

IMPACT

M2/W2 ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER • FALL 2021



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Older Brother Bear Who Tells His Story

Like a skilled craftsman, Elder Pascal Adam is deeply familiar with the tools of his trade. His trade, of course, is helping others. His tools are loyalty, humour, wisdom, integrity, and openness, to name a few. He's honed them through the years, working at recovery centres, at churches (as a preacher and a church planter), and, of course, in prisons.

Some tools Elder Pascal has always had. Others he's picked up along the way. Of these, his openness is notable. It's a key part of what makes Elder Pascal so good at helping others. By being open

about his own life, Elder Pascal lays a foundation of trust and acceptance for the people he meets with.

"I try to give [people] freedom to open up and tell me their history, as well as maybe opening up about why they came in. I find that helps way more than saying, 'I don't want to hear about what happened then. That's way in the past. Why is it bothering you?'"

Being open about pain and trauma isn't easy, yet for Elder Pascal, it's been beneficial in his own experiences with addiction. "I had a lot of anger issues,

as well, so people kind of avoided me. Partially because I carried that chip on my shoulder," he said. "I needed to talk about the pain that I faced because of the residential school and abandonment."

"One of the boys carved a talking stick," Elder Pascal recalled. "It's a bear and a turtle. He dubbed me Older Brother Bear Who Tells His Story. Because I was totally open and sharing with the guys there, he decided that was a good name for me."

The gift and name were significant to Elder Pascal. He received them at



Working with communities in BC's Interior, Lower Mainland, Central & Northern Vancouver Island

Stave Lake Correctional Centre in the early days of volunteering in prisons. He was still in the process of finding peace between his culture and his faith in Jesus Christ. For Elder Pascal, this separation originated at residential school. After he became a believer, he felt pressure from some to distance himself from his Indigenous culture. Yet at Stave Lake, he knew he had something to offer.

"I was still struggling with my own culture and my own identity but by the same token I noticed that a lot of the people out there that were First Nations were really open to talking to me. And I started to realize, wow, that's a place where they need somebody."

Elder Pascal is Secwepemc from the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation. As a boy he was taken from his home at Canoe Creek, 85 kilometres southwest of Williams Lake, to the Kamloops Indian Residential School. He left the school

at the age of 11, an alcoholic. He is a Survivor.

"They cut our hair funny. They tried to dress us the same. They started to tell us that worshipping in our Native ways,

They can open their book right in front of me, and they know that it remains here.

playing our drums and all of that, was not acceptable. Some of us got strapped for speaking our language. There was a lot of us that spoke our language and we tried to do it slyly. But if they came by and happened to hear us, they would take us and discipline us for doing that. They really made an effort to say, 'Your culture is no good here.'"

Later, after he became a Christian, Elder Pascal attended Bible school in the 1980s and encountered more resistance to his culture.

