

SHEEP DOGS

Endeavoring to build mission team unity

May 2005

Teambuilding and Aboriginal Restitution in Western Australia

We thank God for the opportunities he's provided us so far in outreach, especially in regard to what we feel our future ministry will be. Jay used parts of three days to provide team building assistance to our small-team of 13 with great success. The team really opened up as we discussed the team's strengths and areas of weakness. The team was able to set a clear vision, develop some concrete goals and strategies moving forward, and make some immediate improvements both during and after the workshop. Andrea has already taught and directed 3 different dramas thus far for our team to use in churches and street evangelism (see picture attached of a drama in a church in which Jay plays the part of Jesus). It has been exciting to be able put into practice the vision that God's given us for our future in terms of helping maximize the effectiveness and unity of mission teams.

In just a few weeks, we have been able to share the message of God's love in schools, nursing homes, churches, skate parks, aboriginal community centers, and in the city streets. We have also served the communities we have been staying in by building, cleaning, and repairing buildings and landscapes.

SAD HISTORY – HOPEFUL FUTURE

In the last few weeks God has really given us His heart for restitution between the aboriginals and the European colonists. As we listen to the stories of the aboriginal elders, we are filled with deep compassion and a longing to make amends between them and the white European colonists. Their painful history is actually a quite recent history. In fact, we were shocked to learn that it was just in 1992 that the Supreme Court finally even acknowledged that the Aboriginals were the original inhabitants of Australia. From the early 1800s to as recently as 1970 (!), European colonists tried to breed out aboriginal blood by intermarrying them, and any child that was not 100% aboriginal blood was torn away from their families to live in missions/orphanages. They were forbidden to speak their native language and had to apply for permission from the government to get a job, move from one location to another, or even get married. Aboriginals had no rights, no representation, no voice. If you're interested in what we're facing in this reconciliation process, we highly recommend the movie "The Rabbit Proof Fence," which is an excellent movie based on a true story. Many of the people that we speak to are actually part of the 'stolen generation'. It's that recent.



Street ministry — Jay as Jesus

We have been blessed with opportunities to build relationships with a branch of Aboriginals called the Noongar. Our relationships with the Noongar elders have typically taken place over food or around a campfire, as is their tradition (see photo). Both of us were even invited to share in Noongar churches our testimonies of God's love and faithfulness. Additionally, we are continually extending apologies on behalf of the European colonists in hopes of bringing forgiveness and wholeness to the Aboriginal people, even if it's just one person at a time.

Restitution and forgiveness around the campfire.