

Canada Field Report
February 2023

Another year of ministry and service is behind us. Taking time to look back and consider what is behind and then to shift our focus to the year ahead is vitally important for our renewal and the intentionality that is necessary to not repeat what is behind us. One area that I have been meditating on recently is out of a devotional by David Powlison. I used it in the most recent donor letter for Canada. My reflection follows:

The Lord is *near*. This little phrase is at the end of Philippians 4:5. This word can mean near of place or near of time. The Lord can be near to us physically and the Lord's return is coming soon. Both of those interpretations bring a lot of comfort and trust. All our ministry area is in the northern reaches of the northern hemisphere. It is an area that faces a lot of the winter months in darkness. During these months people often fall into worry and fear. Many times, the desperation of their situation leads to taking their own life. Suicide rates in indigenous communities are twice the rate as in our western society. I would invite you to pray for light in dark places - both physical darkness and spiritual darkness. Pray that the Lord would gather a harvest that would shine forth His light and hope.

As a team we also need to remind ourselves that the Lord is near. His physical nearness is that comfort and trust in serving in places that are often difficult and lonely. His soon return is our challenge to be bold in our proclamation of the gospel and the discipling of others. We need to have these pieces in mind if we are going to be effective in our service.

Recent highlights from the field:

- One community that is opening up is Eden Valley, Alberta. After extremely tight restrictions during Covid closed access to the community, our Anchored Warriors team has been invited back into the community to serve the youth. Several of the youth that are now young adults have advocated for the team to return and those youth are involved in gathering the younger teens to the group. We are seeing new relationships develop and new levels of involvement from community leaders and even the ability to use the community hall for regular events.
- As Dan and Bev Mayerle continue to move back into local community Bible studies have begun to be started again. One was advertised on social media, which led to a couple from the Siksika reservation to request that a bible study be held in their home. This is leading to another new circle of relationships in a community where it is more and more difficult to stand as a Christ-follower.
- Winnipeg: After the loss of access to the church where the Punjabi Fellowship was meeting, the group struggled to maintain a sense of connection. Recently the fellowship has begun to meet on Sunday evenings in a local multi-cultural church. A newer group of families has begun to attend regularly and continues to reach out. Also, there have been people from Muslim backgrounds that have refugees who have been re-located in Winnipeg. These families are looking for connection and a circle of people has just begun to gather.
- S.A.L.T. groups in three communities are meeting and are beginning to include young adult leaders from those communities. These young leaders are taking on more responsibility and interest in discipling others.

Personnel Changes:

- Andrew Chinn: Andy resigned from employment with InterAct, maintaining his volunteer membership. Andy is now employed by the Mustard Seed inner city ministry in Calgary. His wife Jessica is filling a half-time position and maintaining team relationship with Dan and Bev.
- Travis Harms: Travis has fully resigned from InterAct to pursue his own business. He and his wife Kristalyn continue to live in Thompson, MB.
- (Allison) Brooke Wortham is now serving with immigrant ministries in Calgary. Serving in conjunction with an immigrant center operated by a local church, the opportunity to build relationship through involvement with teaching English, being available to house refugees and walking alongside these new immigrants has become a way of impacting her community.
- Tim and Gwendy Colwell, Ross River, Yukon. The Colwells transferred from SEND North this past year. They have been serving in Ross River for the past twenty years. There is a significant ministry center that has been developed in the community as a center for Christian ministry, local outreach, and community events. The Colwells have five children, two are married, one in university and two at home.
- Boris and Myrka Vyskocil have developed a local ministry team for the church in Morley, Alberta. Along with a couple from Cochrane and a team of people from the community outreach continues to grow. They are in the process of deciding if they would like to maintain membership with InterAct or be directly attached to their supporting church.
- Don and Kim Gillaspie (Redstone) have resigned from InterAct. Don has become more involved in the community through the housing department and assisting with the emergency response team for the community. They continue to live and minister in the community.

Future Planning/ Advances towards Field Vision

- Development of a leadership team: This past fall I have begun to meet with a group of four men. Josh Beutler, Byron Sayer, Stefan Schulz and Morgan Serger. I have called them my 'Running Partners' and have begun to meet every second week with them. It is a place to develop vision sharing and leadership potential among them. All of them are under 40 and still have young families. I have not delegated responsibility to them, with the exception of Morgan with the team around Midway Bible Camp.
- Biblical Counseling: Over the past number of years biblical counseling has been a major focus of training and development. The departure of Roy Thiessen has left a hole for someone else to fill in continuing to develop training in this area. At this point, resourcing staff with books and training opportunities will be the primary focus.
- Worldview Level (ANA): There seems to be a lot of miscommunication, myths and legends on the Canada field around worldview ministry. I believe that to begin to bring a focus and updated understanding for the Canada field will be important to beginning to shift our use of this ministry approach. Having Josh Beutler on my team and his involvement with ANA is a key link in moving some of this forward.
- Mission X (Steinbach Bible College) EnGage! 2023: The second-year students spend a week in northern Manitoba in a number of communities. This is an opportunity for students to get

outside of their comfort zone and encounter cross-cultural communities. It is a great time to recruit for Midway Bible Camp as well as further opportunities. EnGage! opportunities exist again for this summer. We are hopeful to have an immigrant ministry team in Winnipeg and possibly someone to be a part of the camp ministry.

Hot Spots/Concerns/Further Discussion

- Long Service Employees (Retirement) I am presently working on refining Canada's policy on receiving support funds in retirement. There is a growing number of staff who continue to stay located in their ministry assignment, maintain a level of involvement with the ministry, but who fall into the category of people who would be able to receive a retirement allowance. There is less of a need for supervision and support, and yet still a willingness and ability for involvement in ministry. My hope is to have Jim and Becky Hamilton step in as 'shepherds' to this group and lessen my need to supervise them.
- Ministry in Bolivia. Dale and Debbie Kenyon have been involved for a number of years in church planting in Bolivia. Initially there was a secondment agreement with SIM that allowed Kenyons to be in Bolivia. Since their return to North America, there is continued itinerate involvement in Bolivia and Bonnyville, AB. As an organization our involvement in Bolivia is a tenuous position. I will need to have some intentional discussion about future involvement for Kenyons in Bolivia.
- Midway Bible Camp (Site 6): The funds for the development of the new site continue to be raised. Morgan is quickly moving to the stage of being able to start to develop the driveway access to the land and then begin the site preparation. There is a healthy discussion that is ongoing with the community and Morgan is developing good communication and respect with the chief and council. We continue to trust that the funds will be fully raised and that the property will be in use for the summer of 2025.
- Staff Conference August 27-31, Red Deer, Alberta. We are bringing our location back to the center of the field and hoping that this will be a site that we can use for the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Hamilton
Field Director Canada