"They were almost doing the same thing that the Catholics were doing." He

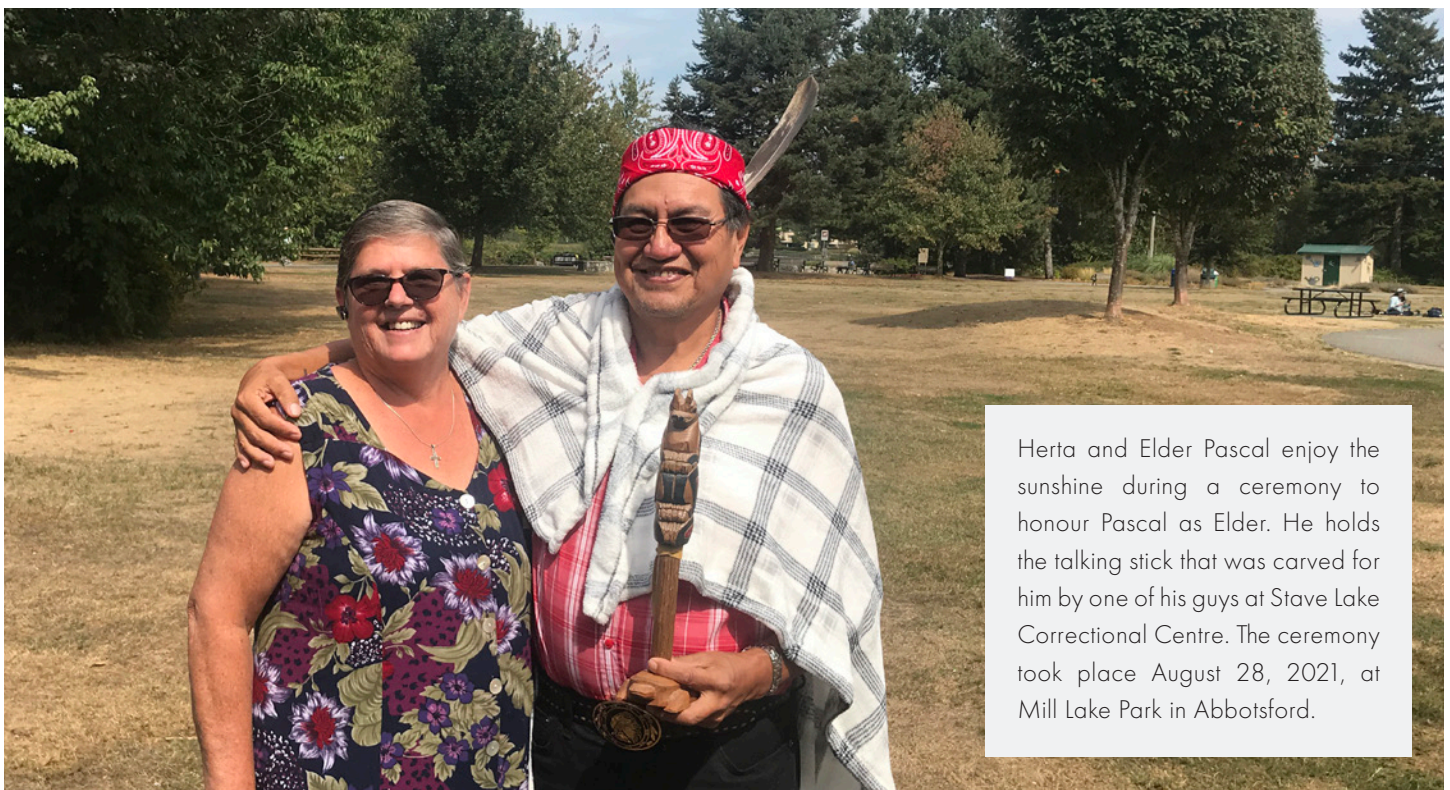
said. "They weren't trying to beat it out of us, but they made comments to say we were supposed to leave that stuff behind.

They didn't try to tell other cultures they had to change, but for some reason or another, our drumming, our way of worship, all the stuff we did as Native people wasn't acceptable at the school. So for many years, as a Christian I started to believe that I really wasn't a Native person anymore."

A Turning Point

Things changed when Elder Pascal attended a conference where Broken Walls, a gospel band from Ontario, was playing. During the concert he saw Indigenous culture in a new light.

"They were doing the White thing—they all had guitars, bass guitars, drums, and everything. And they were just doing music on the stage. They were singing a Christian song and they unveiled this



Herta and Elder Pascal enjoy the sunshine during a ceremony to honour Pascal as Elder. He holds the talking stick that was carved for him by one of his guys at Stave Lake Correctional Centre. The ceremony took place August 28, 2021, at Mill Lake Park in Abbotsford.

big pow wow drum and the four band members took their drum beaters and they sat around this drum and they were chanting the same song.

“For me, it was almost like I was lifted off the ground and I went all the way to the front and I’m standing there, and I’m like, whoa, this is what I need. These guys basically showed me that it was okay to be a Native person and a Christian as well. They were doing Christian music and they were drumming to the same song.”

Answers in a Story

Early last year, before the pandemic, Elder Pascal met with an Indigenous man in prison who had accepted faith in Jesus Christ. The man told Pascal that he was confused. He said he didn’t know how to be a Native who is supposed to worship the Creator and also be a Christian.

“He didn’t know how he could walk both paths at the same time,” Pascal said.

Elder Pascal shared about the separation from his culture he experienced as a young man, and how he learned to embrace both his faith and cultural identity. “I tried to get him to keep an open mind about how he could do both and still honour Jesus.”

The same mindset carries over to all of Elder Pascal’s relationships: “Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, I don’t discourage anybody. I say, ‘Do what you are doing, but remember to ask questions. Ask about Jesus Christ.’”

Called to Serve

For Elder Pascal, being a mentor to those affected by incarceration is more than a job; it’s a calling. He stays in touch with most of the men he’s mentored through the years, and even visits them when he’s travelling through the province on vacation.

Elder Pascal recognizes the support and strength he receives from his wife,


Herta. “There are times when I’ll jump in a vehicle and leave for two or three hours. She doesn’t question where I’m going. She knows my guys must need me.”

The couple has been married for over 26 years. “It’s been a blessing,” Elder Pascal said. “I feel that I’ve met the person that’s walking beside me pretty much in everything I do.”

