

Tripp Report

October 6, 2007



My time with Inter-Varsity has come to a close. Many of you began the process with me back in the spring of 1995, 12 years ago and I would like to thank-you for your support and encouragement over these years. I would like to take a quick journey through the past and talk about what I have learned, from back in the days when I had a 286 with a 40MB HDD, a 14' monochrome monitor and dot-matrix printer, and an 84 Diesel Rabbit to now.

One of the constant themes in my work with IV has been change. It all started before it began. When I began the process, I was living in Waterloo and was moving forward to start work there, but 'the door closed' and then it became a question of where to go? My only request was that I don't go to the GTA.... As you know, I was sent to Oakville, smack in the middle of the GTA! But it was a gift. I took over the work of Joanna Morrison and worked along side Kathy Pedersen. Through the process, God provided a house for me to live in which soon became a drop-in for ISCF and church kids.

One of the things with any mission, we change the mission and the mission changes us. When I went to New Staff Orientation (NSO) in BC at Camp Chahalis I had to read In The Name of Jesus by Henri Nouwen. Nouwen was outside my box, and challenged me to think in a different way. During NSO, I was introduced to more people who challenged me in their being, which was what always attracted me to IV people. There was a deeper contemplative approach to life which was counter-cultural to my Christian culture. The phrase '*be still and know that I am God*' had a very different meaning, which intrigued me. Being in the IV community at Chahalis, there was a lot of refrence to Nouwen, and C.S. Lewis whom I had really only been introduced a year earlier at Ontario Bible College (Tyndale) who also challenged me outside my Christian-box. NSO was very helpful.

Right after NSO, John Bowen hosted an Evangelism Consultation that I participated in, and learned a ton more. I was introduced to small group Bible study with Doug Caldwell, in a way I had never experienced, not scripted, or set-up, but honest questions with only the text in hand. This was called, **Inductive Bible Study** allowing the Bible to speak for itself. Amazing stuff.

The year continued.

March Break Mission

March 1996 I set up our March Break Mission to Montreal. This became a challenge to my ideas of short-term mission. My preception was to have our group work together on one project, but alas in Montreal at that time it was not possible. I had to come up with a different approach. Dividing our kids up among different projects, which was outside my cultural-Christian box. The new approach actually increased the growth in the kids lives in Montreal, and later too on our Toronto Projects. March Break Missions went from 1997-2000.

Oakville to Kingston

When in Oakville, I was at Gordon Phillips' Fellowship Baptist Church, *Faith Baptist*. Early in September Gordon and Eulalia took me out for lunch after church and I was talking with Eulalia over dessert as Gordon was visiting paritioners at the restaruant. Through our conversation, Eulalia saw a potential connection between Helen and I. When Gordon came back, she said, "He is just like our Helen." The phone call was made that afternoon, but Helen was off to volunteer in India with Hope International, and to travel through Africa, until in April '96 she unexpectedly came home a month early to Toronto where, we would say God set us up. I moved to Kingston a year later.

One of the things I quickly learned when I came to Kingston, was that I had to re-learn how to do youth work! Kingston students and the culture was much different from Oakville. When talking with Bill VanGronigen the CRC Chaplin on campus, I asked him for words



of wisdom for a rookie, and his response was *“Kingston is like the limestone it is built upon. If you want to make a difference you need to work like water over limestone and you can mold it into whatever you want.”*

Student Leadership in Kingston was different, and one difference was the interest in Social Action. During the Harris work-to-rule, we were meeting off campus and coordinating the Harvest, and Famine.

Summer Camp

Where to start? I had much to learn my first two years on staff, one of those was about summer camp. In '95 I was at the year end camp at OPC

then called the Edge, which was hard to integrate as the staff had been together for some time. BUT Ontario Pioneer Camp was an IVCF camp, and being committed to the mission, I went back to help with the Leader In Training program (LIT). At that point the LIT director and about half the LIT staff were ISCF staff. I was very intrigued with camp, but did not see the point... But half-way through '97, I could see the change in kids lives, and the potential of student leadership which is a

passion. Where else in our Christian community are kids given such leadership opportunities!? I would challenge, “No where”. After a short time I was asked to coordinate the out-tripping component of the LIT program which meant setting up the tripping program for the season as LITs were the first trips out. It was here that I got involved in instruction. As I was involved on the peripheral of OPC tripping, I saw a deterioration in the quality of the staff. I did a study of summer camps to find out what the standard were, and wrote a report, which was posted online and I got some responses from other camps! But I then stepped up to the plate. A friend of mine, Richard Harvey was offering a Paddle Canada Canoe Tripping 2 Instructor Course in the maritimes, with an instructor from Ontario, John Girardi, I went out east and got my CT2 Instructor. At this point I began teaching OPC trippers. This then branched out and I taught

On a walk through a ravine in Oakville my first year, I was impacted with the idea of taking student groups on canoe trips to develop community. I developed a plan which was supported by a number of my friends. BUT ISCF students did not really buy in. Instead what has happened, I am a program director, and entrapaneur and have the opportunity to live in community with teachers, and secular camp staff, and have been involved in direct evangelism with them.

some graduates from Queen’s teacher’s college in 2000 and Wilderness Tripping¹ was launched.

