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NEW TRIBES MISSION OF CANADA

NTM@WORK

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BEYOND LANGUAGE

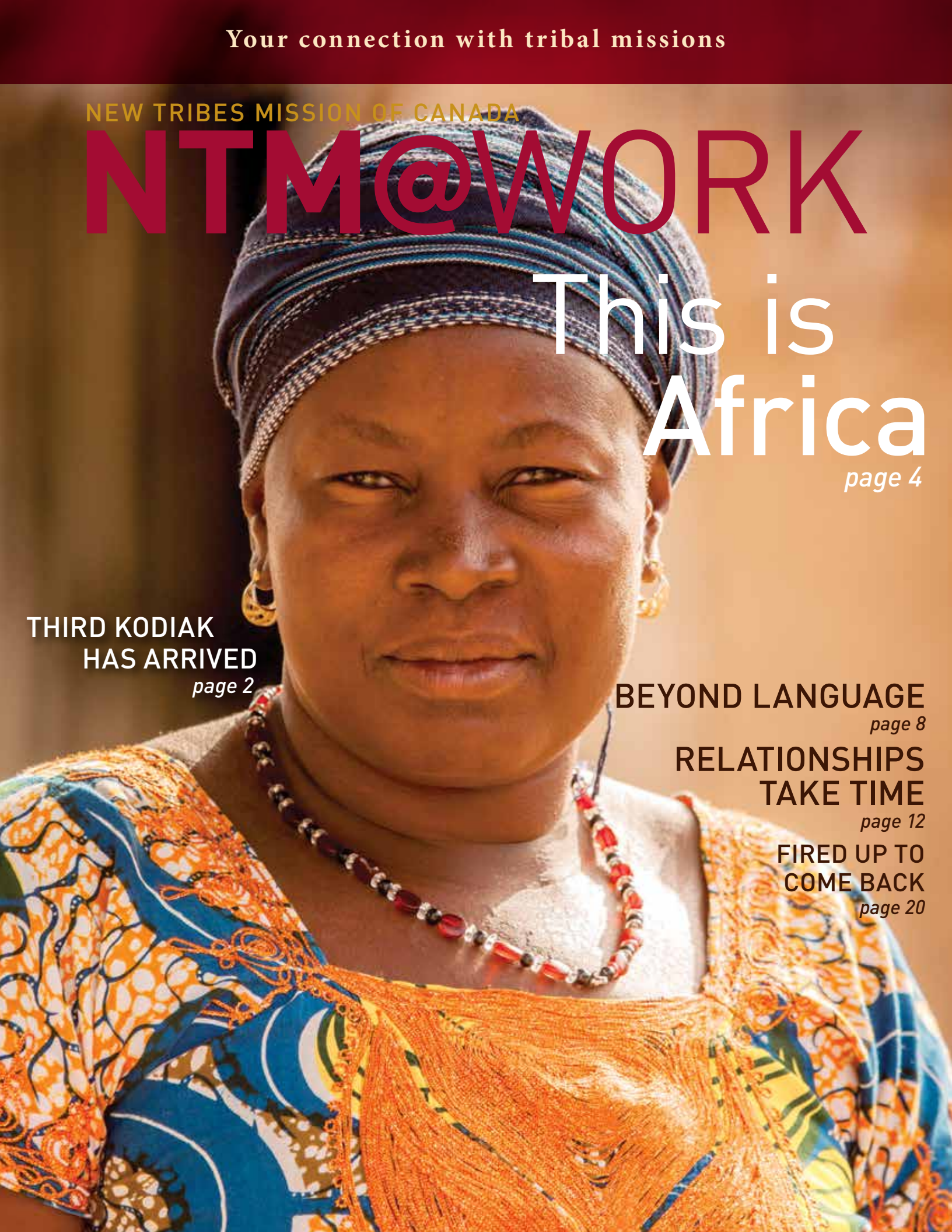
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**FROM THE
EDITOR**



Dear Friend,

My teen years were spent living on the banks of the Amazon River with my missionary parents. Could you have a more amazing growing-up experience than that? Yes, I have piranha, electric eel, alligator, peacock bass and monkey-hunting stories. And yeah, there was that anaconda incident.

I digress. Let me get back to my story.

One night the generator for our community went down. I was assisting missionary mechanic, Bernie Ketchum, when he found the problem and realized some welding needed to be done. Though I didn't speak Portuguese yet, I was appointed to take the part to Manaus. They had me memorize phrases to explain what needed to be done. It was three simple sentences. All I needed to do was memorize and repeat them.

I headed up the Amazon River in my little homemade speedboat. During that 2-hour trip to the repair shop, I silently repeated those phrases over and over again. *It's going to be a piece of cake*, I thought.

I found the repair shop, walked up to the counter, carefully unwrapped the part needing repair and laid it down in front of the mechanics. In my best "Tarzan" Portuguese I repeated the three sentences I had memorized. No one said anything. I repeated them a second time. A crowd of mechanics on the other side of the counter stared at me and listened. Finally one elderly mechanic jokingly said, "We do not speak Japanese here."

Without another word, I picked up the part from the counter, carefully wrapped it back in the oily cloth, and walked out the door and back to my little speedboat.

It was going to take someone with fluency to get the job done. Missionaries all over the world can relate to my story of a first attempt to communicate in another language.

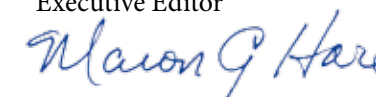
Language shortcuts, memorizing phrases and learning a low Tarzan level of language is never going to get you the fluency you need to share God's Word and His story of love, grace and salvation.

Discipleship that leads to maturity requires fluency in the heart language of a people group. It is a long-term commitment. There are no shortcuts.

In this issue, we look at why NTM recognizes the importance of learning the culture and language of a people group well, and why that has such a big impact in the lives of new believers and in the future of thriving ethnic churches.

If you were part of an unreached people group, isn't this what you would want?

Macon Hare
Executive Editor



PS Please let me know if this edition brings the challenges of culture and language learning to life for you. Email me at macon_hare@ntm.org

NTM@WORK

(ISSN 1527-9057)
Vol. 75 | Issue 2, 2016

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NTM@work is published by NTM Canada.

