

A Missionary Horse Whisperer

Valerie Brumbelow

Steve Horsman has an unusual hobby to go with his last name – he uses horses and rodeos to build relationships with people and teach biblical principles. In the Native communities where he lives near Redstone Reserve in central British Columbia, he has lots of opportunities to do just that.



In August, Steve trained a wild horse at the Nemiah Valley Reserve Rodeo as the rodeo crowd watched.

Local believer Jon Tanis and two Native men from the reserve had brought a horse in from the range that had been halter-broke as a colt but escaped and was left to run in the wilderness. Now a six-year-old mare, she had never been ridden and was wild and unapproachable. Jon had to drag her to the rodeo grounds with his horse and lariat.

Using a round-pen training method, Steve and InterAct coworker Don Gillaspie spent three two-hour sessions with the wild horse in a pen set up on the rodeo grounds. As he worked, Steve talked about how people must trust God in order to please Him, and how He invites us to find peace in His authority over our lives.

“We are like the mare,” taught Steve, “full of fear, anxious to protect ourselves and showing rebellion against all authority.”



Every time Steve approached the horse and raised his lariat, she became agitated. But he was watching intently, and if he saw any slight acknowledgment of his presence—a flicker of her ears or a glance from her eye—he immediately rewarded her by stepping away and lowering his lariat, releasing some of the pressure.



Steve continued alternately rewarding the horse for attention and obedience, and exposing it to other fearful things, calling for a higher level of trust. Eventually she walked up to him, allowing him to pet her, and followed him around the arena with a rope on her head — adding real credibility to his biblical teaching.

Finally, at the end of the third session, the mare was quiet while Steve saddled her, mounted and dismounted from both sides and rode her around the pen.

This horse whisperer just taught a crowd of rodeo fans that trust has to be earned. Only Christ is truly worthy of our trust and faith, and only God can give us peace through His authority and purpose in our lives. Steve demonstrated this biblical truth in a way that won't be forgotten.