

Here is a more detailed report of my time in Mistissini that I've broken down into several different areas. Please feel free to select the areas of greater interest to you if you do not have time to read the whole article. Thanks so much for your involvement in the journey!

## **Safety**

The first prayer request that I mentioned in my email to you was for safety as I travelled, saying that I never take it for granted. I remember as I wrote it that I wondered why I was putting it first and actually questioned myself about it. There was a very good reason!

About 250 km into my trip the driver side front tire flew off the Jeep. All I saw was a glimpse of something black leaving the side of the vehicle and then the Jeep hit the road and lurched hard to the left. To my left was a small ravine and I knew if I went just 6 more feet to my left I would hit the soft shoulder of the road and roll into the ravine. Next thing I knew the Jeep seemed to straighten itself out, returned to my side of the road and drove straight ahead and to a very gentle stop on the side of the road, all the while leaning heavily to the left as it dragged along the road. As I sat there realising what had just happened with the full adrenaline rush running through me, I immediately began to count my blessings.

There was no traffic on the road at that time either behind me or in front of me, therefore the tire did not leave the Jeep and collide with anyone else but simply ran itself into the ravine. Also, because there were no oncoming vehicles when the Jeep lurched left into the other lane I was not involved in a major accident. I cannot tell you how many trucks alone I had passed previous to that point.

There were many ruts and potholes on the road up to that point but none where the accident occurred to me. If I had hit a pothole or bad rut the drum with the missing tire could have easily caught and rolled the Jeep.

I did not continue to bounce and lurch over to the left which would have caused me to enter the ravine. While it would have only been about a 15 foot drop to the left, there is no doubt that once again the Jeep would have rolled, causing extensive damage both to the vehicle and possibly to me.

My first spoken words were thank you Lord for watching over me!!!

I then got out and assessed the damage. The front fender was mostly off of the Jeep and yet the hub looked pretty good. The first person to stop and help me had seen, from a couple of kilometres away, the Jeep lurch on the road and bounce around and knew something had gone very wrong. He could not believe there was not more visible damage or that I had been able to drive it so directly to the side



Be sure to choose a beautiful spring day if you ever get stranded on the side of the road for three hours!

of the road as if parking in a normal fashion. Together we located the tire down in the ravine. He made sure I was able to phone a tow truck and headed on his way.

I then went down into the ravine to get the tire. The snow was knee deep but the tire was easily visible. My biggest concern was wondering how I was going to be able to carry it back out, lol! As I lifted the tire out of the snow I saw something small about 5 feet off to my left following the track of the tire as it came to its resting spot. I put the tire down and went over to see what it was and it was one of the lug nuts!! About 5 feet from it was a second one, and from there a third and 5 more feet a fourth one!! It was if someone had simply placed them on top of the snow at five foot intervals for me to pick up!! They were not buried at all but sitting nicely on top of the snow! That was my first real encouragement that the hand of the Lord was being seen even in the small details!

Two more vehicles stop to ask me if they could help but there was little that could be done as there was no way to jack the vehicle up due to the angle of the ground. I was still waiting for the tow truck and driver who would help me assess if the tire could be changed and the vehicle driven or if I needed to have it towed to Val D'Or.

Then a truck pulled up and a man about my age got out and immediately went over and started assessing the Jeep. He spoke rapidly in French with another man who I later found out was his brother and they began to suggest a number of things to me but I was unable to catch it all as (I realised later) I was still in a bit of shock. He then got his sister-in-law, who spoke English well, to come out of the truck and she told me they wanted to help. Apparently, the first man was a mechanic and the same thing had happened to them about two nights earlier. Consequently, he had purchased all the equipment he needed to fix his own tire, meaning he had everything needed in the back of his truck to help me. They went to work on the Jeep, jacking it up in two different spots, supporting it firmly in place and then putting the spare tire on. They even got the fender put back on securely! They were amazed that four of the five lug nuts were found and that they were able to thread them on securely, too!

They assessed the damage and felt the vehicle could be driven, at which point the tow truck showed up. They all discussed it and decided that the tow truck would follow me to where I would turn off for the final 500 kms to Mistissini, and if I sensed any problems he would then tow me instead to Val D'Or. So three hours after the incident I was back on the road again! If they had not come along and helped me out I would not have been able to drive away!

The Lord's hand of gracious protection was upon me! But it did not end there.

I was told I should avoid bumps and potholes but that is impossible on the roads to Mistissini. On the way back I also drove through a spring blizzard that dumped more than 10 cm of snow on the ground, making the road pretty much invisible for more than three hours! All that kept me going was the thought that surely the further south I drove, the warmer it would eventually become!!

I made it home safely and then brought my car into a garage that my son has a partnership with for them to check it all out for me. Their first words were "I have no idea how you even drove it here, never mind over 1600 kms since the accident." Apparently there was significant damage to the ball joint that was easily visible when it was hoisted up and there was nothing holding that whole part of the Jeep together. They said a simple bump or pothole should have shaken it all loose. I cannot tell

you how many bumps and extensive holes I hit on my way up there and back. Again the Lord was more than gracious to me and faithful in looking after me!

The Lord heard our prayers. The Lord laid it firmly on my heart to ask for protection. I received some great emails and some texts telling me you were praying for me!! Well, those prayers were heard and answered, blessings flowed in the midst of troubles and grace touched the moments in ways that were very unexpected!! And you were part of all of this!

On a bit of a side note here, NO, I did not recently replace my winter tires with my all seasons. It was done back in October and the lug nuts were properly tightened at that time. I have also driven over 8000 kms since then including one trip up to Mistissini and back. So how did the tire become loose and come off??

There is only one logical explanation for it and that is someone possibly tried to steal the tire and after loosening the lug nuts changed their mind. Or they loosened the lug nuts on purpose. Or possibly there is a spiritual explanation as my oldest son Jonathan suggested. Jon had talked with several people he knows in the mechanical repair business and they all suggested that someone had to have tampered with the tire. But Jon also looked at me and said "Dad, in your case it could also have been spiritual." Either way the Lord knew and moved His people to pray.

### **Gordon and MaryJane Petawabano**

Thank you so much for your prayers for our good friends and partners in ministry, Pastor Gordon and his wife MaryJane. They have been much involved in the grief counselling, organising of services in the community and compassionate care for those grieving the loss of loved ones in the fire. The funeral service for the five victims of the fire will hopefully be done by the end of this week after the coroner's reports have been finalised. Their nephew, Charlie Gunner, who was very close to the whole family, was also one of the victims of the fire and has yet to be fully identified through DNA. Please pray that this report can be completed. The problem is that there were so little remains left of two of the victims that the DNA typing has been held up as it requires far more intensive testing requirements. In the meantime, there is no sense of closure for the grieving families. Pastor Gordon and MaryJane are feeling exhausted with the great needs that are there, as well as their own grief, but also recognise the great opportunity to minister spiritually. Please pray for their continued strengthening and also that they will have a time of true spiritual refreshment after the final service is held.

Your prayers for MaryJane's mom were answered. She had been transported by air ambulance to Montreal because of heart problems. Thankfully the hospital was able to fix the problems, put in a pacemaker and she is back at home doing well in Mistissini!



Dale Petawabano (left) with MaryJane and Pastor Gordon at the camp where the fire took place. A memorial cross was erected there for the five men who lost their lives. Over 40 skidoos transported people the four hour ride to the memorial site.