



Indigenews

My People International

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Troubles and Triumphs

Dancing the Way, a ministry of My People International, has toured annually for the past seven years. The team goes to reservations and churches, bringing the message of Jesus using Native music, dance and regalia. This June, the group traveled to Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

Past tours with Dancing the Way have been wonderful experiences of seeing God touch people's lives. This time, however, we experienced so much adversity that the trip was exhausting – physically and spiritually.

Troubles began even before the tour started as some team members had to withdraw from the trip. Then it looked as if no vehicles would be available to rent. Just as things looked really dire, our dear friends, Jim and Sonja Halvorson of St. Paul came to our rescue with an eight-passenger SUV.

My People's director, Terry LeBlanc, flew in to the Twin Cities to pick up the vehicle, planning to drive direct to Racine, WI, where the group was rehearsing. On the way he encountered (what trip would be complete without one!) a tornado-spawned torrential rain-storm! Meanwhile, traditional dancer Peter Kwandibens and his family headed south from Canada, driving through the same storm.

No sooner did Terry arrive in Racine than he received a call that his mother-in-law had passed away. He would lead our first program the following morning and then fly back to Canada. Terry anticipated rejoining the team within a few days. However, after he left, the sister of an old friend committed suicide. Terry stayed to be with the family and minister to their situation.

The team pressed-on without him. Glitches continued till the very end of the tour – from having no power

for the sound system in one town, to being temporarily stranded after a fuel pump breakdown on the freeway, in another. Add to all of this, tension between the team members, and everyone, at some point, was tempted to turn around and go home.

In spite of it all, though, at the Little Earth housing project in Minneapolis and at the Lac Vieux Desert Reservation in Michigan, people came to faith in Christ after the presentations.

In Cass Lake, a man approached Peter Kwandibens after the program. He had been told by leaders in his church that he could not dance his people's dances anymore now that he had given his heart to the Lord, but the message of Dancing the Way had changed his view. Peter was clear, "He did not have to give up his Native Culture in order to walk with Jesus. I saw the gratitude – the Lord had spoken to his heart – in his handshake and the thank you he uttered before he turned and walked away."

- Gina Merritt

We would especially like to thank Jim and Sonja Halvorson for lending us their vehicle and housing us when we were stranded; also Heidi Bauer, for providing us with a day off at her summer home; and Pete and Lynn Haman, for putting the group up and providing us with a place to rehearse.



Kids Kamp '07

From the moment the kids set foot on the campgrounds we knew we had a lively bunch!

First Nations kids from inner city Edmonton and Calgary as well as some from local reserves gathered July 30-Aug 3 for MPI's "Kids Culture Kamp." MPI staff and volun-

teers, together with a few staff from the Edmonton Native Healing Centre matched their energy with that of the kids (we almost lost!!). It was a full mix of activities designed for focused fun, traditional skills training and biblical teaching – all from an Indigenous perspective.

Sports, crafts, horsemanship and traditional teachings in biblical per-

spective filled the day as campers in small groups learned new skills and were exposed to some new thinking. Each camper was exposed to the handiwork of the Creator's Son in the beautiful and different settings in which the camp took place: Camp Evansburg, the Pembina River Park and the acreage of the LeBlanc's.

(cont'd on p. 3)

When Dancing is Spiritual Warfare!

This year's Dancing the way tour was, to understate it a lot, a spiritual and morale challenge. As each person on the trip reflected on the challenges and felt their morale flag, I know they felt like leaving many times. It was that much of a challenge!! One of our long-time friends, however, captured the whole thing in much greater—and more positive perspective. Eric's reflections are as good an assessment as I can imagine...

"[On Friday, June 15th] we hosted Terry LeBlanc's worship team - "Dancing the Way" - as we have for many years now at Madison's "House of Prayer for All Nations". As it turned out this year's tour was - (according to Terry's administrator Gina Merritt) - the most intense and difficult in the seven years they have been putting these trips together (with lots of intense spiritual warfare!).

Problems arose throughout the trip ... The worst blow came when Terry LeBlanc had to cancel his own participation in the tour (just as the tour was beginning) when he learned that his Mother-in-law had died - and that a family friend had taken her life that same week... He had to leave to tend to his family and community back home in Canada - leaving the "Dancing the Way" team to travel on without him.