Subscriptions

NTM@work is provided free to readers in North America on a year-to-year basis. To receive the magazine or have it sent to a friend, sign up online at ntm.org/subscribe, email info@canada.ntm.org, or call 1-844-855-NTMC (6862).

If you no longer wish to receive NTM@work, please send a note and your name and address to NTM@work, PO Box 707, Durham ON N0G 1R0.

The magazine may be read online at ntm.org/magazine.

Requests to reprint articles should be directed to Executive Editor Macon Hare at macon_hare@ntm.org or call 407-323-3430.

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USA 407-323-3430
Canada 844-855-6862
Australia 011-61-2-6559-8646
Europe 011-44-1472-387700



NEWS AROUND THE WORLD

DID YOU KNOW?

Some of the articles in this issue of NTM@work have more content available online at ntm.org/magazine.

Look for the icon at the end of the article!



NTM Aviation team in Papua New Guinea with Kodiak No. 3

IT HAS ARRIVED!

Did you check the Weather Channel lately to track the winds over the Pacific? Have you researched the price of aviation fuel in the Marshall Islands? Probably not. But that's the kind of information that Leon, the professional ferry pilot, needed in order to plan Kodiak No. 3's flight to Papua New Guinea (PNG).

And he found a window of favourable winds and a good price of fuel! Although regardless of the price, he'd have to buy it anyway. The Kodiak has a normal fuel capacity of 320 gallons, but with two extra fuel tanks installed, it doubles that, giving the plane the ability to fly many more hours.

AIRBORNE TO PNG

On April 1, Kodiak No. 3 took off from NTM Aviation's headquarters in McNeal, Arizona, heading toward Kansas. There the two extra fuel tanks were installed and paperwork finalized for its export certificate of airworthiness. With the work completed, on April 30 Leon next headed to California. Twelve hours to Hawaii and 12 more to the Marshall Islands followed. After a final 13 hours, Kodiak No. 3 finally landed in Papua New Guinea on May 4 and quickly cleared customs.

God answered your prayers for safety, protection and favourable winds as Leon flew those many hours over the vastness of the Pacific. Phil Koop, executive director of NTM Aviation wrote, "Thank you for your prayers — even when the reality of the Kodiak seemed unattainable. For your interest — even when the project stretched over years. ... [And] for your trust in God who never fails to do the utmost to bring His Word to people in the most remote locations on earth."

... AND NOW TO THE TRIBES

Pray for the NTM Aviation team in Papua New Guinea as they complete the paperwork needed for licensing. The Kodiak has already begun to take its place in the support of the missionary teams scattered around the country. It is an incredible blessing to have three Kodiaks sharing the load in taking the gospel to the unreached tribes.



For the First Time

We know stories from the Bible about Abraham and Isaac, Joseph in Egypt, and Moses and Pharaoh. We know them so well, in fact, that we tend to forget the truths being taught. But it is the first time for some of the Agta in the Philippines to hear those stories. As Donovan and Charla Epp shared, "Those are some big stories, and we feel that perhaps it's good that we had to cancel teaching [for two days] to give time to think them over. We pray that in the fields, they are continuing to ponder some of the spiritual truths we tried to communicate." They finished the first phase of teaching in June.



Crossing Tribal Borders with the Gospel

This is a trend that is absolutely thrilling: believers from one people group wanting to take the gospel to another language group. Jim Burdett drove four Dom teachers to a new village many miles from their home. The languages are similar, meaning they could communicate effectively. This was a first for the Dom: to go across their tribal borders to share the Good News with another language group. The village welcomed them and eagerly listened to God's message. Impressive? Yes, and even more so because the two tribes used to be combative rivals.



At Last ... for the Dom

How often we take our Bibles for granted. But the Dom people of Papua New Guinea have never had a Bible. August 26 will be a time of great rejoicing as they celebrate the finished translation of the New Testament into their heart language. Finally they will be able to immerse themselves in the Word of God, enjoying what we have had for centuries. May this dedication be a God-honouring festival!



The Nukak Trees in Colombia

Jack Foster has been learning the Nukak language for a number of years, but it's difficult to learn a language when the Nukak leave the area to harvest jungle fruits for months at a time. The team came up with a strategy. "We've made a huge push to plant a bunch of fruit trees at that farm we're working from. The idea is to help the Nukak learn how to garden and plant for the future." This will give them a source of income and allow them to remain in the area.

Coming Soon to the Kuman



In Papua New Guinea, Will Tallman and the team have been working on the Kuman Bible translation for many years — and three formats are almost ready for printing. One will be a Kuman-only New Testament with Old Testament portions. Since the Kuman tribe has more

contact with the rest of the country than other tribal groups, there will also be two parallel bilingual Bibles: a Kuman/English edition and a Kuman/Melanesian Pidgin edition. (Pidgin is one of the trade languages of Papua New Guinea.) This latter version will enable them to spread the gospel beyond their tribal borders. The team plans to get preliminary copies of these Bibles handed out to check for reading ease and comprehension.

Lay Evangelism in Tanzania



In Tanzania many believers think that evangelism, Bible teaching and sharing the gospel has to be done by formally educated pastors and evangelists. Jason and Coralee Garro commented, "We have been excited to see lay people becoming interested in sharing their faith and we have been even more excited to see the church seeking to train up those in the church."

Local churches asked Jason to put on two training seminars. Both seminars had about 20-30 people in attendance. The goal of these seminars was to train believers how to share their testimony and to explain the gospel clearly to a friend or relative.

BECOMING AFRICAN

NEW MISSIONARIES IN WEST AFRICA FACE
LEARNING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AFRICAN

Traffic surges and knots in this West African capital city. Taxis, cars and the occasional bus or truck pause, then dart within inches of each other and pedestrians at an uncontrolled five-way intersection. They race to the next backup caused by a roundabout, or here, a *rond point*.

There they inch in, jockey about and astonishingly, mysteriously even, all find their way to the appropriate road leading off it.

You might assume from the infrequent sign in French and the presence of numerous Peugeots, Citroëns and Renaults that French traffic rules were in effect.

Non. C'est l'Afrique.

