

## Breaking the Silence

*Linda Ross's testimony as told to Shawn Strannigan*

Linda, of Dena'ina Athabascan descent, was born in Kenai, Alaska, the 5<sup>th</sup> of 6 daughters. While most of her childhood memories are happy ones, she experienced sexual abuse at the hands of a close relative. Intimidated by her perpetrator, Linda was shamed into silence for many years.

To escape the pain, Linda became the "perfect" child, earning approval with her good behavior while ignoring her wounded heart. As a teenager, she accepted the Lord at Bible camp and went on to Bible college in British Columbia.

Alan and Linda serve together as church planters on Kodiak Island.



There she met and fell in love with Alan Ross, whom she married after graduation.

The summer after her junior year, however, the pain of sexual abuse resurfaced in Linda's life. She was date-raped and became pregnant—and later discovered that the culprit was a married man. He disappeared from her life and left her to cope with the shame and consequences on her own.

Linda flew to California and lived with a friend until the baby was born. She put the baby up for adoption and then returned to Bible college. When Alan proposed to her, she finally told him about the baby. He immediately wanted to find

the little girl and adopt her, but too much time had passed.

The Rosses joined InterAct Ministries in 1971. In 1987, they moved to Kodiak Island where they've ministered ever since. It was in Kodiak where the Lord began to draw Linda's secrets out of the shadows and into the healing light of His love.

At a women's conference in the early '90s, Linda heard a speaker share about the atrocities she'd experienced during the holocaust. This was the first time Linda had ever heard anyone speak openly about sexual abuse. Over the next few years, Linda attended other seminars that addressed abuse issues and worked through the excellent book, "The Wounded Heart," by Dan Allendar. She obtained biblical counseling and eventually started a support group for abuse survivors.

In 1999, Linda participated in a S.A.L.T.S seminar (Survivors of Abuse Leadership Training) and was greatly impacted by what she heard, feeling that the Lord was calling her to be involved in this type of ministry. Linda has since taken the S.A.L.T.S. materials and tweaked them to fit her Native culture. "Hearts Going Toward Wellness" (from the Alutiiq phrase "*unguwatet asiyaturtut*") is now going strong on Kodiak Island, as Linda shares her story of hope and healing with others just starting on the path.

"We will no longer be silent," Linda asserts. "We will tell our stories and share our healing journeys."