

THE IBC EPISTLE



A newsletter published by Indigenous Bible College (*historically Indian Bible College*)



From Crisis to Character—Reflecting on Five Years of Pandemic Impact

By Dr. Jason Koppen, President

It's hard to believe that it has been a full five years since the world was turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic. For the IBC community, 2020 was a year characterized by uncertainty, prayer, lament, and hope. The loss of community and connection on our small campus was a source of grief as classes went online, many students returned home, most prospective students decided not to come, and families celebrated commencement from their cars. The volunteers who usually enliven and revitalize our campus over the summer months were absent. Some of these painful outcomes lasted for several years. From the outside, IBC looked like a tree that had lost its leaves and gone dormant for the long winter months. But much like the bare trees that surround many of us at this time of year in the Northern Hemisphere, a hidden flourishing was taking place despite all appearances.

I am an avid journaler; it is a fundamental part of my devotional and prayer life. I just finished—and re-read—the journal that I began writing in February 2020—just before the beginning of the pandemic. On August 1, 2020 I wrote: “LORD, COVID makes it difficult to see, which makes it difficult to lead. I feel like the blind leading the blind. Help me understand these matters. Help me think, pray, feel deeply so that I can lead...”

Alongside the uncertainty and grief of that year, hope and action also took root in our community. IBC became a host site for the Navajo Nation food outreach, facilitated by multiple ministries. The IBC Hope Team was launched, which later became the RezRootz podcast (see bottom of page 3). Our staff weathered significant disagreements about how to respond, praying through conflict to greater humility and unity. We learned how to better encourage and exhort our students and alumni in the midst of crisis, uncertainty, and pain. God's people were EXTRA generous, so much so that we were able to pay off the only debt we had (a purchase loan on the administrative building).

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On March 30, 2021, after my wife, my kids, and I recovered from COVID, my journal reads: “LORD, you’re in control over all aspects of my life, the beginning and the end. Thank you for seeing us through COVID. Your faithfulness is so steady. YOU are my rock. You are my hope.”

At IBC we are celebrating that our enrollment has returned to pre-COVID levels—that ten brand new students, two students returning after a hiatus, and all of last year’s eligible students being back this school year has resulted in 28 full-time students! And we are celebrating the full recovery of our summer work team volunteers. Romans 5:3-4 says “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope”—even the suffering of a pandemic can produce Christlike character and hope! Rejoice with us at all that God has done through His people to strengthen IBC through the pandemic.



Dr. Jason Koppen,
IBC President

Accreditation: Transformational Disruption

What do you mean, “It’s all about disruption?”, I thought to myself. I was listening skeptically to the workshop presenter at an Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) training for academic leaders. This was my first time hearing from experts about the real purpose behind the arduous process of institutional accreditation (we sometimes call it “institutional sanctification”). This was especially relevant to my rookie Academic Dean ears, as I was preparing to help lead the IBC academic team on the path to accreditation reaffirmation. The reaffirmation process occurs around five years after initial accreditation, which IBC received in 2021.

One year has elapsed since attending that workshop, and hindsight only confirms that “disruption” truly is the perfect word to describe the monumental task of maintaining institutional accreditation for IBC via an in-depth self-evaluation process (known as the Self Study) followed by an on-site visit from an ABHE evaluation team. This season was truly a *disruption* of epic proportions...and brought some epic praise! Here are a few reasons the accreditation process has been a gracious disruption from God:

First, preparing for the Self Study and site team visit last spring and responding to the recommendations has motivated IBC to reexamine our “comfort zone” of academic policies and procedures, to ensure we are truly practicing what we preach about IBC’s transformational education process. In other words, *do we have integrity concerning IBC’s institutional effectiveness and the student learning experience?* All of the helpful improvements and encouraging confirmations of the assessment have brought growth and provided more assurance than ever that we do what we say we do! Second, IBC utilized the assessment process to verify that our courses were of the highest quality, in both content and delivery, for the benefit of the students’ holistic development. In order to truly be a student-centered institution, IBC must have academic quality assurance.

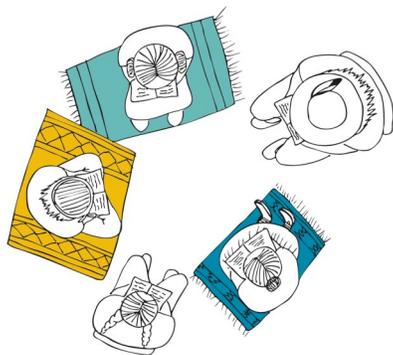
Finally, we are thrilled to announce that **IBC is now officially approved to offer the Christian Ministry Certificate (18 credits) fully online**, which will provide greater learning access to students who cannot relocate for in-person training. We praise God that in all of these academic adventures, each “disruption” of sanctifying assessment has challenged and reassured us that IBC continues to meet the high standards of integrity and excellence for the transformation of students’ lives in Christ!

