

APPENDIX IV

TESTIMONIES

TESTIMONIES THAT APPEARED IN OUR FIRST CCIDD
BROCHURES IN THE MID-1980's:

Dr. McMurry Richey Duke Divinity School, Durham, N.C.

“The impact of CCIDD for Christian growth is why I’ve brought new groups each of the past seven years.”

Sr. Ann Gormly, SNDdeN Associate Director USCMA Washington D.C.

“The CCIDD program makes an excellent contribution to one’s understanding of poverty in a global context. It is highly recommended for those with limited time and funds.”

Br. Phil Armstrong, CSC Holy Cross Midwest Provincial, Indiana

“I learned more of the poor and their Christian struggle in 10 days at CCIDD than in 13 years as a missionary in Gana.”

Sr. Karen Stern, SHF, Superior General, Sisters of the Holy Family

“Coming face to face with the poor, I have faces and feelings instead of simply words or theory. This has profoundly shaped and enriched my understanding of Central America, church and change.”

Dr. Paul A. Wee, General Secretary, Lutheran World Ministries N.Y.

“Churches which affirm the Evangelical Gospel have found in CCIDD an authentic avenue of exposure which brings commitment into harmony with real demands of discipleship.”

Fernando Moreno Past Nat'l Chairman, USCC Campaign for Human Development and Chaplain at Loyola Marymount University, LA, CA

“CCIDD is the most worthwhile, impactful, thought and action provoking experience in discerning real development that I have ever encountered.”

Br. Rex Hennel, CSC Associate Director, Holy Cross Mission Center, Notre Dame, IN

“My missionary work would have been much more enlightened and effective if I had come to CCIDD before assignment.”

Fr. Enda Hefferman, OFM Capuchin Provincial, Burlingame, CA

“It absolutely transformed my way of thinking, bringing a new awareness of the plight of poor within structures of church and social change.”

Sr. Helen Ann Collier, CCVI Incarnate Word Provincial, St. Louis

“CCIDD has convinced me of the prophetic role religious have within church and society. It has demanded solidarity in deed rather than just in word.”

Dr. John Foster, United Church of Canada, Director ICCHRLA

“A powerful ecumenical experience of Latin American Christian struggle for North American Christians.”

TESTIMONIES FROM A NEWER BROCHURE OF THE 1990's:

Jennifer Thompson, Holy Cross College Student

“After having been to CCIDD and experiencing Mexico, I have never again looked at the world around me in the same way. What I experienced there, through the people, will never leave me.”

Janice Swenson, Wisconsin Teacher of the Year, Barneveld, WI

“I can't recommend this highly enough. I've had 20 years of teaching experience, but no other educational experience has been as important to

me as my trip to Mexico. I saw my world in a whole new light and my world hasn't been the same since."

A PERSONAL TESTIMONY FROM SISTER JOAN CHITTISTER, OSB REFLECTION ON ASPECTS OF HER CCIDD RETREAT

Today, I saw the Gospel... Jesus saying "I have not come to bring peace " and "Those who accept the prophets receive the prophets' reward" – the need to be open to the Word of God. And then we went to the Plan de Ayala parish and it all happened before our very eyes. In a bamboo hut with a dirt floor crowded with the poor, these people and their priest talked through the Scriptures and sang freedom songs".

This morning we met with Bishop Sergio Mendes Arceo, the only radical bishop. It was a great and disturbing morning. In any other Central American country he would be assassinated. Here, he can simply be ignored because the institutional church at large is quiet about the powerful, the rich, the political... But the poor love this man. Everywhere we go, we hear his name from them.

It was a hard day. But the next day was even harder. It was what Ray called later, "the crucifixion day of the retreat". A catechist from Guatemala and missionaries from El Salvador sat for literally hours and poured out one example after another of terror, torture and destruction of people and places. People with bibles are murdered as insurrectionists. Villages are traumatized. Their peasant leagues that speak for wages and decent living conditions in the plantation systems are called "communists". And catechists who taught reading, writing and Scripture became keys to the opposition and had to be eliminated. Ignorance is the basis of oppression. Those who threaten ignorance are enemies of the State. Everyone went to bed silent and sullen.

