

Rae-Edzo - How & Why this Missions Project Came About

In 2004 & 2005, members of the English congregation were sent as short-term missionaries to inner-city Vancouver and the slums of Tijuana, Mexico. These missions projects were a source of tremendous personal spiritual growth and development. But as we began looking towards a 2006 summer missions project, two additional goals were on our minds. First, we desired to be part of a missions trip with participants from each congregation. Second, we desired to be part of a potentially longer-term partnership, where we could return as summer missionaries to the same location on an ongoing, annual basis.

In September, Grace Law, the 2005 missions team leader, shared a burden that had developed in her heart to minister amongst natives in Canada. Chester Leung shared that the same burden had been growing within him for the past few years. God quickly confirmed our mutual passion and burden to reach out to natives in Canada.

In October, I attended the Mid-West Baptist Association meetings (the Alberta & Northwest Territories division of the CCSB) at Grace Family Church in St. Albert to fulfill a prior commitment to lead worship during their Saturday morning session. Despite my tiredness and desire to leave immediately after leading worship, I stayed (along with Lincoln Ho and David Cheung) for the morning meetings. A pastor was asked to share about his ministry - his name was David Shed, and he had pastored Tlicho Christian Fellowship in Rae-Edzo, NWT, for about 12 years. As Pastor Shed began to share the challenges of the ministry amongst the Dogrib natives in Rae-Edzo, a spark was

lit within my heart, an almost immediate recognition that *this* was where God desired us to go in 2006.

Pastor Shed shared his desire for God to raise up a partner church to come to Rae-Edzo for a summer missions trip to assist the church and minister to the community. Pastor Shed closed his sharing by mentioning that an ethnic church - “like the Chinese Church that led worship this morning” - would be ideal, because they would not face the prejudice and opposition that exists towards “white man” and “white man’s religion”. As he spoke, the conviction that this was from God grew stronger within my heart.

I shared what God had impressed upon my heart at our next English servant-leaders’ meeting. As I shared, God confirmed the vision within the servant-leaders that this was His leading and direction. There was mutual passion and desire to partner with Tlicho Christian Fellowship. Then I shared with Pastor Ng my experience at the MWBA meeting, Pastor Shed’s sharing, the conviction the English leaders had that Rae-Edzo was God’s destination for our 2006 missions project, and our desire for this to be a church-wide mission. After we had talked for a few minutes, Pastor Ng asked, “David Shed is the pastor there? Are you sure?” Yes, I answered. “Hmmm.” Pastor Ng, quite excited now, went to his office and came back with a Bible. “I thought it must be the same person! I’ve had his Bible on my desk for about the past 5 years.” Years earlier, during a CCSB conference held at our church, Pastor Shed had left his Bible behind, and Pastor Ng had never been able to locate him to return it. Pastor Ng also remembered spending considerable time praying for Pastor Shed, his family, and the ministry in Rae-Edzo, in years past when they had met with opposition and persecution in the community.

Pastor Ng was moved by the way God was directing us towards Rae-Edzo, and shared the vision and excitement that this could be a church-wide missions effort.

Next I phoned David Shed, to investigate the possibility of going up in 2006 for a short-term mission. As Pastor Shed and I talked on the phone, his excitement was almost uncontainable. Because the physical appearance of the Dogrib natives is similar in many ways to that of most Chinese, he felt that Chinese Christians would have a unique opportunity to be accepted amongst the Dogribs. Pastor Shed was elated by the thought of ethnic Chinese coming to Rae-Edzo bearing the love of God in word and deed.

In December, Pastor Ng, Sam Wong, Kam Chan, and myself met and prayed and shared together about Rae-Edzo. We shared a common vision that God was leading clearly in this direction, and that Rae-Edzo should be a church-wide missions trip for the summer of 2006. Since then we have set about clarifying details, dates, and direction. I have truly seen God's hand at work in every step thus far, and have so much excitement about partnering with the church in Rae-Edzo and ministering amongst the Dogrib natives. My prayer is that this summer would be the beginning of a long-term relationship, with both the church and the residents of Rae-Edzo. I pray that our church would be used to open doors and hearts to the Gospel that have remained closed to this point. I know beyond a doubt that God is in this missions trip - that going to Rae-Edzo is His will.

Rae-Edzo is a community of about 1800, mostly Dogrib natives, on Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories. The community is about 17 hours driving from Edmonton; it is just over an hour outside of Yellowknife. The missions team will leave Edmonton on Friday, July 28, and return on Tuesday, August 8. The approximate cost for the missions project will be \$360 per person - \$200 for food and lodging, and \$160 for transportation (van rental & gas). Team members will pay at least \$100 (plus meals on the way there & back); we will seek to fundraise the remaining costs. For more

information about the missions trip, please talk to a member of the Missions Team Committee - Samuel Wong (committee head), Pastor Ng (training leader), Lincoln Ho (registration & promotion), Chester Leung (fundraising), Jackie Lee (finances), or myself (Pastor Tawa - ministry teams leader).