Josh Manning, Academic Dean

What Students are Saying... *each spring we ask students what they wish others knew about IBC*

- * *That it is life changing and that there is hope to change positively, to become more like Jesus.*
- * *How much they care about heart change and transformation. They want to make the best out of what you can be for God.*
- * *The community that is offered from staff to students. You probably won’t find anything like it anywhere else.*
- * *The discipleship. Once healing starts, the more you appreciate IBC.*

Walking in Freedom: NMTS Facilitator Training and the Path to Healing



This past summer marked an exciting milestone for IBC with the official launch of the *Native Mending the Soul* (NMTS) Facilitator Training Program! Designed to equip those called to healing work in Native ministry with practical tools and theological depth, the NMTS Facilitator Training seeks to strengthen these shepherds and their communities for abuse and trauma recovery, looking to Jesus and His Spirit as the ultimate healer.

The 4-day training in Flagstaff this past June, led by 3 IBC staff, brought together 8 participants from diverse backgrounds. Four different tribal groups were represented, including Cherokee, Yakama, Nez Perce, and Yavapai-Apache, as well as two non-Native participants with a heart to minister to Indigenous communities in Wyoming and British Columbia. All were united by a shared desire to see Native America healed and walking in Christ's freedom from the bondage caused by abuse and trauma. Through teaching, discussion, and hands-on application (participants walked through the entire workbook themselves!), the training created space for meaningful connection, learning, and healing for everyone involved.

Together we explored the definition and origins of abuse, how it damages the soul, creating disconnection from God and others, and the distinction between healthy shame (like guilt) and toxic shame, which belongs to the abuser, not the survivor. We also learned how fear can be used to control, robbing us of peace and freedom. One participant shared that this material helped her realize the ongoing impact of trauma in her life and is teaching her to stand against toxic shame. Another expressed gratitude for the safe environment the group provided, enabling her to share honestly about her pain and vulnerabilities.

The NMTS team is committed to seeing Native people healed and facilitators becoming more like the Chief Shepherd they are called to model. We want to build on the foundation and momentum of this past summer's training, so plans are already underway for expanded training opportunities across the U.S. and into Canada in the coming year. We are also exploring ways to deepen mentorship and facilitator support, ensuring that the program continues to foster growth, community, and Christlikeness.

As we move forward, our vision remains clear: to equip and shepherd servant leaders who model wisdom, humility, and authenticity in their relationships with God and others, as well as continued growth in their own healing journey. We are thankful for the many hands and hearts that have invested in this work so far, and we invite you to continue walking with us through prayer as NMTS grows into its next season. Thank you and God bless you!



Joshua Ortiz, Christina Tree-Lasiloo, and Sarah Koppen—NMTS Team

If you are interested in supporting or learning more about NMTS initiatives at Indigenous Bible College, such as the Facilitator Training Program, we invite you to consider giving to the **NMTS Project Fund** at indianbible.org/nativemts.

Have you listened to the RezRootz podcast?

Did you know that IBC students produce a podcast "rooted in culture and united in faith"? The RezRootz podcast began with students Kelly Johnson and Will Axtell in 2020 as a channel for offering hope and connection to Native young people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since graduating, they have passed production along into the care of students, and you can now hear third year student, Emmanuel Bryant interviewing a variety of guests on all kinds of topics from current events to reservation life to following Jesus. Catch up on episodes you missed on the RezRootz YouTube channel! www.youtube.com/rezrootz7217.



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Praise & Prayer

- Praise God for His faithfulness and provision enabling IBC to complete a 14th year in a row “in the black”.
- Praise God for the completion of the fitness center with brand new equipment!
- Praise God for a full campus—the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Praise God for approval to offer the Christian Ministry Certificate entirely online. Pray for our efforts to get this good news to Native Christians across the country.
- Pray for full provision for our Native staff who are raising support and for more funding for the Native Staff Development Fund.
- Pray for the Lord to raise up facilitators and funding to meet the requests for training in *Native Mending the Soul* across the continent.

Supporting Native Students & Staff

We are so grateful to have 28 full-time students on our campus this fall and to be moving towards the fulfillment of IBC’s vision with a staff that is now more than 50% Native American. With these exciting developments comes great opportunity for generosity!

The IBC General Scholarship Fund supports IBC’s goal of graduating each student debt-free.

The Native Staff Development Fund exists to support Native staff who are working hard to fundraise their salaries in challenging contexts.

With more students and staff relying on these funds than ever, we invite you to consider giving to one or both of these funds as the Lord leads. Learn more at **www.indianbible.org/give**.

