

Thoughts on our recent Mistissini Trip, June 2011

It was a great journey to be on with my three summer interns, all of whom will be working in one of the communities we visited. Charity will be working in Waswanipi, Anthony in OJ, and Rachel in Mistissini. Our reception in all three communities was extremely positive and we sensed a real air of excitement for the upcoming camps.

On the first day we were there, the Sunday night, one of the youth took their life. In such small communities that are so closely linked with each other, this is a devastating event. And it was one more in a series of such tragic events over the last few months.

I had met this young person a few years back in one of our camps. He also had some connection with some good friends of mine who help out with a Bible camp just outside of the community. It reminded me once again why we do what we do and the importance of remembering that each youth we come across needs the hope and life we share in the name of Jesus.

I will also tell you that I felt strong discouragement in my heart over this suicide, wondering if we could have made more of a difference, and in my darker moments, wondering if we were making any difference at all. However, the Lord in His faithfulness never leaves us in our darkness but by the Light of His very presence steps into those moments as our hearts cry out to Him. I was reminded in the last two days by some good friends, in two separate conversations, that my focus should not be on those we have lost tragically in the last few months, but rather to remember that our interaction with these youth have planted hope in the hearts of many others. I needed that encouragement!

I had a good time meeting with the youth workers and youth at the Reception Centre. My highlight though was in meeting with a young man who had just gotten out of prison that I had known prior to his incarceration. He told his mom he wanted to meet with me because he had always felt I spoke encouragement into his life.

We went out for lunch together and in my own gentle but direct way, I asked about his time in prison and what he had learned. He had only been out for a few days and was finding the adjustment to freedom still an amazing thing. He had truly learned his lessons and was seeking a life change. We talked about his story and the love Jesus has for him, the potential that exists in his heart. We laughed over some of our previous encounters that had not always been so positive because of his tough outer shell. But I reminded him that he had a very gentle heart and gave him examples of when I had seen that in action. He became teary and sat in deep, silent reflection. When I dropped him off later he thanked me for the time, stood by the car in silence for a bit and then thanked me again very strongly, saying I had given him much to think about. I was humbled and broken inside to see the powerful work of the Lord continued in this young man's life even through the turbulence of his past.

Only God can truly work miracles. Only God can truly bring about transformation. Our requirement is to surrender. His commitment is to work powerfully in love through that surrender to make our story and our moments better than we ever could have imagined.

Thanks so much for your prayers that help make this happen, because our Lord loves to answer.