

## Have You Met Eagle Bear Burling?

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Holder of a number of academic degrees and credentials in a half-dozen disciplines, Senior Lead Communications Maintainer Burling brings a unique perspective to the job at CSXT's Willard Yard.

Although he's an enthusiastic railroad worker and safety-conscious to the core, Eagle Bear Burling is first and foremost a devoted member of the Wyandotte Nation. Descended from the tribes formerly known as the Wyandots, once part of the Iroquois family, the group settled originally in Canada, Ohio and Michigan before being resettled in the 1800s to its current base in Oklahoma.



Burling's path to the railroad was equally roundabout. Born in Ohio, he was sold at age four by his mother. At age 11 he was adopted by the Burlings. He was later to meet his natural mother's companion - a railroad engineer. "Through them I got to see the railroad," Burling said. "I liked those trains, and I saw that camaraderie among the men," Burling said. "It was very appealing and that memory stayed with me."

Before deciding on railroad work, however, Burling spent 15 years in the Air Force flying cargo planes and 15 years in radio and TV broadcasting. Along the way, he collected two associate degrees and an advanced degree in Native American Logic from the University of Wisconsin, as well as certification as an engineer first class. That's not to mention his position as a lay minister and district director of the United Methodist Church, with 82 member churches.

He's addressed church groups and even state legislatures, sometimes using sign language for Native American audiences. "Much of the languages are lost, and the Algonquin language my ancestors used only has 285 words left. We use a lot of sign language to communicate to the many Native American tribes." In the photo, Burling is shown signing a prayer to a group of 4,000 faithful.

Burling believes that in many ways he's been blessed. His adoptive parents had a farm he enjoyed despite its many chores. "My adoptive mother was an Ohio State fan," Burling said. "I remember that anyone who talked to her while she was listening to the Buckeyes games on the radio had to wash dishes for the next week." He and his wife Precious Moments have four boys, and she also has two other sons and five grandchildren. Burling has survived a bout with cancer and a heart attack. Nevertheless, he's still eager to work for the railroad after 27 years on the job and a spotless safety record.

"I love my job at Willard," Burling said. "The railroad's been very good and fair to me. I'm the senior person in our department for age. Did you know that the word "retirement" isn't mentioned in the Bible? As long as I've got my health and am physically able to do the work, I'd like to stay."