

Canada Field Report
Combined Board Meeting, Feb 5-7, 2015
Submitted by Dan Mayerle

There are seasons when giving leadership to ministries among resistant people groups feels much like plodding down a long, flat prairie road on a hot windy day. You can see your goal a long way in the distance but the hot, dusty wind that pushes against you as you push ahead step by step makes it hard to imagine reaching your goal anytime soon.

Native Ministries

Fort St. John, BC. (Beaver, Cree, etc.)

John and Anne Giesbrecht continue part-time ministry at the Blueberry reserve with a weekly Bible study and ongoing relationships. A young couple from the area is helping them with the kid's ministry at Blueberry. At the urging of a few Native believers John is starting another study in Ft. St. John.

Pray that the gospel message would become deeply rooted in this troubled community where violence and death is far too commonplace.

Redstone, BC (Chilcotin)

Don and Kim Gillaspie are seeing doors open slowly in new areas of community life and relationship. Don's table saw injury has forced him to learn to play guitar left-handed so he has not been playing for as many community events. The other side of that coin is that Don has been asked to officiate at two funerals. The "Creator's Kids" curriculum Don and Kim designed specifically for Redstone has been requested by a single mom so Gillaspies are building relationship and preparing to teach. They continue to host a Sunday gathering when the few believers who attend are available.

Pray that Gillaspies would connect with those who are truly seeking and that those who have professed faith in Christ would live the fruit of the Spirit and be salt and light.

Williams Lake, BC (Chilcotin, Shuswap)

Despite a number of health issues this past year **Jess Tanis** continues to speak into the lives of Chilcotin and Shuswap people as opportunities arise. Jess also continues to maintain his role as an elder-advisor in the Cariboo Community Church. Jess is now a half-time employee of InterAct and has decided to move to retirement status on Dec. 31, 2015.

Pray that Jess' influence (and Alta's posthumously) and prayers, through a life of faithfulness, will continue to bear fruit in the Native communities in and around Williams Lake.

Kamloops, BC. (urban Native)

Valen and Carol Straley have both completed cancer treatment and it appears their cancers are in remission. They have continued to minister and serve as much as possible during those treatments. They are hoping to take a much needed Special Assignment (SpA) and holiday in the fall of this year. **Charlie and Judy Cook**, who are coaching the Kamloops, Williams Lake, and Chilcotin ministries, have volunteered to step in and give leadership to the church while Straleys are on SpA.

Since Ellis' death **Dottie Kasten** has continued in ministry at the Kamloops Native Fellowship alongside Straleys and Sayers. Dottie has developed a unique discipleship ministry among ladies. As they gather around a quilting frame to create quilts Dottie has an open door to discuss what it means to live in relationship to God.

Byron and Danielle Sayer consider the Kamloops Native Fellowship their home church. As they serve among the many youth in that church they continue to make plans for serving full-time as InterAct missionaries within the next three years. Pray that God would give them the faith necessary to make this step. A retreat for BC Native youth in May is being planned in partnership with other ministries. This retreat is modeled after the Native Youth Conference in Alberta.

InterAct is partnering with NEFC and NAIM for a third Native Christian gathering in Kamloops April 16-19, 2015. Randy Jackson will be the keynote speaker.

Pray that mature believers would emerge in the Kamloops Native Fellowship and that they would pursue godly living in all areas of their lives.

Native Bible Centre

Ed and Glenna Houston continue to rework **Native Bible Centre** courses and make them available online. Hardcopy sales of the courses have continued on par with the last few years. Since Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute has closed, Native Evangelical Fellowship (NEFC) is considering cyber options for Bible and pastoral training for Native people. NBC courses may be part of what is offered through this training venue, especially since the work of editing and formatting courses for online use continues.

Pray that adequate and accessible training will be developed so that First Nation believers will be well equipped to develop healthy churches in Native communities across Canada.

Lethbridge, AB (Blood Tribe/Blackfoot)

Dan and Barb Kees continue as half-time employees. Their focus on evangelism and discipleship involves a small weekly gathering of believers. **Josh and Joylynn Beutler** have completed the training at Center for Intercultural Training (CIT) and, with Greg Hamilton's excellent coaching, are closing in on having full support. Since their home is in Lethbridge they are also actively involved in ministry among Blackfoot youth.

Both of these couples have been mentoring a young lady who is doing a Millar College fourth year internship as a youth ministry worker.

Dianne Voth retired as of Dec 31, 2014 but she continues to remain in relationship with the Native gathering and with the Native friends she loves.

Cardston, AB (Blood Tribe/Blackfoot)

Roy and Laura Thiessen continue to build relationships on the Kainai First Nation and serve as the part-time pastor of the multi-cultural Baptist church in Cardston. They have sold their house in town and are planning to put a modular house on an acreage a few miles out of town.

Roy continues in relationship with Blackfoot people of all ages. His weekly volunteering at the cadet program on the Kainai First Nation continues to produce relationships and

opportunities to share truth. The Baptist church is the only evangelical church pushing against the traditional spirituality and the Mormonism that pervades this community.