We've spent this whole day at the CCIDD center itself and that's a good change of pace. Sister Dolores, who now lives and works in a ravine talked about Christian education and social action. Her life and work are inspiring but most troubling of all was her final comment: "In the U.S. you can do something for us because you are at the heart of the empire." The empire. We are the new empire – like Rome, Spain or England. We live off the labor of the rest of the world. We rape and plunder and smile and smile.

The horror is that it has corrupted religious life too. We are highly individualistic, highly capitalistic. We want more money, more opportunities, more leisure. We have the fruits of capitalism while others have its burdens.

RECENT TESTIMONIES SENT TO CCIDD IN 2007

Sister Sally Ann Brickner, Director, Peace & Justice Center, St. Norbert's College, De Pere, WI

The retreat at CCIDD was very educational and profound, especially in that we met with native populations and heard their stories. It was constructive in that we met with people who were engaged in transforming their reality. I saw the philosophy of Paulo Freire in action.

Both personally and as a College we benefited from a decade of retreats at CCIDD. I also participated in a BorderLinks program in 2005 with SNC students during our Spring Break Week. Both programs teach a great deal about international inequalities, and both encourage teamwork.

My CCIDD experience motivated me to become involved in future actions. I participated in the trip with BorderLinks. I've incorporated material in the classes I teach on justice and peace as well as global poverty. I have become a member of delegations to other countries, including Christian Peacemaker Teams in Colombia, SA. At the Peace and Justice Center at St. Norbert, we actively promote fair trade and have had anti-slavery programming.

Melissa Ekdom-Delorme, Former Perth, Ontario High School Student

I am 22 years old, from Perth, Ontario, Canada. I visited CCIDD in March of 2003 with a group of students from my school (St. John Catholic HS) from the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario.

Before leaving for CCIDD, I began taking Spanish courses (and have kept up with it ever since). I am pursuing a double major in Spanish and International Development at Queen's University in Kingston.

The CCIDD experience didn't help to clear my confused thoughts regarding what I wanted to do with my life - instead it made me even further torn between wanting to work in social justice and pursuing a career in fine arts. It did help me to realize that justice-minded individuals are needed in every career and sphere of society.

Upon my return I wanted to do something after my experience. I began a youth division of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace at my high school. From my involvement with CCODP, I was chosen as one of 11 female delegates to represent CCODP and to visit CCODP development projects in El Salvador in the summer of 2004.

I had already been accepted into Queen's to study int'l development and my choice was further confirmed with my trip to El Salvador. These two experiences (initiated by CCIDD) made me realize that I had a LOT to learn and that there was so much I wanted to try and understand. Here I am, 3 years later and still not *really* understanding how millions of people live in desolate poverty. I've studied why, but in my heart, it doesn't make sense.

In 9 days, I will be traveling to Xela, Guatemala for a 3 month internship with an NGO working with indigenous women. This will be fulfilling the work-study component of my degree and is something I have been looking forward to doing for a long time. Thus far I have been taking exposure trips to the 3rd world and now I will have the

opportunity to learn AND contribute.

CCIDD has inspired a long line of decisions I've made to dedicate my life to social justice in a way that is best for me and also for what I feel is best for others.

Alice Wissing, Graduate Student, Bellarmine University, Kentucky

I was most impacted by my visit to CCIDD in August of 2006 and its acquainting me with the realities of "free trade." In my limited experiences with other cultures, the Cuernavaca visit was the most enlightening, in particular our visit to La Estacion, the mercado and the talk and video on the war in El Salvador. I continue to pray for those lives that are affected by injustice. And, I am more conscientious of my personal needs vs. my wants. In opportunities such as group retreats or meetings, I have shared my CCIDD experience and helped others to know how I was affected by it. I am blessed to have been a part of the CCIDD education. I hope I may be able to return.