Herta often accompanies Elder Pascal to the institutions, and her presence and commitment provide an example to volunteers and people in prison. “If a couple says we want to come in and join M2/W2, then I want them to come as a team,” Elder Pascal said. “Most of our guys in the system—and women—don’t know how to keep a relationship for a long time. Many of them have been in broken relationships. Sometimes they were dragged out of the home into a foster home. I try to help them understand that it is possible to have a long-term relationship.”

Elder Pascal is successful as a mentor because he is committed to his guys. He is consistent: They know he will be there. They know he will treat them with honesty.

“The biggest thing for me is having a true friendship with my guys,” Elder Pascal said. “The only way I’d disown them is if I pass away and they dig a hole and put me in it. Other than that, I’m there with them.”

After serving in prisons for over 27 years, Elder Pascal has a long list of his guys. One thing these relationships have in common is that they are based on honesty and trust. “They can open their book right in front of me, and they know that it remains here.” Elder Pascal said. “They have the freedom to disclose everything that’s in their history to help them change to be a better person.” 



THE WAY BACK UP

Join us October 2 for our annual fundraiser, an online event that celebrates what God is doing through M2/W2!

By supporting our organization, you share kindness, compassion, and hope with people affected by incarceration. We’ve got a lot planned this year—testimonies, interviews, music, and a very special emcee: Cliff Prang!

Online Silent Auction

Register for the fundraiser and get access to our online silent auction! The auction starts September 27 and runs until right before the fundraiser begins on October 2.

▶ Register today at m2w2.com/fundraiser-sign-up/

ABOUT US

At M2/W2 Association, we mentor and support people who are committed to change yet face the emotional, spiritual, and physical obstacles that often result from incarceration. Visit m2w2.com to learn more about our people and programs.

▶ [DONATE AT GIVE@M2W2.COM](https://GIVE@M2W2.COM)

FALL 2021 NOLA UPDATE

Encouraging Progress



The NOLA pilot program is volunteer driven. This means volunteers lead the circles, provide guidance and support to parolees, and give weekly updates to case managers, who, in turn, empower and support volunteers. With week-to-week circle leadership in the hands of our capable volunteers, case managers are now able to oversee more circles.

Since April, seven parolees have participated in NOLA for a minimum of three months, with two graduating. (The program duration is 3 to 12 months.) Presently, 10 NOLA applicants are still in prison and waiting for release.

Our case managers, Steve Roukema and Allyson Johnson, continue to work closely with parole officers in the community and at institutions, growing relationships and promoting NOLA through Zoom presentations.

"We've been encouraged by the 26 referrals we've received to date," Steve said. "And we look forward to working closer with corrections staff as pandemic-related restrictions subside."

Additionally, the NOLA team continues to invest in volunteers by offering training sessions and reflection times via Zoom. With more parolees requesting support, additional volunteers are needed in communities from Chilliwack to New Westminster.

If you are interested in volunteering in the community with NOLA or as a prison mentor, visit m2w2.com and click the VOLUNTEER button in the footer. 

WHAT IS NOLA?

No One Leaves Alone (NOLA) connects formerly incarcerated men and women with a circle of volunteers. Together they journey toward restoration and reintegration. NOLA circles are volunteer driven — they meet regularly, stay in contact, and provide support in five areas: housing, health, employment, education, and relationships. Learn more at m2w2.com/in-community/

Bridging a Gap

For Andre, a NOLA graduate and current volunteer, the desire to help others stems from the acceptance he experienced through the program.

"I was used to being judged," he said. "When I came across NOLA, they connected. They didn't judge, so that was profound for me. They heard me without judging me."

After completing NOLA, Andre saw that he could volunteer and offer something unique: His experiences.

"It's hard for an outside person to realize what it is like inside. Through my own journey, I can relate. I can help bridge a gap."

"My understanding can help other volunteers to connect. It helps the participant feel at ease. They might say, 'Here's someone who has done it. So if I'm struggling maybe I can speak to him without any worries or any concerns about being evaluated.'"

To hear more about Andre's story, join us October 2, 2021, for our annual fundraiser. Andre will be among those sharing their stories of restoration and healing.

Sign up today at m2w2.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 21: Volunteer Training: Trauma and Resilience Part 1

OCTOBER 2: The Way Back Up Annual Fundraiser—ONLINE!

OCTOBER 19: Volunteer Training: Trauma and Resilience Part 2

NOVEMBER 23: Volunteer Training: Trauma and Resilience Part 3

► Register for these events at m2w2.com