

Canada Field Report August 2023

Renewal. I believe this word best describes the momentum in ministry opportunities over the last six months. As I listen and am able to visit in the communities and ministry centers of the Canada field I hear stories and see the renewal of ministry renewal. After the two years of Covid restrictions, closed communities, fear about the future and the many creative ways in which our staff have continued to be in relationship with people, we have begun to move beyond that world and renewed in earnest relational based ministry.

Highlights from the past six months:

- Development of leaders: I was able to meet a couple of times a month through the end of May with a group of four younger men. As I have named them my 'running partners'; they have been a place of discussion and growing in another group taking a hold of the outcomes of the field. I hope to pick this regular meeting back up in September as the pace of ministry returns to normal.
- One specific outcome of the 'running partners' is the bringing together of the various 'youth ministries' across our field. Byron Sayer will be bringing more focus to some regional gatherings for youth, with the hope of building widening circles of relationships with First Nations young people. There will also be more alignment between the youth ministries and an attempt to bring them under a common name and focus on discipleship.
- Immigrant ministry: There has been some renewed interest in immigrant ministry in Winnipeg.
 - The Punjabi fellowship has been meeting with City Church as well as separately on Sunday evenings. Akmal Erastus has seen a growth of new families begin to join the fellowship and bring further maturity to the group.
 - A new family of Afghan background arrived (sponsored by City Church) from Indonesia in February. Akmal has been very involved in the settling of this family and is curious about the possibility of further involvement of this couple in Dari language fellowship.
 - A young lady who has been serving with Youth For Christ at a camp in southern Manitoba has expressed interest in ministry with InterAct in Winnipeg. A conversation has been started towards her being involved with immigrant ministry for the next year. It would be an opportunity for her to get involved with the hope that a good fit would be developed for her.
 - A young family from Georgia, the wife came on EngGage! Canada seven years ago has reached out to discover what the Lord is doing with immigrant ministry in Winnipeg. She was a part of ESL internship. She and her husband were beginning to track towards ministry and have encountered an obstacle that caused them to inquire with us.

- I have had a discussion with Tim Neilsen, pastor at City Church about immigrant ministry in Canada and ways in which InterAct and City Church might partner in the coming year. Tim sees great need for a relational based approach to outreach among immigrant people. He would be particularly focused on 'refugee' families at this time because of the unique opportunity that comes with displaced people. He would be a champion for InterAct and would be excited about the possibility of developing a partnership.
- Two key workshop topics for the upcoming staff conference:
 - Defining Syncretism and Contextualization. Mike Matthews will be joining us and leading a discussion on this vital distinction. I believe it is an area especially with younger staff that needs some specific attention. The rise in Canada of hyper attention to the cultural practices among indigenous people has caused a level of confusion in our communities.
 - LGBTQ discussion. Morgan Serger and Laura Hamilton will be leading a discussion about same-sex issues. There have been several questions over the past couple of years about walking alongside those who are struggling in this area. Morgan will bring an educational background perspective to the discussion and Laura has been leading our vulnerable sector protection over the past three years. This is not meant as a theological debate as much as a practical approach to engagement with people struggling with same sex attraction.
- Midway Bible Camp:
 - Property update: Early this spring Morgan became aware that the land site we had secured and surveyed was part of the land base that the local community was including in it's land claim. As best as we can tell the province should not have issued our lease on this land. Thankfully the Lord held us back from any development of this land. Morgan has since then searched out a new tract of land that is not a part of any local land claims on a lake that is to the south and west of Thompson. We have submitted a new application to the province to secure a long-term lease on this 15-acre parcel. We have also recently received a letter of support from the Native community that should clear the way for the province to issue the new lease.
 - This summer Morgan invited four First Nations students from Steinbach Bible College to fill key lead roles at camp. The students begun in May assisting in the preparation of camp and being the sponsors for the group of youth that attended Native Youth Conference. Following NYC the four students spent five days in Carstairs taking the EnGage! Canada training. It has been a delight to hear of their involvement in camp this summer. All four plus three others from Thompson will be attending our staff conference.

Field Staff Hotspots:

- John and Tracey Tobin: John was recently hospitalized after a manic incident. This incident threw many of the plans that they have had for the summer out of place. There is a level of ongoing stress in their marriage relationship. Tobins reached out to a

number of relationships that have been part of their community of support over the past number of years. Smiths, Mayerles, Teeters and Hamiltons have all been involved as well as a local pastor couple. I believe that the situation is stable at this time, though not fully resolved.

- Akmal and Sarah Erastus: After a recent conversation I was made more fully aware of the stress in the relationship with Akmal and Sarah. Sarah has been involved in employment outside of ministry in order to keep their level of income higher. In part there seems to be a level of discontent with lifestyle and the pursuit of wealth and stature that comes in 'honor-shame' communities. Sarah has recently taken a leave of absence from all employment at Akmal's counsel. Their family is also in a state of transition as their son finishes high school and begins university. Navigating these changes are always difficult for a first generation immigrant family.

Personnel/Administration:

- Kaitlyn Schulz (wife of Stefan Schulz) currently filling out application for membership
- Hired: Chantel Whiteford as office administrative help. Currently one day a week. Chantel comes with a ministry background and heart. She works part time with a local Wal-Mart and making bookings for a local musician.
- Ministry intern: Matthew Cunningham, student at Eston College. He will intern with Calgary ministry, Anchored Warriors, Restora and office admin for the fall months. An attempt to give a broad ministry exposure.
- 4C's review: Onsite review in September. A different process than last time. It requires a lot of preparation ahead of time. An update of the employee handbook and MER procedures is in process.

Future planning:

- Looking towards the continuing development of leadership at a field level. The running partners format is giving field staff an opportunity to gain a broader perspective in ministry and gain insight into leadership functions.
- Training opportunities: Workshops at conference in part provide an opportunity to highlight an area that could be a springboard towards further training. I hope to work towards a week long training on worldview either in the fall or early in the new year.
- The need continues to develop future vision for First Nations communities. Looking for either current communities that we have developed ministry in or new areas that still need a gospel witness will take some focus and survey work.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Hamilton