

The Little Light of Mine

I returned to Canada in 2012 with the intention of working part time once I received my registration from CNO. When I realized it would take more than 6 months, I decided to work as a travel nurse in California. Upon receiving my registration, I took a contract for 6 months at a private college teaching PSWs. I met Weeneebayko Area Health Authority at a job fair in Toronto, and once I heard of their job offering, I immediately felt a tug on my heart to go and be a part of this organization so I could work with the First Nations People. I did not care about how much the pay would be, I just felt a peace about this decision.

I had heard so much about how they were mistreated by the early settlers in the name of Christianity. I arrived in Attawapiskat in April 2018, it was a cold dry day, I had one day of orientation, and began caring for patients of all ages. This was my first interaction with the First Nation people, I was excited but also hesitant, not knowing what to expect. They have a closed culture, and do not warm to outsiders easily. They exhibit a flat affect and will not make eye contact. They are very serious, they don't smile, and would only speak when asked questions about their health. Life as we know it here in the south is totally a new experience in the north, not just the weather, but also the isolation, and lack of things to do. One year and 5 months later, I enjoy going into the community and know that with the Lord, and Holy Spirit, I can make a difference in the lives of God's children

Challenges in the community are alcohol use and abuse, smoking, suicide, death, anger and abuse, and sexual promiscuity. Lack of self esteem can also be seen among them. They still talk about the hurts and pains inflicted on them through the parochial schools. The first time I had a chance to speak to a member of the community about Jesus was on my fourth visit to Attawapiskat. One grandmother brought in her 8 year old grandson to be assessed and treated for lesions on his skin (a very common occurrence there). He noticed the cross on my necklace, and asked why I was wearing it. I talked with him about Jesus, how he loves each one of us, and that he died for our sins, and that the cross was a symbol of Jesus love for us. His grandmother explained that they believed in "The One" meaning God, and that Cree means "highly spirited." This discussion is being translated by the eight year old because the grandmother does not speak English.

Later in the fragmented conversation, I found out that she was raised Catholic, and sometimes goes to the church. When asked if she had a relationship with Jesus Christ, she did not know what that meant, so I told her about Jesus, and His love. I talked about John 3:16 and Romans 10:9, then told her how easy it is to become a follower of Christ. Then read His word and pray so you can learn more about him. She nodded her head, said goodbye and left. I know that the Holy Spirit is at work in her to do the father's good pleasure. So I prayed for her that night, believing that God is able to save her and her family. Now whenever she sees me, she smiles and wave. I do not know the impact of our talk, but I believe that a seed was sowed. I have invited her to our church service, but she has not come. A spiritual awakening is needed in this

community. Please pray that hearts will be receptive to the Word of God, and many will be won into the kingdom of God. Lord, I am available to you!!

About the author:

Yvonne Baird became an RN in 2000. She completed her master's degree and worked as a Nursing instructor. She knows the Lord wants her to help people and to be a light for Him wherever she goes. Her necklace has always been a conversation starter. Patients would ask her to pray for and with them. Jesus is not openly discussed in the classroom, but everyone knew she is a Christian, so many times the students would ask her to pray for them. That was His light shining in a dark place through His children.

Nurses may not have opportunities to talk about faith in the workplace, but God always provides an open door for Yvonne to answer spiritual questions. Her prayer is that the Lord will use her to love His people and that His light will shine, and that the community will be transformed by His grace as we continue to witness for Jesus our redeemer.