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**International Community on your Doorstep**

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You just returned from experiencing life in another culture and the images will be replaying in your mind for some time. What will you do with these experiences now? On your mission trip you expected to interact with different sights, sounds and smells, but you left that behind when you returned to Canada…or did you?

The images you have from your trip will slowly dim and even the pictures you took will eventually fail to keep your interest like they did when you first returned.

How do you hold onto those experiences to allow them to continue to change and shape you as a world Christian? It is important to allow your experiences to catapult you to greater service and interaction with the international community living at your doorstep…and you don’t have to travel far to find them.

A while back I visited the church I grew up at in California. Across the street is a new grocery store. When I entered the store the first thing I noticed was a wide range of new and different smells.  (Have you noticed that in our grocery stores there are usually not a lot of strong smells, except the bakery?) The next thing I noticed was that everyone spoke a language other than English, and they didn’t look like the people with whom I grew up. This was a Chinese grocery store, and I realized how much my neighbourhood had changed over the years.

There are a couple of possible responses. I could complain about the changing times or I could accept that this is the new reality and learn how to adapt. We spend too much time wishing things could be different rather than accepting the situation that God has given us and learning how to reach out. We wonder why they don’t learn “our” language and culture. Why don’t we make an effort to learn theirs?  There was one benefit of this new reality. My wife and I found yucca root which we enjoyed in Brazil, but it is not something I ever ate growing up. Now I can buy it right down the street from where I used to live.

Here is another question. When you go to a store and can't understand the clerk because she speaks with such a strong accent, what is the first thought that crosses your mind? Your experience in another culture can stimulate your awareness of the different cultures living just around the corner or down the street.

The immigrant community is growing up all around us. There are an increasing number of people from Africa and Asia pouring into our country. Their presence here provides an opportunity to help them assimilate through building friendships. Look for churches and ministries that you can work with to interact with the immigrant community.

There are many university students from around the world studying in schools here in Canada. These are not only universities, but also community colleges. There are many opportunities to meet with them and introduce them to Canadian culture just as you received orientation when you visited another culture.

The key is to use the same eyes of culture that you used when you traveled to another culture to look for opportunities to make friends with the international community living in the US.

**Resources**

* *Christians at the Border* by Daniel Carroll is a book that studies the biblical response to immigration. You can read a 20 page summary of the biblical teaching. The author also has a [blog](http://www.denverseminary.edu/m-daniel-carroll-r-immigration-and-other-matters/) on the topic.
* World Relief has a helpful website on the topic.
* The Ethnic America Network is a resource of organizations and churches that are reaching immigrants in North America.
* There are a number of organizations that work with International Students living in the US. Look for those organizations (Intervarsity and Navigators are some options.) and churches that have ministries that you can join.
* WorldVenture has regional teams in the U.S. that come alongside churches and individuals to analyze and discover mission connections between their communities and the world. Those local connection teams are found at http://www.worldventure.com/connect-locally.