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NORTH AMERICA
INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES



"Out of the Ashes"

When Carolyn and I drove through the Little Shuswap Reserve in Squilax, BC on November 12, our hearts were broken as we saw the ashes and debris left by the wildfires that had devastated the community. Thirty-one homes had been destroyed and numerous other structures. We saw areas where all the homes were burned, and other areas where some were destroyed and others remained standing as the winds shifted and ran their ragged course through the Reserve. Numerous other homes were lost along the lake and neighboring communities as well, but many of those were summer or vacation homes.



When the orders to evacuate were given, most on the three Reserves near Chase headed for emergency shelters or temporary housing, but some chose to stay to try to protect their homes along the river. Three brothers from Squilax who chose to stay to protect their property ran pumps from the river to hose down their houses when the winds swept the fire through their homes and across the river and up the mountain on the other side. A rescue boat from the Adams Lake Band headed up the river to try to rescue them when they were told it was too late because the fire had already swept across the river and it was unsafe to proceed. They insisted and endangered their own lives to rescue the three brothers who would have otherwise likely perished. Amazingly, with all the destruction and loss of property, no lives were lost from those devastating wildfires of August 2023.

One who lost everything said it was like the "fire gods" in their fury selectively took what they wanted and left what they chose to leave, and that they "must have needed it more than we did". He was so grateful that their lives were spared and said that they can always rebuild their homes. Like so many others, he focused on praying for and helping others in need.



Jamie, the Chief of the Little Shuswap band asked us to meet with him at the band office the morning before we returned home. He had been elected Kukpi7 (Chief) early in 2023. We had been family friends for many years. Jamie asked us to pray for wisdom to lead his fractured and grieving community. He told us he wants to break down the dividing lines and serve his people as they rebuild. He said it is tradition for the chief to see that everyone else in the band has their home rebuilt before he rebuilds his own. I told him that Jesus model of servant leadership is what the community so desperately needs at this time. We had a wonderful time of prayer together. Jamie was one of the three brothers who was rescued from the fire while trying to save their homes.

It could take 2 years or more for everyone to rebuild. Many have asked how they can help, and people have offered household items and furniture, but at this stage, with most living in rental units and emergency shelters, there is no place to put those items. There will be more need for those items down the road.



Carolyn suggested the value of art as a tool that she has used in helping people rebuild their live and work through grief individually or together as a community. So many of the Indigenous people express themselves through art and music, and many of those tools were lost in the fire. The value of art and music is so important in rebuilding. Pray that the Lord would give direction if this is something we should get involved in.

Will you pray for wisdom for Kukpi7 Jamie and the Squilax families as Christmas approaches? Pray that many would find the hope and joy that only Jesus can bring as they seek to rebuild their homes and lives. Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." Pray that out of the ashes will come life to the full.

Thanks for partnering with us in this ministry. May your Christmas season be filled with the blessings that only Jesus can bring.



Gratefully,
Jack & Carolyn Teeter



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