others come out of addiction, violence, and hopelessness. Last year the Lord opened doors for our Tribal Trails team to visit UGM, recording the testimonies of Gilbert Plante and several others.

What struck me was how many of these people had somewhat normal lives until something knocked them off their feet. They told how their lives took a downward turn because of abuse, of grief, or other situations beyond their control. This turned them to a life on the streets filled with addictions and abuse. They needed someone to walk alongside them and teach them the way of Jesus. God provided His people at UGM to do this.

Please pray that the Lord would protect from spiritual attacks each of these who have shared on Tribal Trails, that they would be kept strong in the Lord.

## FROM OUR VIEWERS

“Today I felt Jesus telling me to contact Tribal Trails to ask for prayer for my sickness and my loneliness. [In my previous calls] it has been so good to talk with your workers who truly care.” -- *A.*

“*T*” in British Columbia phoned to express her gratitude for Tribal Trails, because it was through the program that she came to faith in Jesus in 2004. She requested prayer for wisdom and direction in dealing with a relationship issue with her friend/neighbour that was making her quite distressed.

“I love the Tribal Trails ministry. It has helped me in many dark times in my life with depression and addictions. I have been watching the programs and phoning the prayer lines for 20 years. I am now three and-a-half years sober, and now work at the Mens Teen Challenge Centre. I relate to the testimonies very much. God bless you!” -- *J.*

“I look forward to watching your program each night as I go to sleep. The songs of worship are awesome!” -- *J.*

“I love your program and I watch it often. I am grateful to hear all the stories, the teachings, and the music, too. I find much inspiration and encouragement as I listen, read the Word and pray with you [when I call]. I have come to feel like you are all my friends!” -- *L.*

Recently someone wrote in on behalf of their family to tell how their 93 year-old father came to faith in Christ through Tribal Trails ...

“Looking back [we] can see how Dad didn’t read his Bible, didn’t pray with the family (except for giving thanks at meals), and he didn’t talk about the things of God. When he moved to a care home, part of his routine included watching Tribal Trails ... In January 2022 Dad was watching your program, as usual, but this time he heard the message clearly, and he accepted Christ as his Lord and Saviour! He called his children right away and, as the tears flowed, he shared what had happened and how God had saved him!”

“I received your inspiring book ‘*Real People...*’ It was wonderful to read about these people who have found hope and life with Jesus. Without Jesus we would all be gone astray. I love my life with Jesus! I love you all.” -- *R.*

*These emails, letters, and phone conversations have been adapted for space and clarity.*

## We appreciate & need your Prayers

● Praise the Lord with us for two new avenues for sharing the Gospel through Tribal Trails broadcasts ... **CHCH-TV** in Hamilton, Ontario ... and **Wilkins Radio Network** in the USA.

As you know, radio hasn’t been our primary focus, but we have seen how it reaches an additional audience. We don’t broadcast our programs on conventional TV stations in the States, but through the Wilkins network our program is heard on over 20 American AM & FM stations (please visit our website for station list). Pray with us for the Lord to touch lives, and also for His financial supply to cover the additional costs of these new broadcasts.

● We appreciate prayer for our **staff needs**. Even before MiLin’s passing, we were in need of program planners, and now even more. We are happy to provide on-the-job technical training for those with an aptitude and heart to reach First Nations people through media. (All our staff are required to raise their own financial support ... and we’ve found that those the Lord calls He provides for!)

## WITH THE LORD

On October 21, 2023, our coworker, MiLin Lau, passed away from cancer at age 73. While we grieve her passing and miss her dedicated service with us here, we rejoice that she is enjoying her eternal rest.



MiLin joined Tribal Trails TV ministry in 1990 to serve full-time as a program planner. She always enjoyed opportunities to meet program guests in person, and her evenings and weekends were always busy with local church work in the city of Prince Albert, including children’s ministries and visiting homes.

The Tribal Trails programs that MiLin planned and edited number in the hundreds. Though suffering from cancer and side effects of treatments the past five years, she served right up to the week prior to her hospitalization and passing. In fact, she was working on Gilbert Plante’s testimony (featured in this newsletter) just 10 days before her passing.

If you had the privilege of hearing MiLin pray, there was no doubt she was passionate for her Saviour and Lord, and strongly desired for many others to know Him.

# GENERATION HOPE

With our long running Tribal Trails TV program appealing for the most part to middle-aged and older viewers, launching a media outreach to a younger audience is something we have wanted to do for some time.

Over the past year, media missionary, Linsey Blodgett, has been devoting time and energy to "Generation Hope," a new online media outreach geared to teenage and young adult First Nations.

"Following Generation Hope 'sneak peeks' over the winter, March 15 was the 'Grand Launch' on our YouTube channel" @newgenerationofhope! reports Linsey. "With these interviews with First Nations young people who have Jesus as their Saviour, our goal is to share hope in Christ, and bring light into the darkness of this generation."

We appreciate ongoing prayer for this new outreach as interviews are recorded. Pray for production work, for many to watch and connect with us, and for spiritual protection for the young people who have shared their stories.

Linsey and her husband, Jordan, were married last summer. Jordan has assisted in "Gen H" video production from the start, and recently joined NCEM as an associate member. Linsey continues to build her prayer/financial support team.



We invite you to check out Generation Hope!

You can find it on several platforms. Perhaps the easiest is to go to YouTube.com ... in the search box type "@newgenerationofhope" or look at the website generationhope.ca

## WAYS TO DONATE ...

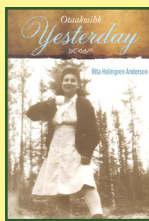
Check out [tribaltrails.org/donate](http://tribaltrails.org/donate) or phone 306-764-3388 for details.



Tribal Trails is made possible by the gifts of interested people.

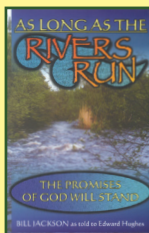
## Free Life Story Books

For your inspiration ... and to share the Good News with others ... we have several life story books written by First Nations Christ followers. We are happy to send you these at no charge (sorry, North American addresses only).



In YESTERDAY, Rita Anderson, one of our Tribal Trails hosts, tells of growing up in an isolated northern village, of unsettling changes that soon came her way, and finding God's plan for her life.

A NEW KIND OF FISHERMAN is the story of Gilbert Bekkatla who, as a young man, almost gave up on living. Through near tragedy, he found hope in Jesus, and a desire to reach his own Denesuline people.



In AS LONG AS THE RIVERS RUN, Tribal Trails Bible teacher, Bill Jackson, tells of his early years in residential school, taking a stand for Christ on his reserve, and the adventures of ministry among his Cree people and beyond.

Ask us about other complimentary books and resources available. Or orders can be made online at [TribalTrailsbooks.com](http://TribalTrailsbooks.com). Also, our contact numbers are listed below.



Tribal Trails News & Views is the newsletter of NCEM-TV, a department of Northern Canada Evangelical Mission (NCEM), issued two or three times a year. Subscriptions are free (donations towards costs are appreciated).

Since the early 1980s NCEM's television ministry has reached across racial, religious, and geographical barriers with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Your involvement through prayer, financial giving, and other personal contributions can make a difference in the lives of First Nations people who Christ loves and for whom He gave His life.

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Designated Giving Policy: Spending of funds is confined to NCEM Board/Officers approved programs and projects. Each contribution designated towards a Board/Officers approved program or project will be used as designated with the understanding that when the need for such a program or project has been met, or the Board/Officers have determined it cannot be completed, the remaining contributions designated for such program or project will be used where needed most.

A financial statement is available upon request. Pre-authorized and online giving is now available. Visit our website or contact us for more information.