Similarly, you may assume from Wilfred Haurell's title, French language helper, that you know his job. But ask him what he does with new missionaries, and his eyes twinkle and he smiles. "I'm not here to teach them French," he says. "I'm here to help them learn how to be African."

SO MUCH MORE THAN ORIENTATION

Some would expect this to be the easy part.

Preparation for ministry is hard. Future missionaries study for four or more years, in some ways relearning everything they thought they knew, and then spend another year or two developing partnerships that will sustain their ministries.

And ministry is tough. They'll live among an unreached people group, getting to know them as individuals and friends, and in that process learning their language and how they think. Then comes Bible translation, lesson preparation and teaching, and instructing people how to read and write, followed by years of disciple-making, leadership training and continued translation.

But this part in the middle — between the time they arrive in West Africa and head out to a village — is orientation, right? It's just time to become familiar with the lay of the land and get a handle on the national language, isn't it? A simple time of transition.

No. It used to be called NCLA for National

Culture and Language Acquisition. Now NTM calls it e2, for Equipping, Level 2. But missionary jargon doesn't help explain it.

It's a full-court press of immersion in a process similar to the one they'll face in a village ministry. That's true even if they're not planning to go into a village ministry, but will be working in support of those ministries, because it's the best way to learn not just how to speak the national language — French, in this case — but how to live in Africa among Africans.

To do otherwise, to have Western missionaries give them a crash course in how to live here, would be "strangers telling strangers how to live as strangers," said Dan Rabe, one of NTM's leaders in West Africa.

FEELING THE PRESSURE OF LIFE IN AFRICA

"Today is one of those days I feel like packing up and going home," Del Griffith wrote in his journal one day during this time. "Life is so different here."

Five times a day, the call to prayer echoed through the neighbourhood. Traffic noise was constant — the

roar of taxis with no muffler, the screech of unmaintained brakes, the clip-clop of a horse cart.

"We bartered for all kinds of stuff, even taxis. I got ripped off more times than I can count," Del said. "I did not know how to even correctly stand in a line, or should I say stand in a crowd correctly. If there was more than a couple inches between me and the next person, people would cut right in front of me."

"I struggled with having so many people in my home during the day," said Del's wife, Arielle. "And having so many people ring our doorbell. It was hard! It's part of life here, and it is not normal to our individualistic culture."

And even as a mother with three small children, she was expected to visit others. "I did and still do struggle with getting myself and my children out of our house. It's hard for me. Not because I don't want to, but because I like to have all my hens in a row and have home life checklists done before moving on to something else."

It was all too much.

THEY WEREN'T IN THIS ALONE

Their time in West Africa began with French study, led by experienced missionaries and surrounded by their fellow new missionaries.

"Four months into French study — when you have enough French to be dangerous — we were given a host family and host church," Arielle said.

"When we receive missionaries here, first thing we do is we find them a host family in the church," said Pastor Moïse Nazaire Diémé, pastor of Del and Arielle's church in the capital city.

The church works to ensure that the host family understands their responsibilities and is willing and able to fulfill them.

"Then we help them to get to know the church context and the local culture," Pastor Moïse said. "And we help them to integrate into the church by coming to different church activities as well as encouraging them to learn the language and the different cultural practices we have here."

For example, if the missionary is invited to a ceremony or event, someone from the host family or the church would go along to make sure they understand what was happening.

“Recently my cousin was having a baptism for his child, so they had invited the Griffiths,” Pastor Moïse said, adding

encouragement from NTM missionaries, both leaders and instructors, who regularly checked in on them.

“Language help from Rick and Muriel Oickle and Andi [McMartin] has been invaluable,” Arielle said.

“Dan and Sharon Rabe have showed us what servant leadership looks like,” Del said.

To have Western missionaries give them a crash course in how to live here, would be “strangers telling strangers how to live as strangers.”



Photo by Dale Stroud

that this was not a Christian baptism, but a folk religion baptism. “We went with them. My wife was always there next to Arielle, and I was there always next to Del, at the ceremony.”

The challenge, Pastor Moïse said, is helping the missionary see things from a different perspective. “He’s coming to work in this African context, and helping him transcend his culture and work in this African culture takes a lot of work.”

It just makes sense to Cecile, who served as host mom to other missionaries. Sitting in the shade in her family’s compound in a nearby village, she smiled and nodded as she said, “They’re living missions as it should be.”

“For me, missions is about being with people, living with people,” she explained. Host families help new missionaries not simply to become accepted as part of the community but also to be able to function that way. On the other hand, “If you don’t know a country’s customs and practices, how can you minister to them?”

Del and Arielle also received support and

Norbert Yao and Joel McMartin were generous with their time.

Yet it was still overwhelming.



Photo by Dale Stroud

“Years of training meant nothing to me in this moment,” Del said. “All the classes, preparation, being fully supported, and I was ready to pack my bags and go home.”

THEY HAD GOD

At the end of himself, Del clung to the only thing he could: “God and His Word. God reminded me time and again through days like this one that we have absolutely nothing to offer Him.”

For Arielle, it was a matter of putting her focus where it needed to be.

“I realized that I was focusing on myself and where I was at, instead of on God and where He is at. And Who He is. And what He has done. And what He will do. That was so refreshing! It was like the cool rains that come after days or weeks of sweltering humid heat during rainy season here. And it is still refreshing to my soul after more than a year.”

THEY’D DO IT ALL AGAIN

As the Griffiths prepare to move into a village where they will repeat the process in a different culture and another language, Arielle said she “cannot imagine starting the process we are now in” without the learning process they went through.

“Even though I feel like I have a long way to go in becoming, it was one step closer to understanding life here, people here, thought processes, language, culture. ... Also I learned and am always learning that I can’t do this without Him. I often stop what I am doing and audibly ask God for help.”

“It gives you a toolbox of experiences you’ve gone through to prepare you to do this in another context,” Del said. “So then as you go through the different phases and it’s hard and it’s difficult, you know you can get through it.”

“We were super excited,” he added, “about coming to Africa and getting connected to what God is already doing. ... We’ve enjoyed learning from our African brothers and sisters.”

And the process they went through brought them to a place where they now see West Africa as home, Del and Arielle agreed. “We love it here!” Del said. Having people drop by is a joy now, not a struggle.

And now it’s time for them to make new friendships that will lead to new African brothers and sisters among another people group.

