

## MissionSonlight-3<sup>rd</sup>Qtr.2008 – Canada

**Narrator:** Welcome to Mission Sonlight. The third quarter of 2008 turns our focus to the North American Division and the work of lay members who are reaching others for Christ. During the early part of 2008 Mission Sonlight took its cameras to the far-western reaches of the North American Division and visited British Columbia.

British Columbia is the westernmost province in Canada and in territory is larger than Washington, Oregon and California combined. The government center for British Columbia is located in Victoria with Vancouver laying claim to being home of the third largest metropolitan area in Canada.

The natural beauty of British Columbia is breathtaking, from the rugged peaks of the Canadian Rockies to the temperate rainforest of Vancouver Island. Visitors to the area might see grizzly and black bears as well as the Kermode or “spirit” bear, which is only found in this area of the world. Deer, elk, moose, caribou, big-horn sheep, mountain goats along with a myriad of birds and sea life inhabit the land and waters of this land.

Forestry has long played an important economic role in the economy. Today there is also an upsurge in the mining industry in this province. British Columbia has also established itself as the third largest feature film production location in North America, just behind Los Angeles and New York.

With a population of over 4 million citizens, British Columbia is ethnically diverse. Much of this immigrant population has called this home for less than 30 years. Ethnic groups include Chinese, Punjabi, Tagalog, Korean, German as well as many others.

One of the greatest challenges in this vast territory is telling the story of Jesus. In a recent census, just over 64% indicated that they were Christian. Other faith groups listed included Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu. Almost 36% of the respondents indicated that they had no religious affiliation at all. This opens incredible opportunities but creates challenges for the local churches also. Many of the Adventist churches in the province are small. With a small pool of manpower, it is difficult to reach such a vast territory.

When the way seems blocked by either limited personnel or funds, God opens ways that we never imagined possible to provide opportunities that take the gospel to those who are seeking answers in their lives.

Seventh-day Adventists have long believed in using every means possible to share the gospel with their neighbors and communities. Today, the Seventh-day Adventist church in Canada is using the work established years ago to reach out to a 21<sup>st</sup> century society.

**Sherry Griffin:** In 1929, Harold Williams was a young pastor serving his God and church in Newfoundland. As Williams labored there, he was impressed that he should begin a radio station to spread the gospel. William opened his radio station in St. John's, Newfoundland and named it Voice of Adventist Radio or VOAR.

**Narrator:** The foresight of Pastor Williams led to remarkable events in British Columbia years later when Elliot Tam had the vision to bring the Adventist message by radio to his new hometown of Cranbrook, British Columbia.

**Elliott Tam:** In 2004, we were living in Vancouver, British Columbia and God led us to move to the country to raise our children and homeschool them. So God led us to Cranbrook.

**Narrator:** Elliott and his family stepped out in faith to make the move to Cranbrook. He had to give up his job as an engineer but he believed that God was leading and would provide all the things his family needed.

Settling in Cranbrook, the Tam's attended the local Adventist church and would also visit a sister church in Eureka, Montana which was just across the border.

**Elliott Tam:** During one of those visits I found out they put up a radio tower to broadcast 3ABN to the people in Eureka. I thought what a wonderful idea to be able to reach people 24/7.

**Narrator:** Elliot began to think about how this could impact the town of Cranbrook. At the same time he was being impressed by the messages of David Gates, a missionary who believes in moving forward in faith.

**Elliott Tam:** I was thinking it would be wonderful if we could do something like that for Cranbrook. It's a small church and it would be a wonderful way of evangelizing.

**Narrator:** Elliot soon discovered that the legalities of beginning a radio station in Canada are different than in the United States. Even though it looked like it would be impossible to establish a Christian radio station in Cranbrook, Elliott didn't give up.

**Narrator:** Elliot began to research and learned that VOAR was operating in Newfoundland. VOAR is allowed to broadcast because of a historical action that took

place in 1949 when Newfoundland became a part of Canada. At that time VOAR was granted the right to continue operating as a Christian radio station.

Wondering if it would be possible to use the VOAR signal to broadcast in Cranbrook, Elliott consulted with another church member who had expertise in this area.

**Elliott Tam:** God also has people in this local church like Nathan Hall. He is very good with ham radio so I brought him in on what I felt impressed to do. He also has a friend named Russ who is a retired industry Canada engineer. To a project like this you have to have not only CRTC approval but also Industry Canada approval.

**Narrator:** A team was formed with Nathan Hall, Elliott, Russ the Industry Canada engineer and Sherry Griffin, VOAR station manager. In order to start the project, it was necessary to submit an application and a \$500 fee to Industry Canada. If the application were denied the \$500 fee would not be returned. Elliott knew that the Cranbrook church was small and didn't have those kinds of funds. Even though his personal finances were tight, Elliott decided to commit the money. He took the plan to his local church board and they approved the idea of submitting the application. After the meeting, Elliott returned home and found a surprised waiting for him.