Pray that this ministry team in southern AB would have wisdom as disciple makers to speak and live God's truth in such a way that the assumption of Christianity being a 'white man's gospel' would be shattered.

Eden Valley, AB (Stoney)

Joel and Amanda Sewell began a SpA last June as a result of feeling like they were on the edge of burn-out. During their SpA they have visited supporters, taken time to rest, spent time with a pastoral counsellor talking through family life issues, and are currently meeting with a New Tribes member care specialist. Their desire is to return to southern Alberta by March 2015 and return to ministry among the Stoney people. Field leaders will be working with the Sewells to develop and implement a sustainable ministry plan.

Pray that the younger missionary families in InterAct would know God's leading as they seek biblical balance between ministry demands and personal/family life.

Morley, AB (Stoney)

Boris and Mirka Vyskocil continue their Sunday ministry at the United Church on the reserve and in relationships as they are able with the limited time they have to be involved in this community.

Pray that the Truth being taught would be powerfully at work in the hearts of those who gather every week.

Calgary, AB (urban Native)

Amy Flater is **Anchored Warriors'** (AW) core team member. There are a few others who volunteer for parts of the ministry that Amy is involved with. Amy continues to focus much of her energy on Eden Valley youth with a monthly youth activity night and ongoing contact with several youth from Eden Valley and other communities.

The larger AW ministry includes Beutler, Sayer, and Quibell, and others not connected to InterAct. This larger ministry includes leadership development events and a summer mentoring/ministry trip.

AW continues to be a conundrum to me. It was initiated in partnership with First Nation, next generation leaders but over time the Native leadership component stepped back from leadership because they did not want to pursue being a "missionary," although they still believed in the ministry and maintained ministry involvement. A couple weeks ago I had a First Nations pastor tell me he wanted to see the AW ministry go nationwide because he believes it is why his daughter is still alive (has not committed suicide).

I am convinced we have much to learn if we are going to facilitate and partner well with our First Nation brothers and sisters as they pursue fulfilling the Great Commission their way.

Recently the Lord has opened a door to relationship with a Korean missionary couple and a Korean church in Calgary who have a passion to partner in re-establishing a Native church in Calgary (a city with approx. 60,000 Native people and no visible fellowship gathering).

Pray that Jesus would build His church in Calgary ... with a form that will best impact the urban Native population.

Loon Lake, SK (Cree)

Dick and Ruth Browning continue to facilitate church growth and develop leaders. This fall an eight-month intern from Millar College has joined them and focused on children and youth ministry in the church and community. The Brownings have been good mentors for this young student.

Please join Dick and Ruth as they continue to pray for teammates (ideally a young man) who can focus on the growing youth population in Loon Lake.

North Battleford, SK (Cree)

Paul and Joanne Janzen have completed their SpA. They are taking on a coaching role for the younger missionaries serving in InterAct Canada's Native ministries. This role will involve a minimum of monthly contact including face-to-face time at least four times a year. We trust this will alleviate some of the discouragements and frustration in our younger missionaries by helping them keep their ministry focus sharp and encouraging healthy personal and family life.

Kelsey Quibell has finished raising her support, taken the cross-cultural training at CIT, and is in full-time ministry in North Battleford. As part of her ministry and our ongoing partnership with Territorial Drive Alliance Church Kelsey is filling a maternity leave vacancy as a half-time children's pastor.

The partnership between Territorial Drive and InterAct continues to bear fruit both in the city and on the Moosimin reserve where Tyrone Bird pastors an indigenous church.

Ron and Taya Browning, have resigned from their half-time position with InterAct and are pursuing employment in North Battleford.

Pray that God will continue to bless this ministry partnership and grow His church. Pray that these ministry workers – Native and non-Native – would have strength to stand firm in the battle.

East Indian Ministries

Surrey, BC (Punjabi)

Sam and Judy Paras continue outreach, discipleship, and gathering of believers. Their involvement in the satsung (fellowship gathering) continues as a partnership effort with a Southern Baptist missionary and a Punjabi believer.

The Christmas outreach program saw 75 people from the community attend. Sam continues to grow his friendship with the Punjabi fine arts school (NAAD) director and Judy continues her ministry as a doula. They are both deeply invested in relationships with Punjabi people.

Sam and Judy continue in their coaching relationship with Akmal and Sarah (Winnipeg) and that relationship has proven to be mutually beneficial.

Pray that the years of investment that Sam and Judy have made in Punjabi people will result in a gathering of Punjabi disciples who love Jesus with all their heart.

Abbotsford, BC (Punjabi)

John and Tracey Tobin continue to move forward in growing a healthier marriage relationship. Besides the ongoing discipleship of Punjabi men (many of whom struggle with addiction), John has a role that requires discernment as he advises both the part-time pastor and the leadership team at Indo-Canadian Christian Fellowship (ICCF). At the end of this year ICCF is being released from its denominational supports and will be making its own way. John is working to facilitate clear communication and healthy relationships between the pastor and church leadership team so this transition will be successful.

Pray for continued health in John and Tracey's marriage and that God will give John wisdom to stand in the gap as ICCF walks through a year of change.