— Ian Fallis, Contributing Editor



After 15 years writing and editing for daily newspapers, Ian Fallis has spent almost 20 years writing and editing for New Tribes Mission. He’s interviewed missionaries and the people they serve around the world, travelling to Africa, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region. Sunrise Church Ontario in California has faithfully stood by him throughout his ministry.

Photo by Dale Stroud





A E I O U
 AND
 ALWAYS
 WHY

SETH AND ROCHELLE CALLAHAN DELVE INTO THE CULTURE AND LANGUAGE OF THE ISKI PEOPLE SO THEY CAN CLEARLY COMMUNICATE GOD'S TRUTH

The drums never stopped. The singing was loud and energetic. Normally reserved and outwardly somewhat westernized, the Iski people's traditional culture was on full display as the *singsing* ceremony continued throughout the night and into the morning. For Seth and Rochelle Callahan, missionaries to the Iski people, there was so much to take in, so much to learn.

Everyday shorts and T-shirts had been replaced by bark coverlets and grass skirts. Adornments of huge feather headdresses, pig tusks, dyed grass, seashells and mud-based body paint communicated the story of each person's lineage.

This wasn't just for the older people who had grown up separated from the "modern world." From the oldest to the youngest, all of the people had gathered to participate or watch. Even toddlers joined in the careful choreography, holding onto parents as they marched and sang. Women of all ages stood along the perimeter echoing the chant while swaying a slow, rhythmic shuffle and waving palm fronds.

As the people continued their traditional dances throughout the night and early into the morning, the Callahans gained further glimpses into the radically different thinking of the Iski people.

IMMERSED IN CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

Six months ago Seth and Rochelle became the third family on the missionary team. Living in an Iski village in Papua New Guinea, the Callahans eat, breathe and sleep Culture and Language Acquisition (CLA) in preparation for bringing the Iskis the life-changing message of the Scriptures.

"Our team has been living with them for two years, working hard to get to a point where we can communicate the message of redemption in their heart language."

Cultural events like this can be overwhelming for those in the beginning stages of their CLA experience. Seth recounted, "This was our first ever *singsing*, so we didn't really know what to expect going into it, but we were hoping to get a few cultural insights throughout the night. It certainly didn't disappoint! This thing was packed full of cultural rituals and beliefs! Honestly, at times, it was kind of like trying to catch water in a Dixie cup while getting sprayed with a fire hydrant. There was just too much going on for us to keep track of it all!"

Since culture and language study builds on itself, the Callahans will later revisit their notes and photos of the *singsing* throughout their CLA journey, digesting what they can understand now and coming back later to the more difficult facets as their understanding of the culture deepens.

Partway through the festivities that evening, the Iskis warned those who were visiting from other villages to remember not to walk around at night by themselves, because evil spirits might attack them. "Like with everything else we experience among the Iskis, we now have more questions than when we started."

A HANDS-ON APPROACH

Experiences such as the *singsing* are foundational to helping missionaries increase their understanding of culture and language. While Seth can't schedule major events like this, he can plan for exposure to the Iskis' everyday living. Seth plans for one or two days per week in everyday cultural events.

“If language is the ‘what,’ then culture is the ‘why.’ If we want to truly learn the language, then we need to learn it in the culture that it exists in.”



The Callahan Family

“I typically spend two to six hours out with the people, observing and taking part in a normal life event. This ranges from hiking to the lake to go fishing to going through the procedures of cooking different foods to working in a garden to learning how to cut down a tree. During these days I spend more time taking pictures, asking questions, and ‘experiencing’ culture and language. When I get back home, I record what I did and organize my photos and audio recordings. And I often try to put together a short

meet with one or two village guys in the morning and go through language drills in a *haus win* (pavilion-type structure) near my house for two hours. Usually, I will spend some time going through a couple of photo books during this time, trying to elicit different nouns and verbs and things.

“This is also the time when I practice Total Physical Response language learning, where the focus is on seeing, touching, doing and mimicking the things that my culture/language help-

er is teaching me. This includes lots and lots of repetition of basic words and sentences that make me very thankful for my patient teachers!

Also, I try to spend some time reviewing older audio recordings that I’m still learning words from.”

Other days he spends with culture/language helpers: “I prearrange to

“To break things up, I also try to do different ‘games’ during these sessions, like having my culture/language helper tell me an action that he’s going to do, and I have to watch and tell him whether or not he did what he said he would do. They get a kick out of trying to trick me! I end each session by getting a few more recordings of things that we’ve gone over. I spend the afternoons drilling in our office with recordings. Or I’ll go around with my photo books and try to practice talking about the different cultural events that I’ve experienced.”

CULTURE + LANGUAGE = REAL LIFE

It is critical to learn language in the context of culture. Seth explains, “The C part of CLA (culture) is hugely important. It is in no way secondary to language. In fact, the more I learn, the more I see that language and culture are intrinsically intertwined. If we were to learn the vocabulary and the grammatical features of the Iski

language separate from the culture in which these language aspects live, then we would not have an accurate understanding of the language.

“If language is the ‘what,’ then culture is the ‘why.’ If we want to truly learn the language, then we need to learn it in the culture that it exists in.”

Take, for example, the word the Iski people use when talking about prayer. “It’s a word that has been in their language forever. At first glance, this would seem like an easy and helpful addition to a missionary’s vocabulary, right? Awesome! They already have a word to describe talking to God! I can use that when I teach! To find a word for ‘prayer’ already in the language is like gold.

“Culture, however, makes the word almost useless. It is the word that they use to talk about man talking to a spiritual being. But every time this interaction is depicted in a traditional story, the spirit is being manipulated by the man. This word doesn’t represent communication between God and man. It represents man’s power over spirits through words. But you’d never know that without studying the culture! And the people wouldn’t know to tell you the difference, because they’re only aware of their own culturally defined way of interacting with the spirit world.”

LEARNING SO THEY CAN TEACH EFFECTIVELY

Seth and Rochelle benefit from the hard work of their teammates. Jason and Nisae Williamson and André and Aurelie Tousch have lived with the Iskis for almost two years. They have already completed their formal time of CLA study.

