

Canada Field Report  
Board meeting  
August 2013  
Submitted by Dan Mayerle

A field missionary asked me an important question a few days ago, “Do you think InterAct is doing better at church planting than it did five years ago?” My immediate response was “I am not sure that we are doing better at church planting but I feel like we are discipling among our host cultures with more intentionality and a ‘sharper knife’.” The conversation then continued with a dialogue about how hard it is to determine effectiveness in church planting or discipleship over a five or even 10-year span. Developing a strong faith and consistent life change involves unraveling a significant amount of false beliefs and deeply entrenched behaviours. Therefore a spiritually mature disciple is developed over years rather than days or weeks. Hence, the difficulty in saying that in the last five years we have done better.

It would be wonderful if the hunger and thirst for repentance and revival broke out among First Nations, Muslim and Sikh people like it has in other people groups throughout history. We may need to be praying more diligently for this kind of an outpouring of God’s Spirit in the communities He has called us to. And while waiting for that we can be thankful for the consistent and faithful witness of the missionaries who have committed themselves to long-term ministry and faithfulness to the Lord. There is no question in my mind that disciples are being developed through the ministries of InterAct. We need to continue to pray for these missionaries. They need a daily renewal of their commitment and passion and they need wisdom to be as effective as possible given their time and energy limitations in the midst of a seemingly endless list of ministry activity that could or should be engaged in.

This report highlights changes and developments in the ministries on the Canada field. God’s work continues to be done across the Canada field through faithful InterAct missionaries. I am encouraged with the direction ministry is moving.

**Staff Concerns and Highlights**

**Joel and Amanda Sewell** (Eden Valley, AB) have hired an immigration lawyer and sent their second Permanent Resident application in to Immigration Canada. Pray that this application will fulfill the immigration criteria and allow them permanency in Canada. Joel has purchased logs and is moving ahead with building a cabin on the reserve so that he can spend more language learning time in context with the people. A lot of questions remain as to what constitutes appropriate permission to build on First Nation land and there is a feeling of being in ‘uncharted waters’ as Joel moves ahead.

The Kamloops team had three of their team members diagnosed with cancer in the last few months. **Ellis Kasten’s** diagnosis is the most severe and he is now on a

chemo therapy regimen. We are trusting that both **Valen and Carol Straley's** diagnosis will be resolved with surgery and radiation. Prayer is needed for this team as they continue ministry and walk through these health issues.

**John and Tracey Tobin** continue to grow and do well in both family life and ministry. It is so encouraging to watch as God restores this family and their ministry among Punjabi people in Abbotsford, BC.

**Fayez Narooz** received his Doctorate of Theology degree in May and is working on developing a doctoral study curriculum in Arabic. He and Vivian continue to rejoice in the growth of the Arabic church plant in Calgary.

The staff retreat in April focused on encouraging ministry workers to care for their own soul so they are able to minister from a place of spiritual health and vitality. One of the messages was given by Tyrone Bird, a Native believer from North Battleford, SK who encouraged the missionaries that their love for his people and their faithfulness to the call was producing fruit even if they couldn't always see it clearly.

### **Recruitment**

One of the exciting, and time consuming things, in the last six months has been the influx of people into the recruitment pipeline since the February board meeting.

**Akmal and Sarah Erastus** (Pakistani immigrants to Canada in 2011) were led to Winnipeg by the Lord to reach Punjabi people. Akmal was the Operation Mobilization director in Pakistan before coming to Canada. They have completed the application process are now raising support and reaching out to Punjabi Sikhs and Muslims in Winnipeg.

Two other couples are in the process of filling out applications. **Josh and Joylynn Beutler** (grads of Millar College of the Bible) are living in Lethbridge and doing Native youth ministry under Dan and Barb Kees' mentorship. **Stewart and Charisa Reimer** (Charisa is Daryl Kroeker's daughter) have moved into the middle of the south-Asian Muslim population of Surrey with a heart to share the gospel and see house churches established that will spread back to the home countries of the people who follow Christ. Greg Hamilton anticipates these two couples completing the application process and interviews by mid-September. Pray that the Lord will confirm His calling in the hearts of these two young couples.

