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Dear Friends,

Well... Fall has snuck its way in... Seems it was just the beginning of long summer days. As school dismissed we prepared for Bush Camp with a team flying in from Perth, New York.

This year, with a only 8 on the team, we switched midstream from Kids Bush Camp to Family camp. There was an average of 25 during the day, and swelled to 50 + at night with parents joining us to camp and spend the evening singing around the campfire and listening to stories of Jesus and changed lives. As camp opened on the first night, people gathered, ate, and an elder opened with this statement. "I want you who have come here to share with us to understand who it is you have come to give of yourselves to. I want you first to hear what we went through, so you know better how to speak to our hearts." She is not a believer yet but states she has begun to be more open to what we have to offer about Jesus after all these years of seeing genuine love. She then went on to share her very vulnerable story of abuse and heart ache at residential school. Qui-



etness settled over the camp as she tearfully finished. Those who were invited in were mingling their tears with the wounded ones. Then she invited others who wanted to share their story. One by one nine elders stood. Each told their heart wrenching stories. Some for

the first time in public. Many ended with.. But I am still here... As one Mom openly spoke of her abuse, her grown son had to walk away. Lastly, one of our Fellowship members end with her tearful story. It was so powerful. She spoke of how she had been through counselling and received a lot of help but it was her relationship with Jesus that truly brought her to healing. Knowing he deeply loved her and His eyes did not see damaged goods, helped her to regain dignity and an ability to see her worth before her Creator. Bush Camp had never opened in this way before.

The next night, just as people began to arrive, the skies opened, rain poured down in sheets, and the wind blew so hard, the kitchen began to blow apart and frying bannock was put on hold. For over an hour we were pounded on as tents were blown flat to the ground, when all of a sudden it sounded like a huge gun went off right behind us and lightening struck the base of the mountain 100 yards away. Rain doused the fire. Elders were seen running for the big mash tent. There went our evening of sharing the gospel. Bit by bit the team slugged thru the downpour with parts of supper and tables and chairs. When I ran across and darted into the mash tent, I was shocked. No one had left and in fact more families had arrived and brought 100 bannocks! Everyone was laughing and enjoying the adventure. That night we fed over 60 people and then all kinds of games were invented and we began to sing. Some were visibly moved by the singing and sharing. As the evening closed, one elder came to thank us personally. Then he said these words. "You know... I have always had my own ways(spiritually), but tonight hearing these songs and these words about Jesus, I will think about it for a long time. There were tears in this strong man's eyes as he turned to go.

Camp finished on a high with Sunday morning Fellowship. Afterwards the team from Perth, N.Y. were invited to the Band Office for the Instillation and Celebration Feast of the new Chief and Counsel. There the Chief thanked them for returning each year, loving the people so well, and their willingness to help at the gathering. Each was presented with a gift. It was hard to say goodbye to 8 strong warriors who did the work of 80.



As a result of the lighting, fires flared up everywhere. The rest of the summer was smoked filled and all around us villages were on alert or evacuation. Many came into Lillooet and then on to Kamloops. It was hard being on constant alert for many. Out door things were cancelled. Bear and deer roamed in our back yards. The deer ate all my roses!

The rest of summer was so unusual for our fellowship. Near the end of July, Leona (Jenny's sister) became so sick and we began to really fear for her life. Finally after 4 days of kidney failure and soaring diabetic counts, she began to turn around. The infection began to subside. Jenny and I stayed several days with her. She had been a big part of Fellowship in the past. Pray for her recovery.

After 2 days home Ken was rushed into the hospital and he taken over to Kelowna hospital with suspected brain bleed and dizziness. Once again I stayed with Jen at the hospital the first week of August in Kelowna. He eventually was sent home without any answers. The dizziness continues.



While I was away Mark continued work on 2 projects with the mission. He has longed to see a youth networking body from all sectors of native ministries in Canada. This has become a reality and they are planning the second conference this fall. He also along with another missionary got a

vision to see “I am second“ type 7-minute videos produced with the stories of Native Christians to be sent across main stream media. It is a powerful medium. So far there have been 2 tapings and the committee is now moving on 3 more tapings. Please pray for this production and for many to hear the gospel from their own people.

The second week of August, Nathan and Abby arrived with their family to celebrate our 50th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY! What a great time we all had. Did they ever spoil us with Breakfast at the Fairfield Whistler – kinda like Breakfast at Tiffany’s! Then we hiked along the River to the falls and returned to the house decorated in gold and a few friends gathered for a beautiful supper. It was such a memorable time. Thanks to all for your wishes and cards and flowers.

By the end of August, I was back in the Kamloops hospital again. This time with Vivian. Her Mom was so sick and hallucinating. I stayed with Vivian for a week. “Gramma” seemed to get worse. In her confusion, she fell out of bed and broke her hip. Since then she has been up and down but today is still in the hospital. Can you pray for her? Also for Vivian as she continues to remain by her side. I returned to teaching at the St’at’imc Christian School.



It is now fall. We had planned to see many of you over these fall months on our furlough. We were very disappointed as the time of departure approached and still we could find no one to fill in with the Fellowship in our absence. This was our second attempt to do so. We did not feel the freedom to leave with the fellowship so small, especially after Covid years. So... once again we called to cancel all plans. We long to be with you and we long to remain. Please pray with us as we seek to replan for next fall to find a helper for the 3.5 months of absence.



Lastly, the greatest news of all! There has been a birth. Just last Sunday while we were away at Staff Conference, Pam gave her heart to Jesus at Fellowship!!! Two days ago she walked into Fellowship and said, “I am one week old today!”

Thank you for your continued support and prayer for our work we do together. Your prayers, when we wander into your thoughts, have been the very strength and wisdom we have needed.

We continue on.

Love,

Mark and Babe Smith

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