“Because the Iski language was previously unwritten, learning to speak it has been very difficult. But after building a vocabulary and collecting a good deal of [language data], our partners were finally able to put together an orthography (alphabet).”

Nisae and Aurelie began teaching literacy classes as this article was being written. And Jason and André are diving into Bible translation and lesson development. They anticipate starting the Bible teaching early next year!

Motivation runs high for the Callahans to complete their time of CLA. Just before the *singsing* one of the older men in the village told Seth, “It’s good that you are coming to our *singsing* and learning how we do things. You need to know everything about us. Then, when you bring us God’s talk, you can give it to us in a way that we Iskis will understand.”

Keep up with Seth and Rochelle and the Iski team at blogs.ntm.org/seth-callahan

— David Pierce, Staff Writer



Sent by Calvary Monument Bible Church in Paradise, Pennsylvania, and Westside Community Chapel in Amboy, New York, David, his wife, Michelle, and their six children, served in Papua New Guinea for 13 years. As God closed doors there, He opened new doors of service with NTM’s Communications team in Sanford, Florida. If you ask David where he is from, he finds it difficult to give a concise answer.



Photo by Seth Callahan

Seth and Rochelle Callahan were equipped for cross-cultural church planting in Canada. Check out emanatetraining.ca

SOMETIMES SALVATION'S ROAD HAS CURVES

BRINGING THE GOSPEL TO THE NUKAK PEOPLE HAS HAD MORE THAN ITS SHARE OF UPHILLS AND DOWNHILLS.

The day I arrived in the village, a Nukak man died. A young man who shouldn't have died. He should have lived to be an old man. But like many Nukaks before him, when faced with rejection or embarrassment, he reached for the poison. He drank it. And he died.

"There have been hundreds of Nukaks who have committed suicide," missionary Lisa Jiménez shared. "Mostly men. For social reasons. For rejection. Hundreds of them."

It's a harsh reality — and one the missionaries have faced time and time again. Each time, they wished the hope of the gospel message had already penetrated the darkness of the Nukaks' hopelessness. But it hasn't. Not yet.

THE EARLY DAYS

Reaching this monolingual people group was not an easy task. The language barrier was compounded by their nomadic lifestyle. Living scattered throughout the jungles of Colombia in small family clans, they wandered in search of fruits in season, sleeping in hammocks under makeshift houses thatched with huge plantain leaves.

The initial contact with the Nukak people was back in the early 1970s. It didn't go as planned. Though one of the early missionaries with the Nukaks, Danny Germann, was pleased at the seemingly smooth exchange of gifts — the accompanying poisoned dart in his neck wasn't quite so pleasing.

Tense moments continued as relationships were established between the missionaries and the feared Nukaks. One night in particular stands out in Andrés Jiménez's mind. He had his foot on a log and a Nukak man took a swing at it with an axe, barely missing Andrés' foot. And then the man started laughing. Laughing and laughing.

"I was always afraid of him walking behind me on the trail because I didn't know what he might do to me," Andrés said.

"It's like he was trying to see how Andrés was going to react," added Lisa, Andrés' wife. She went on to explain that "now he's like this calm old grandpa, like he wouldn't harm a fly. But when he was young ..."

Despite the tensions, the missionaries wanted to live in Nukak territory, but between the ever-prevalent malaria and recurrent guerilla activity, keeping missionaries in the tribe proved to be a constant battle.

This came to a head in 1985 when NTM missionaries Tim and Bunny Cain, Steve Estelle and Paul Dye were





Photo by Hannah Taylor

The Missionary Team to the Nukaks

kidnapped by guerrillas. All missionaries living in remote jungle locations were evacuated. The team of missionaries among the Nukaks found themselves uprooted and forced to leave a people they had grown to love.

As time passed, it became evident that the missionaries could not return to Nukak territory due to the guerrilla activity. So how would the ministry continue?

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

The answer came to the missionaries as they observed the Nukaks seeking medical attention in small guerrilla-controlled towns dotted along the rivers. Where could the Nukaks receive medical attention that would also offer a measure of safety to the missionaries? A survey trip was conducted. Only one small jungle town fit the criteria. Luis and Elizabeth Trujillo were the first to make the move. They remember those early days.

Luis reminisced, “In 1996 we moved to a small jungle town situated on the border of Nukak territory to continue studying language, but there just weren’t any Nukaks around. So we started to pray, ‘God, give us a Nukak family to study with.’

“One day we were walking in town and saw a Nukak family. We followed behind them as they went from restaurant to restaurant watching people.

“I said to my wife, Elizabeth, ‘When they are somewhere private, we’ll approach them and talk to them.’

“And then they got to a quiet place and we called out to them in Nukak. They asked us where we lived. We told them, and asked if they wanted to come to our house. They came.”

Before long the missionaries were making regular afternoon visits to the hospital. It was rare not to find two to five Nukaks there. The Nukaks would stay for about a month, and once they recuperated, return to the depths of the jungle, far from contact with outsiders. Though it was challenging to have a revolving door of language helpers, the missionary team rejoiced that contact had been reestablished.

CHALLENGING ASPECTS

Eventually one large family clan showed up and stayed, but they were landless and culturally at odds with the Colombian townspeople. The mayor of the town made a generous offer, allowing the Nukaks — though not the missionaries — to live temporarily on his personal land. *Temporary* has extended to the present day.

Living outside the community, the missionaries’ exposure to culture and the daily lives and routines of the Nukak people is hampered. Add to that the fact that the Nukaks continue to be semi-nomadic, leaving for months at a time when the jungle fruits are in season, and it’s easy to see why years have passed by and the missionaries still find themselves immersed in culture and language acquisition — but not yet ready to share the gospel message.

CULTURE AND LANGUAGE BLEND TOGETHER

The missionaries are well aware of the need for proficiency in both culture and language. One without the other just doesn’t cut it. They are equally important. Suso Rojas had a great example to share.

“In their culture, they don’t like to remember someone who has died,” Suso told me. “I kept using the Nukak word for a hole, and since we have a lot of holes on the land where we live, I used that word a lot. But there was a man who died that had that same word for his name. So the Nukaks reprimanded me, ‘Don’t say that word.’” They gave Suso a different word to use because they didn’t want to be reminded of their dead loved one.

