

Canada Field Report January 15, 2021

As I write this report several of the First Nation communities have gone into lockdown ... again. Even one community who has already received the first round of COVID vaccine has locked down again. Only half the community took advantage of the vaccine offered so as case numbers increase there is still significant risk even there. As well, several of the provinces are implementing significant restrictions that severely limit in-person social interaction or connection. Our missionaries, whether their focus is Muslim, Punjabi, or indigenous peoples, are doing everything they can to honour all levels of government in these restrictions while keeping in touch with people and continuing their disciple making efforts.

InterAct's ministry model is based on relationship. Technology gives us an incredible opportunity for a helpful level of relational connection that was not possible even a half dozen years ago. But, as you know, it is impossible to duplicate the dynamics of face-to-face relationship via a digital connection. InterAct's missionaries are working hard to get all the benefit possible out of the social media and digital connections available but it is a struggle. It is a struggle that gets wearying and it is especially wearying as restrictions get tighter. Fortunately, vaccinations are beginning and there is some light at the end of the corona virus tunnel. Significantly larger than hope of vaccines is the certain hope that we serve a Master who is innovative beyond our wildest dreams. He is not surprised nor is He hand-cuffed by this pandemic.

PRAYER

I am very thankful for Dale's leadership in utilizing Zoom to make InterAct's monthly day of prayer a more concrete reality among InterAct's missionaries on all three fields. I am also thankful that Bill Twichell has continued a weekly zoom prayer meeting on the Canada field. We continue to work at utilizing communication apps to enhance participation in praying for each other in InterAct. This is particularly important as younger missionaries join InterAct. I am grateful that Carol Smith and Chris Olson are making that a priority. These efforts to highlight prayer are important as we seek to move ministry ahead, and particularly in these times when innovation is a necessity.

TRAINING

At the online Canada staff conference last August people voted overwhelmingly in favour of continuing online training. Both field and organizational leadership has been looking for options to offer training without tasking other InterAct'ers who already have full plates of responsibility. Thanks to the help of Roy Thiessen a second weekly study group has completed the 12 week study of Paul Tripp's Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands material. To date 16 Canada staff have been through this premier disciple making material (my opinion 😊). If there is interest Roy may lead another group in the spring. In January, 26 staff participated in an online Understanding Suicide workshop that was done in collaboration with Samaritan's Purse and one of their chaplaincy trainers. In February a dozen InterAct staff are registered for the online, week-long, intensive Biblical Counselling conference coming out of Lafayette, IN. 10 of those have completed the Fundamentals track and will be participating in more in-depth training offered in the other tracks.

I would like to see further worldview discovery training (A Novel Approach) but a protracted border closure has delayed that training. George Walker continues to effectively coach Sewells in their ministry at Eden Valley, AB and Beutlers in Lethbridge, AB. George's experience and gifting are a great gift to

these missionaries as they work diligently to understand the core assumptions of the people and clearly present the Gospel in a way that connects with their hearts.

LEADERSHIP

In October Cohle and Rebecca Bergen moved to southern MB and resigned from InterAct. They will focus on strengthening their family and further development for future ministry. Although we were sorry to see them go InterAct leadership blessed the decision they made. I continue to stay connected with Cohle. This loss created a significant hole in the Thompson team as Cohle was the team leader. Thankfully, Jim and Becky Hamilton were willing to step in and give interim leadership to the team until the fall of 2021. Morgan and Krista Serger have recently had God confirm their transition out of the isolated community of York Landing back into Thompson. Morgan, with Jim's help wherever it is needed, will start giving leadership to the team next fall. Sergers will move back to Thompson after the 2021-2022 school year. At that point they will again have a full-time focus on developing InterAct's ministry across northern Manitoba.

In February Greg and I have made tentative plans to swap roles. Greg will become the Canada field director and I will assist him however I can. We are already looking for someone who can come alongside as an assistant field director since the plan is for my involvement to diminish over the next two years. Bev and I plan to transition back to focusing our energy on ministry in Calgary. It continues to burden Bev and I that there is still no identifiable gathering of Native believers in a city where over 70,000 people identify as indigenous. We would like to walk alongside the scattered believers, disciple them, and facilitate fellowship and gathering.

PROGRAMS

We currently have one summer camp program. Midway Bible Camp and a one week satellite camp at Berge Lake serve northern Manitoba communities. It is uncertain what camp will look like this coming summer so the team is developing programming that will work with any one of three options that may be possible. Camp could be entirely virtual again like it was last summer. We may also operate family camp style where we offer programming for families that come together. We would offer this program to one community at a time to minimize the possibility of spreading the virus to other communities. Although it seems highly unlikely, we also may have the freedom to operate a regular camping program for youth from multiple communities across the north.

COLLABORATION

Initial discussions have opened the door for collaborative partnering with Native Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (NEFC) and with Indian Bible College in Flagstaff, AZ.

NEFC leadership is dreaming of having a YouTube channel filled with teaching and resources geared toward Native pastors and leaders who are serving Christ in their communities across Canada. InterAct missionary, Mark Dabrowski, has already been able to offer technological assistance to Kene Jackson (NEFC Exec Dir). There is a possibility that Mark could be very instrumental in making web-based resources available to Native Christian leaders.

Indian Bible College would like to partner with InterAct to offer the opportunity to Canadian indigenous believers to get Bible education in a school that is staffed primarily with Native American teachers.

Both potential collaborative efforts open the door for InterAct Canada to be involved in developing indigenous believers who can be spiritual leaders among their people. The Canada leadership team is in dialogue with Dale as he will give final direction to any partnership that develops.

ADMINISTRATION

Melanie continues to manage the financial processes of InterAct Canada well. We continue to upgrade technology and software to expand our administrative services to both donors and missionaries. The Boring office (Mike) is looking for an organization wide donor management software that will meet the needs of both fields. If we can find one that will meet the needs on both side of the border InterAct Canada will then have the option of processing credit card donations in-house instead of outsourcing it to CanadaHelps.

If all goes as tentatively planned this will be my last report as the Canada field director. It has been a pleasure to get to know each of you at least a little bit. I greatly appreciate your commitment and service to the Lord's work through InterAct Ministries. I have learned and grown under Dale's leadership and I look forward to applying what I have gained as I serve among the urban Native population of Calgary in this next season of ministry.

Respectfully,
Dan Mayerle, Canada Field Director