

New Faces in the Circle

by Dan Woodard and Gary Brumbelow

A 37-year-old missionary partnership has a new look!

InterMission Cooperative Outreach (IMCO) is a collaboration of 11 agencies, including InterAct Ministries, serving among Canada's First Nations communities.



IMCO delegates convened for a November 2008 gathering.

IMCO was birthed by missionary leaders. As a child and young adult, this partnership had an Anglo face. Missionaries provided most of its energy and leadership. But the landscape of the First Nations church of Canada has been changing, and now IMCO has changed as well.

What has changed? For one thing, God has raised up First Nations leaders with the vision and skills to give direction to Canada's Native churches.

Over the last two years, Native leaders from various groups have joined missionary leaders for frank and open discussions about needed changes in the IMCO partnership. Some of these meetings were coordinated by NEFC (Native Evangelical Fellowship of

Canada) and some by FNACC (First Nations Alliance Churches of Canada).

Cliff Bird is one of those leaders. Cliff is the founding pastor of a First Nations church in Montreal Lake,



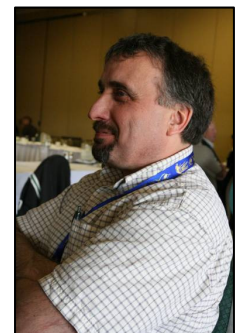
Saskatchewan, affiliated with FNACC.

"I think change is here now," Cliff observed at a recent gathering. "Change can cause a knee-jerk reaction. ... It's imperative to respond to change with wisdom that can only come from above."

Most of the change has been gradual, like magma building inside a volcano. But a very healthy "eruption" took place last November, at the biannual IMCO gathering in Calgary, Alberta.

That meeting included vigorous discussions about how to adjust IMCO in light of today's realities. Three days of honest talk resulted in a decision to "reconstitute" IMCO "as a biannual talking circle of Christian leaders called to ministry among the First Nations."

Cliff Bird and InterAct's Canada field director, **Dan Mayerle**, were appointed as new co-chairs. Their first task is to propose alternate



names for IMCO and to organize the first meeting of this talking circle to be held in May 2009.

The IMCO label will be retired. A new name will capture the relational partnering wave. And the First Nations church-planting movement will continue to grow as a testimony of our Lord's promise and commitment, "*I will build my church, and nothing will stop it!*"

*InterAct's **Dan Woodard** serves as IMCO administrator.*



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