Do you see how learning the language without the culture would be problematic? Imagine how this cultural taboo would affect a language over the years. And this is but one example.

To effectively communicate in the language, you must also understand the culture. To clearly understand and learn the culture, you need to be exposed to it. And it stands to reason that if you aren’t living among the people, you handicap the learning process. So what options did the missionaries have?

PROPERTY FOR A PURPOSE

If they could not live among the Nukaks, the missionaries figured the Nukaks could come to them. So in 2008 the team purchased a good-sized plot of land. Suso and Elga Rojas were the first to build a house and move there, and later Luis and Elizabeth Trujillo and Andrés and Lisa Jiménez joined them. Jack Foster and Colin and Megan (Jiménez) Rogers still live in the nearby town.

If it weren’t for the cultural implications, the missionaries would have just asked one of the Nukak families to join them, but by inviting them, they would become responsible for them. They had no desire to create an environment where the Nukaks were dependent on the missionaries. On the contrary, they wanted the Nukaks to learn how to live responsibly alongside the Colombian community, yet without leaving their cultural identity behind.

“We prayed that the Lord would put it in the heart of one of the Nukak families to ask if they could live with us, and that is exactly what He did!” Lisa wrote. They wait for another to ask.

Having the Nukak family living in close proximity — at least when they’re not off on a nomadic trek through the jungles — has been greatly beneficial in the missionaries’ progress toward proficiency in culture and language. Frequent visits are still made to the Nukak community to continue building relationships with individuals and the community as a whole.

“The vision of this project with the Nukaks living here

with us is about discipling them in everything we can,” Andrés said. “First with material things, and then, when we have the language ability, we can move on to spiritual things. We are looking to the future.”

A LEGITIMATE QUESTION

The missionaries are looking to a future where they are finished with formal culture and language study and ready to move into Bible translation and lesson preparation. It’s a future that includes answering a question the Nukaks continue to ask: “When are you going to talk about God?”

That day is coming. When I asked the missionaries for prayer requests, reaching proficiency in culture and language ranked the highest. There was an urgency behind their request. They have too many stories that end with “but so-and-so drank poison and died.”

They want a different story to tell. They pray for the day when they can answer the Nukaks’ question. They pray for the day they can clearly verbalize God’s story in the Nukak language. And they pray for the day the Nukaks’ eyes light up as they fully grasp the scope of God’s love and His message of hope. Would you pray for that day?

— Rosie Cochran, Staff Writer

ntm.org/magazine



Born in Wales and raised in Canada, Rosie Cochran has served with NTM for more than 20 years, most of them in Venezuela. She uses her writing skills as a staff writer on the NTM Communications team. Rosie is grateful for her sending church, Second Baptist Church of Auburn, New York, who have stood with her all these years.

It’s a future that includes answering a question the Nukaks continue to ask: “When are you going to talk about God?”



Photo by Hannah Taylor

Software Speeds the Process

And your gift can hasten software development

It takes three to five years for a missionary to gain sufficient fluency in a people group's culture and language in order to minister effectively.

Specialized software greatly aids this process by making it faster and easier to catalog, organize and review audio and video recordings, photos and notes of language examples, cultural events and more.

But the current software is in great need of updating. It must:

- Work on mobile devices, or interact with a mobile application. Cell phones and tablets are excellent tools in the field.
- Be available in languages other than English for co-workers who speak a variety of languages.
- Operate on Windows, Apple and Linux computers.
- Be simple to use, so missionaries can focus on learning culture and language instead of software.

Your gift will help simplify and speed the culture and language learning process for more missionaries, which will in turn accelerate

the process of establishing thriving churches for every people.

To give, use the enclosed response card, or give online at canada.ntm.org/projects/culture-and-language-software/



Photo by Dale Stroud

NTM Engages First Nations

The spiritual needs in Northern Canada are huge. Over the years, numerous people have asked if NTM would consider helping with church planting in Canada's north.

Exciting News

God is opening doors for NTM to help establish thriving churches within Canada's First Nations and the Inuit communities.

One opportunity is to work alongside Northern Canada Evangelical Mission (NCEM). NCEM already has numerous members that

have been trained by NTM.

God also is opening doors for Dave Wright, former church planter to Papua New Guinea. Dave is adapting NTM's church planting and discipleship curriculum for use within Canada's First Nations and the Inuit communities.

On both fronts, NTM is trusting the Lord to increase this momentum!

Please be praying for NTM Canada as we seek to walk with the Lord.

Connect with Dave Wright at dave_wright@ntm.org

When Things Seem Impossible

The book and DVD *When Things Seem Impossible* tell the full story of the missionaries' kidnapping mentioned on page 13. Find out how God dramatically delivered them from the hands of their captors and learn about their ministry while in captivity.



go.ntm.org/impossible-book-dvd-cdn

CONNECT WITH ...

Derek and Chantal Chen
Evan, Wesley and Owen
En route to Papua New Guinea
Sending Church: Westside Calgary Chinese Alliance Church



We were both born in North America—Derek in the U.S. and Chantal in Canada—but grew up in Asia—Derek in Taiwan and Chantal in Hong Kong. God crossed our paths when we left Asia to attend university in Chicago, and our similar cultural backgrounds drew us to each other.

Chantal was raised in a Christian household and trusted Christ at the age of 12. Derek grew up going to church, but did not understand the gospel until Peter Yoon, our Bible study leader in university (now serving with NTM in Asia Pacific), took us chronologically through the Bible from creation to Christ. He also introduced us to tribal missions and impressed upon us God's heart for every tongue and tribe to hear the gospel in their heart language.

After university, God led us both to serve with GoodSeed International, where Chantal was able to use her journalism training to write the book *In-ká-hai: How Sweet It Is!*—the true story of how the gospel dramatically transformed the lives of the Manjúi

tribe in Paraguay.

After we got married in 2005, God brought us to Dallas Theological Seminary to be further equipped for ministry, then subsequently to Calgary, where Derek served as an assistant Mandarin pastor in our now sending church for three years. During that time God rekindled our hearts for tribal missions through the testimony of another NTM missionary couple—Wayne and Gail Chen. We asked God to grant us the privilege of being directly involved in tribal church planting, and He's been opening door after door ever since.