Even while working at OPC’s LIT program I was teasing Camp IAWAH’s director Tim Edwards, *“What Christian camp doesn’t have an outtripping program?”* In 2001 Tim asked me what I had in mind. After conversations with Garry Castle and Jeff Dixon I submitted a proposal to the IAWAH board, and in '02 **Out There**, IAWAH’s wilderness adventure program was born and has been growing since to having it’s own leadership training program, Coureur des Bois (CB) in '07.

<http://www.wildernesstripping.ca/IAWAH/outthere.html>

Summer camp has been an about face for me. I went from thinking that direct high school work was the frontlines, to thinking that summer camp

is the frontline or beach-head of evangelism in the Christian Community in Canada. There is nothing like living in intentional Christian community for a week or 2 at a time to help bring people to faith. There needs to be follow-up of course, but it is a spring board for kids to jump into the adventure of faith.

During the CB program at IAWAH this summer, half the kids at mid-point in the program stated that they wanted to learn their Bibles more! Warm my heart! In 10 years of high school work, I have never heard that from a student. I love all my ISCF students and challenged them and was in turn challenged

by them, but CB went farther faster than a year of high school. Who knew. *“Camp is relationships on steroids.”*



In talking with the late Cathie Nicoll in '96 at OPC, I asked her for words of wisdom for a rookie, she replied *“There is nothing Spiritual about longevity, but there sure is perspective.”* I hadn’t a clue what she was talking about, but in my late 30’s, I think I get it.

¹ Wilderness Tripping is a canoe and first-aid instructional company targeting summer camp staff and recreationalists. www.wildernesstripping.ca

Halloween Harvest

Decades ago Juli (Wilcox) Wichert started the Halloween Harvest in Kingston which was continued by Maggie (Clark) LaMarche, and by me. But the Harvest took on a new direction after I shared a room at Urbana 96 with Jarem Sawatsky (MPC LIT/Winnepeg ISCF). Hearing what was happening with the food drive in Winnipeg with the inter-connections with camp-campus-church, I thought *WOW we have a ways to go*. I sat down with my student leaders and we came up with a new plan and the project grew, and today is one of the largest Christian youth events in Kingston. This project will now be continued by Kingston's Urban Coalition.

<http://www.wildnesstripping.ca/UC/harvest.html>

Special Meals

Maggie started the ISCF group helping out with Martha's Table downtown Kingston, which is a type of soup kitchen that is run like a restaurant. Guests pay \$1 for a meal and are served and have some options. Just as Maggie was leaving to go back to school, Martha's reduced our hours as they had lots of help. At the same time, I heard that St. Andrew's was in desperate need of help. So for fall 1998, I signed up our ISCF team for Special Meals. We never looked back. The students set-up, prepare the food, serve, and then are responsible for clean-up. A complete meal deal! That program has grown and we now invite local youth groups to serve. This program will be continued by Kingston's Urban Coalition.

<http://www.wildnesstripping.ca/UC/coalition.html>

School Clubs

School Clubs were a centre of my ISCF work for years, but going back to change in culture, Kingston was always a struggle. Most often what kids wanted was an adult to run the groups. When the students picked up the mantle and ran with it it was great, but to find the next generation of kids, was next to impossible. Struggle as I did, it became easier to coordinate events for youth groups to participate in than maintain a club model.

In 2003 I did an intensive youth culture survey in Kingston using Reg Bibby's survey as a template. Of the 6000 kids in Kingston, ~632 were in the local church, but only about 100 are actively involved. If 10% of the church does 90% of the

work, to have my 6-10 ISCF kids in Kingston I was right on target and I found my population!

Leave of Absence

With the constant of change, the last year in Kingston before our leave (fall 2006-spring 2007 in Peru) it was hard to initiate new ideas or programs as I was not going to be around to follow through, and there wasn't anyone on the horizon to pick up the baton and run. (Though I was vigorously looking!) Often youth work has been like fishing, you cast a line to see if you get some bites, and then go from there. Jason Woudsma stepped in to host Special Meals, and the Harvest, as these are committed on-going projects. Our conversation happened in August weeks before we left. The leave was a time of refreshment and learning, that is a newsletter in itself! It was assumed after the Leave that I would be into something new, just 'what' was the question. I submitted a number of proposals to IV seeking to connect Camp-Campus-Community and Church. But I was outside the box. I continue to believe in the idea but will be working at it as a volunteer instead of IV staff.



Future

I will miss IV and the people who challenged me to grow, but as time goes on, I have become one of those people. I have learned, and as others have moved on, I too move on. I do not know what the future holds.

In writing this final newsletter, I think there is more that I did not talk about than I did talk about, but these would be some of the major signposts on the journey.

I will continue the ISCF projects but under a Kingston Urban Coalition banner as I pursue other ambitions.

I am also thankful to all the students that I had the privilege of working with whom I had the opportunity to challenge, and they me.

Again, thanks to all who supported and encouraged me in the mission. God has provided each step of the way in remarkable ways, which has been truly encouraging, and faith building.