

## Journey of Hope Beyond the Dead End

In my latest time up north I was there for a very specific reason: to help bring encouragement and healing to those who had just lost a loved one, a young man who was a youth worker who died at the age of 32. During my last trip up there, a young girl aged 14 had just taken her life and her father was a youth worker I also knew from previous trips up north. So I found myself dealing with two crisis situations and the great swath of pain that surrounded them.

In meeting with the two different families I really sensed the Lord at work through me, offering words of knowledge that translated into hope in their dark moments. That is a result of the prayers of many who stand with me during such times and I have the privilege of sensing the Lord at work all around me. I could see it in the timing of events; people coming across my path at the right moment and the one thing that still amazes me to this day, that I am truly given insight into the story that is being shared with me that can only come from God.

However, in this past visit there was a period of time for about three days (during the eight that I was there) when I felt inside of me a really heavy sense of discouragement. It was during the middle of my time there and while the issues I was dealing with were hard moments to walk through, I felt in my heart that there was more to this sentiment of despair than simply that.

As I prayerfully walked myself through the feelings I began to see a picture of my ministry up there as I perceived it in my own soul. I visualised myself as a Medic, cleaning out wounds and bandaging up the hurting but powerless to stop the injuries from reoccurring. It caused me a great deal of inner turmoil and at times moments of real anxiety, but I also knew that I needed to embrace these feelings in order to sense from the Lord what He wanted me to learn from these dark moments in my soul.

The picture at the right is one I took during my days of discouragement in Mistissini. It symbolised for me the way many people can feel as their hope fades and the complexity of their many poor decisions, or life factors outside of their control, compound upon each other. Suddenly they reach a place in the journey where it looks like they are out of options; it is a **dead end**. Death looks like the only release from the pain they feel inside which is so intense, it blinds them to the consequences of such an action and makes suicide look like an escape.



As I stared at the sign that night, set in the lingering days of winter when it should be spring, I saw something just behind the sign. The remnants of a beautiful sunset, bringing to a close this day, but promising the start of another once the night sky was done portraying and declaring its message. And the message of the night sky is this; all powerful is the One who made the Heavens and the Earth, and each one of the Stars that you see He called into existence by name! And that same power is at work on behalf of each one of us with a love so wide and deep, awaiting only for us to experience it by inviting Him into our moments. That night I stood out under the stars reflecting on all of that and I was priveleged to see a huge shooting star light up the night sky as it moved across it in full majesty. God was using my time up there in the north, no matter how short it was, to bring about hope and light for those who were searching.



The beauty of the sunset is to remind us to lift our eyes off the path we are on which can seem so discouraging in the moments that surround us. Yet as we lift our eyes up, we see a reminder that even the bleakest of days can end with the beauty of hope and the promise of a new beginning about to be revealed.

It all depends on your focus, what you choose to see. And it may depend on the ability of those like me to help someone see that truth by coming alongside in the journey we call life.

My role is not simply to be a Medic, but there are times that I serve in that capacity. But my real ministry is to help people to refocus, as I bandage them up, and to see the hope that is theirs and that it is much closer than it seems. This hope is just beyond the sign that seems to point to a dead end, in the midst of the wonder and beauty that it is truly all around us. And even in the dark night of the soul we can see and sense the Hand and Voice of the Creator reaching out to us with power and love to actually change our moments.

Unfortunately, I cannot get everyone to see that hope before their despair gets the better of them. But I was reminded that my role is to be faithful in getting that message out, to those who are hurting and to those who are not, in order that they might learn to look beyond the moment to the scarred Hands of Him who wants their story to be better than they could have ever imagined because He loves them so much. And the measurement of my success is in the unseen difference that message makes in the lives of people who when they do see that sign, do not believe the message, but look beyond it for the hope that is theirs.