

MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MDP, IT'S A NEW DAY!

Training Program Equips for Global Horizons

IMCO's MDP training program, after nearly four decades of equipping over 1,100 missionaries serving from Alaska to Mexico, continues to experience dramatic and positive change.

Carstairs, AB, (MDP) – On November 20, 2008, IMCO Leadership unanimously voted to give operational and functional independence to MDP to “provide the space and opportunity for optimal growth.” Several First Nations leaders called the decision “historic.”

Since 1971 the Ministry Development Program (MDP) has been the signature activity of the partnership known as IMCO (Inter-Mission Cooperative Outreach). Ten mission agencies pooled their resources to equip missionaries and Indigenous leaders to serve among First Nations and Latino peoples with cultural sensitivity, relevancy and increased effectiveness. The program is undoubtedly one of the longest-running cross-cultural training programs in North America.

This decision by IMCO triggered the forming of a Governance Development Team under the leadership of Colorado-based MDP Director John Cosby. Mr. Cosby brings four decades of cross-cultural church planting and leadership development to bear on the formulating of fresh vision for MDP's next phase.

In recent weeks the Governance Development Team has transitioned into an intercultural Governance Council. The Council, comprised of Anglo and Aboriginal leadership residing in five Canadian provinces and four states, meets nearly weekly through online meetings to do MDP strategic planning.

The next significant event on the MDP calendar is the training program scheduled to begin April 24, 2010. This eight-week training event will take place in an environment of living and ministering among people of a different culture. Through this real-life experience MDP will provide a unique opportunity for moving beyond one's own ego- and ethno-centric notions, to living out the realities of the Christian life in a cross-cultural context. This is the flagship program among many training venues envisioned for the near future.

In the coming months MDP Administrator Dan Woodard, based in Alberta, anticipates several additions coming to MDP. MDP leadership is exploring other venues along with the annual spring training program. Comments Woodard, “Years of interaction indicate there are numerous agencies and denominations looking for training venues to equip their staff for culturally relevant ministry.”

Utilizing MDP's rich cross-cultural training history the MDP Council envisions a transition from a *cross-cultural* to *trans-cultural* focus. The difference between these, explains Cosby, is very simple. Cross-cultural training has traditionally been understood as a one-way street, usually reflecting a specific cultural focus, most often applied as “from Anglo to Aboriginal” or “Anglo to Latino.” Trans-cultural training carries equipping for ministry to a whole new level. It expands the training purpose of awareness and communication between one individual crossing over to another culture, to training on any side of cultural boundaries. This is thrusting MDP into a “new day” with a focus on equipping servant leaders for global horizons.

God's Word is a message for the entire world, emphasizes Cosby. It is supra-cultural and soars free of cultural boundaries while powerfully penetrating the same. The heart of God is incarnational, beating in rhythm with all nations, tribes, tongues and peoples. With the growing multi-ethnic tide in North America it is imperative for Christ-followers to experience the liberty of being trans-cultural and global as we relate to other people whether they live across the street or across the sea.

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If you would like more information about this topic, or schedule an interview with John Cosby or Dan Woodard, their contact information is listed here.

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