

Alaska Field Report

InterAct Board Meetings

February 2014

Almost quite six months ago, David Joseph stepped down as InterAct Alaska's field director. As a result, I now wear the hat of the Alaska Field Director (sorta/kinda). This has added to an already full plate, but with the history of so many field directors coming and going in Alaska I don't feel it in the best interest of the field, and therefore the organization, to appoint someone quickly. So I continue wearing two hats. Because of this, I will not get everything done. I will not meet everyone's expectations. This too shall pass. I trust we will soon have a new super-powered Alaska field director and I will once again get everything done and keep everyone purring with satisfaction at the job I am doing. Or maybe not. In the meantime I covet your prayers – not just for my sake but for the organization as a whole. At this juncture, we are not any closer to having an ideal candidate for the role of Alaska Field Director. We have some strong leadership prospects in the pipeline with Millers and Tramms but their ability to lead at this level is a few years out. Horsmans are doing a good job in every role they have been given so far, but I feel it would be premature to put them in any major leadership role. If you believe that leadership is simply "influence," then you would have to say Horsmans are already leading in a significant way.

Alaska has always had a strong independent spirit and not having a field director on site has not presented a major change from what most InterAct Alaska staff had experienced the past four years. They continue to do their individual ministries without the need for a lot of "hand holding." In fact, they continue to do good ministry in a number of different areas. The four couples of the Fairbanks team are very active in ministry, most of it being done in conjunction with the Fairbanks Native Bible Fellowship. Anchorage has three missionary units involved with local churches. The most exciting of these is the decidedly multi-cultural church in the Mountainview area of the city.

In addition to ongoing ministries in the state's two largest urban centers, InterAct is partnering with several other ministries to establish a relationally based Native Alaskan training program. Last summer, a team was appointed to lead a new initiative that I am confident will advance ministry in Alaska. Steve & Jill Horsman and George & Judy Richardson have worked together with five other organizations to come up with an innovative program that is being called **LEaD Alaska** (LEadership and Discipleship). This highly relational program will utilize the Lazy Mountain campus for its base of operations. I am excited and hopeful about this new venture for several reasons. This initiative has evolved at the specific request from Native Alaskan leaders. It makes

better use of an existing InterAct resource, the Lazy Mountain property, while also having the potential to serve as a focal point for a greater involvement by churches and prospective staff.

Another source of fresh energy is the launch of the “EnGage! Alaska” summer ministry program. This model was launched in Canada two years ago and has seen not only effective ministry accomplished but has already become the source of several new applicants to the mission for long-term service. Jim & Becky Hamilton will take the lead for this first summer while working closely with Steve & Jill Horsman “on the ground” in Alaska.

I will spare you a play by play of the specifics of each staff situation on the Alaska field, but will say that without a clear vision and a fresh infusion of new missionaries in the next decade, this field will have largely “aged out.” Good work is still being done, but the average age of our missionaries makes it clear that a failure to bring a host of new people into the organization – very soon – InterAct Alaska will simply shrink out of effectiveness. I am confident that as the above mentioned new initiatives become reality and move forward (the LEaD initiative and EnGage! Alaska) the field will revitalize. I see much hope. As momentum builds with these initial projects I am confident new stakeholders will emerge. As new ministry begins, a greater number of people will hear of the needs and opportunities in Alaska. New ministry also means a growing amount of viable ministry to which we can and will recruit.

All of you received a copy of the report I sent to the Alaska field to announce the appointment of new leadership there. As you read, these are interim appointments until a long-term Alaska field director is identified and appointed. To refresh your thinking, not to mention to save me a lot of writing, let me paste the heart of that December 2013 report below.

One of the things that stood out to me on this trip was the ongoing need for new missionaries with fresh passion and vision for reaching the people of Alaska. As we all know, God has brought several new couples to the ministry in the state. John and Jenn Tramm have been on the field almost a year now. Steve and Jill Horsman have transferred in from InterAct Canada to be part of the team. James and Shannon Miller are continuing to very actively pursue full support for ministry out of the Fairbanks area. Was there human effort put into getting these new folks on to the team? You betcha! (Thanks, David Joseph and others who helped!) Is this God answering specific, focused prayer for laborers? I believe this is also a big, “You betcha!” Let’s give God the credit and the glory. Let’s also keep working and praying for more workers for the huge harvest field of Alaska. By the way, welcome again to Tramm, Horsmans and Millers!!!! It is GREAT to have you on the team! How does it feel to be an answer to the prayers of many?

So what is happening with the Alaska field? I am not able to answer that question comprehensively but I can speak to a few specific areas. No, we still do not have an Alaska field director. Now it may shock you to hear me say this, but that does not cause my heart to skip a beat. Why, because most of you who are on the field are seasoned veterans. You know what you are doing. In fact, you could probably continue in ministry until the Lord took you home without anyone looking over your shoulder telling you what to do. Does that mean I am not actively looking for someone to provide leadership in Alaska? Nope. I continue to look for the right person to provide the kind of leadership needed for InterAct Alaska. To date God has not brought that person across the radar. I also do not want to try to run the field from afar. I want strategy for the field to be developed and driven from the field.

So what is the best way to see this happen without an Alaska Field Director currently in the saddle? I'm so glad you asked. Although all of the existing ministries in Alaska do not really need a lot of "hand holding," everyone appreciates encouragement and a "go to" person when they have specific questions or ministry needs. In order to meet those very real needs I have asked George Richardson (and of course Judy too) if he would be willing to fill this need. Rather than being an authoritative position, this new role, the "Alaska Field Coach/Mentor," will resource, coach and encourage. Together, George and Judy will be the "go to" people for field questions, resourcing, etc. This new role will not conflict with Richardson's current member care role as it is not a supervisory role, but rather a role of coaching and encouragement.

As you have already heard at our gatherings in November, some very exciting things are happening associated with the Lazy Mountain property. LEaD Alaska, a collaboration of several ministries (Alaska Freedom Journey, Hearts Going Towards Wellness, Alaska Bible College, InterAct Ministries, Covenant denomination, Mission Connexion) is standing at the starting gate and chomping at the bit to get moving. Although this was a true team effort, Steve & Jill Horsman have provided significant leadership to get us to this point. I have asked Steve (and of course Jill with him) to take the mantle of responsibility for InterAct's part in this new initiative as well as other new initiatives in the state. This new role, Alaska New Initiatives Director, will include responsibility for supervision of all field staff serving in new initiative programs (LEaD Alaska, EnGage! Alaska, etc).

Hopefully, the two preceding paragraphs made sense. So if you are in a ministry role outside of one of our new initiatives in Alaska your "go to people" are George and Judy Richardson (Alaska Field Coach/Mentor). If you are part of one of our new initiatives your "go to people" are Steve and Jill Horsman (Alaska New Initiatives Director). As you can tell, this pretty well captures everyone. As

we move forward with LEaD Alaska and other new programs, I trust we will have an increasing number of new folks serving under our Alaska New Initiatives department.

InterAct Alaska has been used powerfully in the past for God's glory. Have we been perfect? Far from it. Still, we have sought to be faithful to our calling and God has allowed us to see His hand move His heart forward in Alaska. As we seek to rebuild ministry in Alaska, not for our glory but for His, we can advance with great confidence. Where He leads He will supply ALL that is needed – vision, partners, coworkers, finances and the ability to persevere. Ain't it great to be on His team?!!

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Smith

“Acting like the Alaska Field Director”