**Kelsey Quibell** is starting a seven-month internship in September. Her time will likely be divided equally between North Battleford and Calgary. She is thinking seriously about joining InterAct at the end of that internship. Pray that the Lord will confirm in her mind and ours what His best is for this young Moody Bible Institute grad.

The *EnGage!* summer ministry program doubled in size this year to eight participants who experienced First Nation community life and were testimonies for Christ in four communities: Loon Lake, SK., Kanai First Nation (Cardston, AB), Eden Valley, AB., and the Kootenay Nation in BC.

Also there has been at least one contact a month to follow up on, someone who is interested in knowing more about what InterAct does. Time will tell what results will come from these contacts. Every morning at 10:02 my phone alarm sounds reminding me to pray Luke 10:2, that the Lord would send labourers into the harvest field of Native, Muslim, and Punjabi people living in western Canada. I would encourage you to keep praying for that as well.

### **Vision and Strategy**

In September the Canada Leadership Team (CLT) will choose five more communities to add to the five already being researched and recruited for. This is in keeping with the vision of seeing InterAct Canada ministering in 20 communities across western Canada by 2020.

The ministry plan budgeted for in the 2013-2014 budget is progressing in some areas. Realistically, accomplishing it all in one fiscal year is beyond the capacity of the CLT but we are working and trusting the Lord to put the pieces in place that will continue to move the ministry of His choosing ahead. At this point we have one youth ministry internship in place.

In keeping with some of the input coming from the next generation of ministry workers the CLT has been exploring 'sustainable' ministry projects for urban outreach and discipleship.

"Sustainable" includes ministry opportunities that do not necessitate raising full-time financial support. One of the identified needs among the aboriginal population is skills for living outside the reserve context. Some Native people who try to move off the reserve and make a different life for themselves in education or work fail, in part, for a lack of knowledge and skills around finances, work ethic, and relational support. So vision is being cast for a holistic discipleship model that includes:

- Transition housing where Native people who agree to the holistic discipleship terms can live in context with other Native people who are walking the same road
- Employment alongside a Christian mentor or support for a successful education experience
- A relational gathering of believers where questions about life, faith, culture, etc. can be answered and the 'one anothers' can be lived out

The goal of this concept would be healthy and mature Native believers who, in time, can make a spiritual impact in their families, their communities, and the world. Another goal would be to provide ministry opportunities to those in the next generation of believers who struggle with a clash of values between the desire to

serve God and the disconnect with the full-time, faith-supported western missionary model that has emerged over the last couple hundred years.

One other project concept being explored is a Christian perspective documentary on a First Nation Christian response to the residential school history and realities in Canada. Thomas Slawson has connections with a video production company who would love to work with InterAct on this project. This is a very sensitive topic and would require heavy buy-in and involvement from Native believers if it is going to be helpful rather than harmful.

### **Training**

One of the CLT's goals is to provide on-going training for our InterAct missionaries. In April a four-day course co-sponsored by Briercrest College was taught on Forgiveness and Reconciliation. This in-depth look at the biblical perspective of reconciliation was enlightening and challenging for the InterAct staff who attended. At the Canada field conference in August Dan Gibson (pen name Roland Mueller) will be teaching a one-day session on honour and shame cultures. This should be very helpful insight since all the cultures we work with in InterAct are more attuned to that value system.

### **Administration**

By the time the Canada board reads this all of the major projects should be completed on the new office building. A contractor is doing the decks and wheel chair ramp, a volunteer team led InterAct missionary Roy Thiessen is replacing the shingles on both office and garage and we are hoping to recruit one more team to pour sidewalks, and do some landscaping and exterior work. This office has become a very functional building meeting our organizational administrative needs well.

I am thankful that God continues to provide health and energy to both Bev and I as we serve the team of faithful missionaries who are committed to serving the communities God has called them to. May the name of Jesus be made famous in every one of those communities!