We finished our training with Emanate (NTM Canada's missionary training program) in December 2015 and are currently en route to Papua New Guinea, praying that God will allow us to serve Him as church planters. We're super excited to be doing our part in making ready the Bride of Christ for His glorious return!

Connect with Derek and Chantal at chenookwinds.wordpress.com



When we met at a Bible School in southern Germany fourteen years ago we both had it on our hearts to do God's will no matter where that might take us. Soon we realized that we could be a great team and that we wanted to spend our lives serving God together. We got married in 2004 and it was also around that time that we first learned about New Tribes Mission when a missionary came to share at Markus' Bible College. The way New Tribes Mission goes about planting tribal churches, their cultural

sensitivity and their goal of working themselves out of a job in the tribal churches really caught our attention.

We both liked the thought of working with the least reached people that do not yet access to the gospel in their heart language.

After Bible School, University, working in youth ministry and growing as a family we finally stepped out in faith and started training with NTM. We have learned a lot about reaching the unreached and the methods New Tribes Mission uses during

Markus and Stefanie Koehler
John, David, Timothy, Hannah and Lukas
En route to Tanzania
Sending Church: Cedar Creek Community Church, Cambridge, Ontario

the 18 months of missionary training in Ontario. Learning more about core ideas like the chronological teaching through the Bible, literacy programs and training locals to become leaders have confirmed our decision to work with NTM. God has laid on our hearts that we can be obedient to the great commission through tribal church planting. Together with our five children we plan to serve God in Tanzania, South East Africa. We are excited to see God at work to bring us there! God is faithful and doing amazing things. Join in the adventure!

Connect with Markus and Stefanie at canada.ntm.org/missionaries/markus-and-stefanie-koehler/

Building a Physical Foundation to Build a Spiritual Foundation

Gerolf and Mailis Wuest joined the Dom team in 2011. They were ready to move in and begin culture and language study — but first they needed a house to live in.

Missionaries who specialized in construction and maintenance jumped in with both feet and their toolbelts.

“Right after we decided to join the Dom team, we started planning our house. People with more knowledge of designing a house, buying building supplies and building helped us.” Over a dozen missionaries participated at different stages. They helped with everything from framing and building to solar-electric, water and sewage systems to roofing and painting.

The Wuests were quick to express their gratitude, “We can honestly say

that we could not do what we are doing without those willing hearts and hands!”

One of the missionaries involved in building was Bryan Moritz. Serving as the head of the maintenance team at NTM’s field centre in Papua New Guinea, Bryan uses his background in construction to assist the wider mission team.

Bryan explains his role in church planting, “I never saw myself as a Bible translator or a tribal church planter. However, the Lord showed me that the skills and background I had could be used for His purposes and plans.

“It is such a privilege to be a part of the team as God has allowed me to help serve our fellow missionaries on our missionary centre. Also, many

times I have had the privilege to fly into remote locations to build new houses or work on maintenance needs.

“I would encourage you to step out in the adventure of serving Him in the way He has designed you!”

Left: Bryan serves the Lord doing what he loves to do. Right: The maintenance team.



The Wuest family

Do you have skills and experience in maintenance, construction, carpentry, electrical, plumbing or mechanics? Find out how you can use your experience to serve God in missions.

Serve short term in Canada
canada.ntm.org/volunteer

Serve a year or more in Canada or overseas
go.ntm.org/maintenance-positions



Photo by Shara Moritz

PRAY

When a credible threat of an imminent kidnapping of American missionaries was intercepted by the Colombian government authorities, Jack Foster was given four days to pack things up and be ready to leave his jungle home among the Nukaks. “We can’t promise you when you can ever go back,” he was told.

“I had a language helper who was also my best friend among the Nukaks by then,” Jack said. “He came and asked, ‘You’re leaving?’ I explained as best I could, but I wasn’t too far along with the language. I told him what had happened and that I needed to go. He seemed to take it well.”

But then the plane came in. The plan was to get in and out of the Nukak village as quickly as possible. With

good-byes said, Jack began boarding the plane. A semi-circle of Nukaks spanning from the wingtip to the tail watched. And that’s when it happened. Jack’s best friend and language helper wasn’t taking it so well by then. He rushed from the group, ran up and grabbed Jack. “You can’t go,” he said.

“I bawled my eyes out,” Jack admitted. “Between the pilot and me we got him convinced that I had to go. We taxied down, and when we came back, they were all standing there, but I couldn’t see. My last vision of that place was through all sorts of tears.”

That wasn’t the hardest part. “In our absence,” Jack said, “he got meningitis and died.”

It’s been years since that day, but it’s still fresh in Jack’s mind. His love for the Nukak people is evident, but with nearly two decades passing since the initial language-learning process, the



second time around is proving to be a challenge.

“At this point, I want to fit in the best I can to help the work go forward,” he said. “I would like to get far enough in the language that I can help with the discipleship part.”

Pray for Jack to continue progressing in the language-learning process, so that one day he can sit down with his good Nukak friends and disciple them in the things of the Lord.

PRAISE

WHEN THE UNTHINKABLE HAPPENS

It was October of 2014. NTM Aviation pilot Jon Leedahl was nearing the completion of his extensive training with SIL (JAARS) in the Kodiak airplane — and God had already miraculously provided two of the three Kodiaks that NTM Aviation needed for Papua New Guinea. Within a year’s time at least one of the Kodiaks would be on location in Papua New Guinea and Jon would be in the pilot’s seat.



Life was good. Everything was going according to plan.

And then a blind curve in the road changed everything. The head-on collision between Jon’s motorcycle and the Land Cruiser should have killed him. In critical condition, Jon desperately needed a medevac flight to Australia. It was SIL (JAARS) staff that loaded Jon aboard their Kodiak to make the four-hour flight across open water to Australia.

GOD’S BIG PLAN

From the hospital in Australia, Adie wrote, “Jon is out of surgery. . . . God has his leg. God has a purpose. My first thought of ‘why’ was quickly answered with, ‘I have a big plan.’”

Adie had no idea what that big plan might be, but it was a comforting thought. It was comforting when they considered the effects of the trauma on their immediate family, the effects of their absence from NTM Aviation in Papua New Guinea, and the journey to recovery that they faced.