Nonetheless significant ground was taken during this tour because there were people coming to Christ, and because they were also performing on some traditional reservations—many that had long been closed to the gospel—for the very first time. *(This was because of years of work and relationship building by Terry LeBlanc and the "Dancing the Way" team).* Much of the spiritual warfare was likely tied to these ...

The effect of [these challenges] - as you can imagine - was very discouraging to the team members. There were points along the way when they felt like calling the whole tour off. However, they resolved early on to persevere and carry on with the tour despite the numerous setbacks."

(cont'd on p. 4)

NOTE: Special thanks go out to Gina Merritt and Peter Kwandibens who made the difficult—sometimes challenging decisions which kept the tour alive this year!!



Associate Staff Profile: Dorothy Wright

Dorothy is Cree from Northern Alberta. She is a single mother, grandmother, a friend to many and an associate staff colleague in ministry with My People International. She is known in her city as a mentor and caregiver of Native people. Her passion is to see Native people experience a vibrant faith in Jesus—one which witnesses His transformation of all aspects of indigenous life.

Originally involved in Christian ministry in a program under Terry LeBlanc's supervision, which provided healing support for sexually abused Native people, through the years Dorothy has grown into a significant presence for Jesus in the city. Her straight-forward manner and obvious compassion for the disadvantaged makes her stand out even among her peers in ministry.

Dorothy has been involved in Native ministry with Native street people for many years now, taking meals, warm clothes and the message of God's unflinching love to those many urbanites consider "street trash."

When I asked her about her deepest longing for Native people she replied: "To see a Native church in the city which welcomes and affirms, encourages and equips, nurtures and develops our people toward a healthy faith in Jesus!" She went on to say that so many of our people live in such drastic conditions that it seems, at times, to be more a distant dream than an achievable reality. "But, God has laid this on my heart—and I'm going to see it through!" she said. One thing I know about Dorothy—she will not rest until the Lord of the harvest gives her that rest.

Dorothy's work with My People this year saw her and two other Native women steer the first-ever Native ministry conference for training and worship in Edmonton, Alberta (see Rise Up! In the news column). It was a resounding success! We'll have more to say about this in the next issue.

Please pray for Dorothy and those whom she touches for Jesus.

- Terry LeBlanc



Kid's Kamp... (con't from Page 1)

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship's horse-camp at Rocky Mountain House graciously provided horses and guidance for the riders (Thanks Chris and Lisa!).

Campers were encouraged to be aware of kind deeds and other positive traits displayed by fellow campers during the day and gave coloured beads to one another in recognition of deeds of love, joy, kindness and growth each evening. Among the activities campers enjoyed most were floating the Pembina on hot days, learning how to ride and control their horse and nature walks where they were encouraged to recognize what God has made. There, surrounded by creation's beauty, they sang their prayers to the beat of their drum not unlike the Psalmist might have.

The wide variety of sports including soccer, field hockey, hide and seek (with the counselors!), water games and the craft times (including bannock making) were hot activities too.

Some pictures from the camp in this issue help tell the story...
- Tim Stime



Ministry/Staff Highlights

Dancing the Way—US Midwest
A difficult year of ministry in the US midwest! The front page article describes one of our supporter's perspectives on this year's ministry of dance.

Abegweit, Roddy Gould, were the focus of two trips Terry took to the East.

Church. The article appeared in Faith Today, and is available through the MPI website.

Rise Up!—Edmonton, AB
The Rise Up Mighty Warrior outreach and gathering in celebration of National Aboriginal Day in Canada took place from June 20-23 in Edmonton's downtown and suburbs.

Together with Denise Spencer, another Mi'kmaq believer from Nova Scotia, Terry and Roddy did some initial planning for a ministry training conference targeted for next spring in Truro, NS.

The Word Guild is a national association of Canadian writers and editors who are Christian and who have a goal of impacting Canadian culture.

Native leaders from the US and Canada attended, offering the downtown Native street-person a whole different picture of what it means to be Native and a follower of the Jesus Way!

Rock Ness Family Camp—Rock Ness, BC
Rick was providing counseling for the family camp—a significant need for many Native families.

Moving day!—Calgary, AB
The Aldreds just arrived in Calgary yesterday, and are unpacking. Ray is beginning a new position as a theology prof this fall. Ray will be teaching two classes at Ambrose University College (formerly Canadian Theological Seminary).

An historic partnership of Native people, ministries and missions in Canada and the US, My People was a principle supporter. Prominent among other native-led organizations were the Edmonton Native Healing Centre and NAIITS (North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies). Our own Terry LeBlanc was the MC and on-site program coordinator.

