

The History of American Indian Bible Institute

Rapid growth was the word. The Los Angeles area was the location. Between 1960 and 1966, the Native American population in the Los Angeles area doubled from 10,000 to more than 20,000. This rapid increase was due to the fact that large numbers of Native American young people were coming to the Los Angeles area from reservations across the country. These young people were coming to the Los Angeles area for jobs or job training. Most of those who completed job training remained in the area to find jobs. These young people were getting married and beginning their own families and soon a high birth rate began to increase the rapid growth.

A group of men at the First American Indian Church of Los Angeles became concerned about the spiritual needs of this rapidly growing number of young adults. They began to talk about and pray for the need they saw to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ not only to those young adults but also to their families back home. "We need a Bible Institute where we can be trained to reach our own people for Christ." As a result, those men contacted a number of Indian missions in other parts of the country to see if they would be interested in beginning a Bible Institute in the Los Angeles area. Since none of the missions that were contacted had the personnel available to begin such a ministry, those men started seeking God's will about whether they should begin such a Bible Institute. In the spring of 1966, after much prayer over a period of months, those men felt certain that the Lord had called them to organize what became the American Indian Bible Institute.

The purpose statement of the Bible Institute was "to glorify God by developing a Biblical leadership development team on every reservation and in every urban area." The Bible Institute chose the key verse 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." The purpose statement and key verse led to four objectives: Reach, Teach, Train and Send.

The original board included five men who were all members of First American Indian Church. Over the years, the men on the board and advisory boards represented over nine different tribes. Most of the men had been students or graduates of the Bible Institute. The Lord used those men in a variety of leadership ministries in the Los Angeles area, on reservations and in other urban areas from Alaska to Oklahoma. Board members have also had many opportunities to train others in one to one on-the-job training ministries.

Four of the Los Angeles area Indian churches, as well as many homes, served as classrooms through the years. Because we believed that the statement of Christ to "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" provided the ideal model for training, class instruction was combined with on-the-job training in the homes of non-Christians. In the same way, we believe that all other areas of ministry are to be shown, rather than taught to be most effective. As a result, much of the training for ministry has been done by small teams ministering in apartments and homes where people live.

Through the years, former students have gone out to serve the Lord in urban areas and on reservations in eleven states. Most of those who have gone out from the Los Angeles area became Christians through evangelistic home Bible studies taught by board members, staff or students, grew through follow-up and growth Bible studies taught by board, staff or students, and then became students

themselves. While taking classes, they became involved in ministry by going along and observing. Then, they began participating. This was followed by ministering and reporting about how the Lord was working as they went out to share the Gospel and minister in other ways. They then began taking others along with them to show others how to do these same things and repeat the process. The Lord continued to provide opportunities for those serving with AIBI as well as those who had been equipped through AIBI over the years to serve the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully.

Over the years, in addition to offering regular Bible Institute classes in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, the Lord led the board to develop a number of other ministries to assist in the training of leaders on reservations and in urban areas in several states. Courses offered in the Los Angeles area were made available in printed format to other areas through the extension training program; leadership training seminars were held on reservations and reserves both in the United States and in Canada; the tape ministry provided verse-by-verse Bible studies through several books of the Bible; in addition, a variety of Bible and leadership training manuals were written. In 1999, many of those Bible and leadership training materials were put on-line for easier access by former staff and students. The Lord took the media of the internet and brought the Bible training resources not only to staff and former students but to groups and individuals around the world. In June of 2000, AIBI Resources became an official ministry of AIBI to help develop this new area that provided the compliment to the Bible Institute by reaching not only to their "Jerusalem and Judea" as commanded in Acts 1:8, but also into their "Samaria and the ends of the earth." It has expanded through the internet to individuals in over 140 different countries; free computers CDs have been sent to over 70 different countries. In order to provide the opportunity for this aspect of the AIBI outreach to continue to expand as the Lord allows, in 2013 the AIBI board requested the establishment of what is now known as "Serve and Equip".

Due to various circumstances, AIBI ceased to exist as an organization in 2022. However, ministry is carried on by local churches, former students and staff in their areas of ministry and the resources developed are available on the Serve and Equip website at: <https://www.sveq.org>

It was for HIS glory that the AIBI organization existed. Praise the Lord for lives that were and continue to be impacted through what God has done!