Recovery was a slow and arduous process involving multiple setbacks,

surgeries and lots of physical therapy. But over time, Jon’s body healed.

Another journey awaited them. It involved navigating their way through a myriad of requirements to have Jon reinstated not only as a licensed FAA pilot but as a qualified missionary pilot. It was a journey back to the life they had known. It was a journey back to Papua New Guinea.

COMING FULL CIRCLE

The day finally arrived. They boarded the plane for Papua New Guinea. And just one year and four months after his traumatic accident, Jon was flying a Kodiak in Papua New Guinea.

“We are just thrilled that God has brought us back to Papua New Guinea,” wrote Jon and Adie. “God is a God of miracles, Who gave us the chance to come . . . and once again fly for our missionaries. He is so faithful and we have seen He can be trusted.”

Read the extended testimony at
go.ntm.org/adies-story

“I would encourage you to step out in the adventure of serving Him in the way He has designed you!”

Fired Up to Come Back

By Pastor Mark Zellner

Pastor finds Wayumi challenging, sound and fun.

Searching for the perfect mission trip is like trying to domesticate a unicorn: It may not exist, and if you found one, you probably couldn't afford it.

Overseas mission trips can be amazing, but the cost prevents many families from participating. An ideal trip would be cross-cultural while remaining local and affordable. It seemed like an impossible goal, until I discovered Wayumi.

Wayumi is a tribal missions immersion centre in central Pennsylvania. It's a place where youth groups, college students and

church families can experience the life-changing impact of an overseas mission trip without ever leaving North America. It's intense, challenging, biblically solid and a whole lot of fun.

I recently visited the Wayumi campus for a pastors' retreat to learn about their programs. I left so fired up that I've made plans to come back and bring as many people with me as I can. Here are a few reasons why you should come along too.

THE STAFF IS AMAZING

Wayumi is run by a team of veteran missionaries who established the camp after returning from the field. This means you are surrounded by men and women who have been in the trenches, ministering in some of the remotest places on earth.

Friendly and approachable, they welcome questions and jump at the

chance to share their stories. I once interrupted a leader during his lunch break to ask a brief question, and was surprised when he invited me to sit down with him. He then treated me to a long conversation about his work on the field and the unique difficulties he faced in Papua New Guinea.

This sort of thing happens frequently at Wayumi. The staff make themselves available, and as a guest, you will feel like family among them.

THE TEACHING IS SOLID

Your time hearing biblical messages about missions will be well spent. This is because they want to give you more than just a missions experience: they want you to leave with a firm understanding of the work that goes into tribal missions and a biblical foundation for planting the gospel in an unreached people group.

These gifted communicators will have you laughing, weeping and occasionally wincing as they challenge your way of thinking and bring you face to face with God's heart for the lost. If you're lucky, some of that missionary fire will ignite your own heart and leave you with a burning desire to obey the Great Commission.

THE EXPERIENCE IS UNFORGETTABLE

Wayumi is a place to experience what it's like to plant a church in an unreached people group.

The camp offers a variety of immersive activities where you will need to work with teammates to apply the things you have learned. The core of this is what they call "The Village" — a simulated community with very real representations of a tribal world. Sitting near a man and struggling to communicate with him in an unknown language was a moment I'll never forget. And it was the moment I knew I would be coming back.

Mark Zellner is youth/associate pastor of West Rome Baptist Church in Manitou Beach, Michigan.

Excellence Takes Time

Making disciples is a long-term process, and making disciples across cultures and languages takes longer.

How long does it really take to plant a church, translate a Bible or train a missionary? The answers can vary. But it's difficult to believe that it can take less time in a cross-cultural ministry than it does right here in North America. Consider this ...

North American church planters estimate it takes two years of work simply to start meeting.

Think about that. Trained, professional church planters, backed up by proven methodologies and a team of experts, say they need to start researching, planning and meeting two years before they even open the doors to a new church. That's among people whose culture they understand and whose language they already speak fluently. And they're not talking about establishing a church — that's just holding the first meeting.

That new church will be mostly people who were already believers. They already have not just one Bible translation in their language, but dozens, along with hundreds of helps and study guides and devotionals and more. They don't usually expect economic or medical help from those church planters, either, so church planters can focus on planting the church.

How long do you think it takes to establish a church among people whose culture is foreign and whose language is unwritten? Where there are few, if any, who profess to name Christ? Where there is no Bible, and where the people's material needs are huge and pressing?

Modern English-language New Testament translations take several years to complete.

Mull that over. Someone assembles a team of expert translators. They have access to hundreds of years of English-language translation heritage, thousands of translation helps and dozens of top-notch experts in ancient languages. And it still takes years.

The New International Version New Testament, one of the few "completely original" modern translations, took eight years to complete. The New King James Version New Testament required four years, with the preface calling it a revision.

A "limited revision" of the New American Standard Bible took three years to complete. "More than 100 people," according to the preface to The English Standard Version, worked for three years to produce a revision of the Revised Standard Version.

How long do you think it takes for a few people to translate the New Testament from scratch, into a language that's never even been written down before? A small team with limited access to experienced translators, and virtually no access to the world's top experts?

Most established churches prefer a pastor with a Masters of Divinity.

Few will settle for less than a Bachelor's degree. Some are looking for a candidate with a doctorate.

That's a minimum of four years of training, if not six or even eight years.



Photo by Dale Stroud

Their task? To help an established church, full of people from their own culture who speak the same language, move forward. Few would say that is an easy task. The training is vital; therefore many churches are looking for people with experience as well.

How much training should missionaries receive? We send out missionaries to establish a church where there are few or no believers. The people they will work among don't think the same way — their culture is different — and they don't even speak the same language. There's no Bible in that language, either. They're going to have to create one. Training is essential.

Excellence takes time.

Making disciples is the goal, and excellence is the standard. That's why when we translate quality New Testaments, equip believers and establish thriving churches, we must take the time necessary to do the job right. How could we do anything else?

— Ian Fallis, Contributing Editor

Wayumi Weekend Retreats are offered for groups of 25 to 75 each fall and spring. Fall dates were still open as this magazine went to press. Get details and the latest information, or find out about other Wayumi programs, at wayumi.com.



Photo by Dale Stroud

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