Wilderness Camp—Browning, MT—Blackfeet youth spent a challenging week camping in the mountains of Montana with associate staffer, Summer Graham

Ray and Elaine will continue to give leadership to My People's family ministries in a "shared staff" situation.

Plans for the Future—Abegweit and Eel River First Nations.

Bible/sports camp—Eagle Lake, ON
Rick and Linda taught at a Bible/sports camp July 24-27. The camp was an outreach for 15-22 year olds from the White Dog Ojibway Reserve near Kenora.

Making progress!—A local Native church

"Though I used to think the drum was evil, I don't anymore," announced a local pastor from his pulpit. And, Ray Aldred had a lot to do with that.

Prayer and planning with elder John Martin of Eel River Bar and special friend, elder and former chief of

Youth Camp—Evansburg, AB
See the story in this issue!

Writing award—Toronto, ON
This spring Terry LeBlanc won the 2007 Word Guild award for best long feature article for *"Native Suicide: A Challenge to the*

The pastor, a musician, recorded a song with Native vocables (sounds without specific meaning—think of "fa la la la la, la la la la). In the past, he would never have done that!

Prayer Needs

- ⇒ Ray Aldred's dad, Bill, who has a low level leukemia. They don't know yet how it will be treated, but it has been rough on the family.
- ⇒ Rick and Linda as they support the people of Muskrat Dam in the building of their church.
- ⇒ The Lord's blessing on the Elders' Feast to be held August 17 – 19 in Muskrat.
- ⇒ Adrian as he travels with the kids to South Dakota this summer.
- ⇒ The schedule of Fundraising and reporting events in the US and Canada beginning in Sept.
- ⇒ For success in publicizing the work of MPI, that we might connect with people who have the Native community on their hearts and whom God is calling to support Native ministry.



“Person-Centered Discipleship — Keeping the Message Real!”

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www.
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Warfare (cont'd from p. 2)

"Dancing the Way" felt they needed to honour the commitments they had made with the different communities on this year's schedule, and I have to give them all very high marks for pressing through like true warriors for Christ under very difficult conditions.

- Terry LeBlanc

(with thanks to Eric Seaberg)

Prayer (cont'd)

- ⇒ Aug 8 – 13, Rick and Linda in a musical/evangelistic outreach in Waskaganish, PQ; and some follow up counseling related to previous workshops they've presented.
- ⇒ Ray Aldred as he begins to teach at Ambrose University College in Calgary
- ⇒ Terry as he teaches a course this year for Taylor University College and Seminary

Dates and Events ...

In Memoriam

Thanks to the following people who gave contributions to MPI ... *in memory of Marina Froese*

The John Froese Family
Karen & Gary Bergen
Ed & Wendy Peterson
Jake & LaVerne Bargaen

Ray & Nicky Peters
Ray & Elaine Cottyn
Reg & Dorothy Giesbrecht
Vern & Marty Penner

Upcoming Events

August 8 – 13, Rick and Linda will be presenting a musical/evangelistic outreach in Waskaganish, QB. They will also provide follow up counseling related to previous workshops they've presented.

September 29—Ray will be speaking in Toronto at the People's Church for their annual mission's conference.

Upcoming Dessert Evenings – Mark the Date(s)! (all evening programs begin at 7:00 p.m.)

2007

Sept. 27	Spokane, WA – First Free Methodist Church
Sept. 28	Shoreline, WA (near Seattle) – Bethel Lutheran Church
Sept. 29	Burnaby, BC—TBA
Oct. 11	Winnipeg, MB – William & Catherine Booth College
Oct. 12	Steinbach, MB – 55 Plus Steinbach
Oct. 19	Kitchener, ON—Country Hills Church
Oct. 20	Brantford, ON—TBA
Nov. 1	Grande Prairie, AB – Venue TBA
Nov. 2	Edmonton, AB – Community of Hope
Nov. 3	Calgary, AB – Emmanuel Community Church
Nov. 8	Ottawa, ON—St. Alban's Anglican Church
Nov. 9	Brinston/Iroquois—Community Christian Reformed
Nov. 10	Pembroke, ON—Wesley Community Church
Nov. 11	Winchester—Harmony Community Church

(NOTE: Men's breakfast @ 8 a.m. Nov. 10 at Winchester)

2008

Apr. 24
New Brighton, MN – New Brighton Family Services Center