**Elliott Tam:** "I stopped by my mailbox and found a check from my old employer for much more than that, so I said 'Praise the Lord' on the same day as He returns our step of faith. As we were continuing on with this project we were getting some roadblocks from the CRTC in Vancouver. I felt impressed to say, "Lord this project cannot die." As I was praying about it I felt impressed to do some research about it and find someone higher.

So I found the name of the western CRTC rep so I phoned him. He got back to me right away and found a way that we could do this without involving CRTC too much. That was the key for us to open the door and move forward.

**Narrator:** With approval came the need for a location and equipment-neither of which seemed readily available. Elliott knew that the ideal location for the transmitter would be on top of Mt. Baker. Even though that wasn't possible because of costs, God once again provided.

**Elliott Tam:** Garth, one of our church members kindly offered his home, because he lives on a small hill and we could put the tower there.

**Narrator:** So the land was secured, but equipment was still needed. Initial estimates indicated that start-up costs for the equipment would be \$15,000 (I'm not sure if we need to clarify Canadian or US \$ here, since they are essentially equal these days,) Elliott decided to see what kind of local support he could get.

**Elliott Tam:** We were contacting some of the local businesses in town. Miraculously the equipment that we were buying wasn't in and they gave us a really big discount. The total cost, instead of being \$15,000, was only \$5000.

**Narrator:** Response to the new station was exciting and at times overwhelming. Garth McMilligan, who donated space on his land for the tower, experienced first hand just how many people were tuning in those first few days of broadcasting.

**Garth MacMinagil:** We have a number of people listening to the program. After we had this installed we wondered how many people would be listening to it. A few days after

we had it in, we had a problem with the satellite dish. I was inundated with phone calls.

People were calling me up with “How come it’s down? How come it’s down?”

I’ve had people from different churches stop me thanking our church for bringing this system in.

**Narrator:** The audience and response has grown as the station as continued with its broadcasting. Ian Cotton, pastor of the Cranbrook and Creston Seventh-day Adventist churches, says that the impact on the community has been very positive.

**Ian Cotton:** We’ve had a lady come by the church and tell us how much she appreciated the Sabbath morning worship services. We also have a stall in the mall. The first couple that stopped by wanted to give us a \$100 so that they could help support VOAR.

One of our ladies works for a car rental company and she often checks the radio setting and often finds it tuned in to 106.5 FM which are our call numbers in Cranbrook.

**Narrator:** It wasn’t long before other Adventist churches in the area began to make plans for their own stations.

**Ian Cotton:** The Creston Ministerial Association gave us \$500 this year to help offset the operating costs as well as giving us \$500 when we were setting it up about a year ago.

You can well imagine how much of a blessing it was to receive money from the ministerial association both for the setup and the annual ongoing costs for the VOAR downlink.

**Narrator:** Elliott first conceived of the idea to begin the station in April. Six months later, the first broadcast was aired and by the end of that year, the entire project was completely funded. Elliott saw God moving in another way also.

**Elliott Tam:** In June, when the station was up and running and we were about ready to sign the formal contract with VOAR, the day that I signed it God turned around and gave me a wonderful job again.

**Narrator:** The framework has been established for more downlink sites throughout Canada.

**Elliott Tam:** Since this first tower in Cranbrook, we have 8 or 9 rebroadcasting stations running in British Columbia.

**Ian Cotton:** We are planning to have upwards of 40 VOAR downlink sites in British Columbia.

**Elliott Tam:** There are 64 churches in British Columbia. If all goes well more than half the churches will have towers to spread the Good News in British Columbia. I understand that plans for the other provinces of Canada to have other VOAR stations.

**Narrator:** A portion of the 13<sup>th</sup> Sabbath offerings this quarter will be used to continue the building of VOAR radio stations across Canada. These stations will carry the good news that Jesus is coming again to the small towns and large cities across Canada.

**Elliott Tam:** As of right now there are 30 applications with the British Columbia Conference from local churches to have VOAR in their towns. Your 13<sup>th</sup> Sabbath Offerings will help these small churches to achieve their goals as well as the other churches across Canada to help put their dream into reality to help spread the gospel of Jesus through radio. Thank you for your support.

**Narrator:** The mission field is not just a foreign land where the national population lives in thatched huts. It's the people you work with, the cashier at the checkout, your next-

door neighbors. How will you tell them about Jesus this week? This year? Your 13<sup>th</sup> Sabbath Mission offering will play a part in telling the story of Jesus in the North American Division. Begin budgeting now for your gift on Sabbath, September 27. Reporting from Cranbrook, British Columbia, this is Mission Spotlight.