Winnipeg, MB (Punjabi)

Akmal and Sarah Erastus have recognized the value of using 'English as an Additional Language' to prepare hearts for the gospel and also to raise up partners among Canadian churches. Relationships are developing and one Bible study with Sikh men has started. Also four Christmas outreach events in December were well attended and expanded the network of contacts among the Sikh and Muslim communities in Winnipeg.

Pray that Akmal and Sarah will continue to be effective messengers to Punjabi speakers who are immigrants to Canada, just like themselves. Pray also that the Lord will use Akmal as a catalyst for mobilizing Canadian believers to do the work of cross-cultural evangelists ... with the people who live across the street.

Muslim Ministries

Fayez and Vivian Narooz continue to develop the True Love Arabic Church under the umbrella of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches denomination. Fayez spent over a month in Egypt and Jordan teaching theology this fall.

David and Marlene Nelson continue to face significant life adjustments as David's MS limits him more and more. However their passion for reaching Muslim people with the gospel does not waver.

Pray that God would provide workers if He is calling InterAct to expand ministry in this important harvest field.

Administration

Wes and Carol Schellenberg and **Greg and Laura Hamilton** continue to keep the necessary organizational pieces of administration and human resources functioning. They are fine examples of servant leadership as they contribute in a very significant way to InterAct accomplishing the ministry God has called us to.

Thank the Lord for these servants whom God has gifted for the work they do.

Training

The Canada staff conference training day in August 2015 will focus on effective ministry among honour and shame cultures. Tom Steffen will lead this training day.

Five InterAct'ers from the Canada field will attend a biblical counselling conference next week in an ongoing effort to better understand how to use Scripture in disciple making among communities that continue to cry out, "we need healing!"

Recruitment Target – 20 teams in 20 communities by 2020

In the past year we have added 3 new members to the Canada field pipeline. We have also added another community to our list of 20 communities. Two of those new members, Andy and Jesi Chinn have a specific community in mind – Anahim Lake, BC. The other, Whitney Conaway, is planning to be the first urban ministries team member on the ground in Calgary.

Short-term ministries

Jim and Becky Hamilton continue to recruit and grow the *EnGage!* program. Under Jim's leadership *EnGage!* has become a primary door for recruiting long-term missionaries. *EnGage!* 2014 included a team of students focusing on ESL as a platform for building relationships among immigrant people living in an urban setting. The *EnGage!* team learned some things about doing this type of internship well and there is anticipation of expanding our immigrant ministries as an ESL internship is being developed in Winnipeg for 2015. The two interns who participated in our 2014 ESL internship are planning to come back to lead the team in 2015.

We are also continuing to recruit to and place teams in First Nation communities.

Keep praying for the Lord to send workers into the harvest fields of western Canada.

Leadership Development

One of the pressing needs on the Canada field has been spreading out the supervision load so that missionaries get higher 'touch' and so that I can put leadership energy into other areas of development. That continues to happen with Paul and Joanne Janzen picking up a full-time coaching role. I am very thankful for the Canada Leadership Team who work hard to make ministry happen.

Urban Ministry Team Strategy

The development of an urban ministry team using some level of business-as-mission as part of a whole-life discipleship focus moved forward significantly as 10 interested participants gathered in November to begin to grapple with the realities of making this model of ministry a reality. Whitney Conaway is raising support with a plan to be on the field by January 2016 and several others are praying about filling out applications before May 1, 2015.

The 5 P's

Prayer:

Barbi Gonzales and **Leila Cross** continue to hold the banner of prayer high. It is a powerful role that is a huge encouragement to staff and, more importantly, is what God calls us to do in releasing His work and His power.

Partnerships:

InterAct Canada has a few effective partnerships with local churches and many of our missionaries have strong relationships with local churches who support and facilitate ministry. We also have ongoing partnerships and growing relationships with like-minded ministry agencies.

People:

God continues to draw people to the ministries on the Canada field. For that we are very thankful. Please keep praying that the Lord would place His workers in this harvest field!

Perspective:

Worldview training and practical implementation are a part of our core strategy. A ‘personalized’ worldview training component is going to get test-driven this coming year as Mike Matthews (Worldview Resource Group) works with some of our newest missionaries to equip them to discover the stories of their community that reveal foundational assumptions about how life ought to be.

We continue to pursue ministry workers who have training in biblical counseling. We also are seeking to highlight biblical counseling among our staff as a road to address the cry for healing and wholeness. We believe following this road is one way to make disciples who are making disciples.

Promotion (Public Presence):

Dan and Deanna Woodard are spending more time developing workshops that will equip our partner churches to reach out across cultural barriers and love their neighbor well. Equipping partner churches continues to be increasingly important as God raises up churches who take seriously the call to love their neighbors.

Pray that InterAct will be a ‘value-added’ partner with the churches and ministries we come alongside of.

Although razzle-dazzle is a lot more exciting I am okay with what appears to be plodding toward our goal of seeing disciplined, gathered believers if that is what it will take to stay the course long term and reach the goal. I am optimistic and hopeful that InterAct leadership continues to be led by the Spirit of God as we pursue effective ministry, set strategy and serve people.