Genevieve Rampage, 12th Grade, Cornwall, Ontario

I am a 12th grade student from Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary School who came to CCIDD during my spring break in March of 2007.

The CCIDD experience enriched my life because it influenced me to start thinking more about others. It opened my eyes to the unjust treatment of many people around the world and helped me to cherish the relationships I have with the people around me. I have witnessed the living conditions of hard working people and will always remember what MY eyes have seen; not my father's, not my friend's, my own two eyes.

Heather Davidson, Saint John Catholic High School, Ontario

I came to CCIDD in spring break of 2006. I witnessed incredible selflessness contrasted by heartbreaking pettiness. Frustration over long months of fundraising, all of the panic and plans gone awry, human nature the crucible of stress...And I got to go on a trip that still reverberates within me, with an intoxicating brew of culture, gritty realism, and surreal delights.

In between childhood and adulthood, in that seemingly vast gap, is a space called adolescence. And somewhere amidst the past and the future is a country called Mexico. For me, they had so much in common last spring. My trip *was* adolescence. It was fleeting and unappreciated, confusing and exhilarating. Also, it is only now that it is gone that I understand it.

From the rumbling lift-off of the airplane, to the final touchdown, everything was a new sensation. We all wondered how these people could seem so welcoming and humbly content. I know that for me, the oddity of it all was that I rarely felt pity towards them, more of a sense of wonderment. I was walking out of a primitive hut in the middle of a shantytown, when I was struck by how light I felt- how I had felt more of a connection with these poor and resilient people than with anyone else I had met so far. It was a calm, unthinking space before any judgment could be passed. I almost wished that I could be wracked by guilt like some of the other travelers, and flagellate myself at the

cruelty of it all. However, I realize that these people needed much more than pity or guilt, however earnestly it was felt. There were so few pretences there: things were as they were. It would have been easy to feel guilty, and ashamed- but what if you couldn't? Is there something beyond the simple response that causes us to hang our head?

I had a conversation one steamy day, standing in the heat on a Mexican sidewalk, across from a comically bright little car and crumbling brick walls. It was with one of my teachers, and as life went on around us, we philosophized about many things: how coming here was not about staring at these people like at museum exhibits- because we felt that this would be exploitation. We pitied the students who would never come on this trip because they thought they knew about poverty- they had heard all about it. There is so much more, we lamented, shaking our heads. Life here, this trip, was so rich and so vibrant that I was afraid to close my eyes and miss any of it.

What experience on earth can compare to a time when everything you are seeing is for the first time? I was in a state of childlike wonder, when it seemed that if I only looked around, listened, and was open to it all, it would soak into my pores forever. And it never did leave me, really. I surprised both my family and myself at my attachment to Mexico. The only word I could find for this curious force that had overtaken me was "belonging". Here I was, a shy foreigner, a naïve teenager, and I never wanted to leave. I wished that I could learn how to feel like a native, instead of being teased for having the palest skin in the group. It hurt to see that so much of life here was the tourist experience- and it hurt me because I wanted to know how to go deeper- to be more than a gringo with money. Mother Teresa once said that the greatest poverty is not to go hungry but to be unloved, unwanted, uncared for. That was what I wanted to give- my attention rather than my money. Being an outsider was to be dumbfounded, horrified, and amazed, sometimes all at once.

At night, when the mariachi music still blared from the hotel down our winding, busy street, I lay down and thought of how our group of students was getting along. It was distressing to see how much inconsistency there was- how can we care about the issues of the whole world, about all of the people out there, when we bicker and gossip? And yet there were days when we all fought illness, fatigue and heat, that we saw the best in each other. We would all make it up the mountain, because we would carry each other. We all marveled at how self-consciousness and pettiness falls away when we all struggled, when water was down to the last drop and vultures circled above us ominously.

We are all the same, really- we all worry about our family, our future, and the world. As for what I learned, maybe it was this- that we will never change the world, and we will never be able to truly say that we care about all the world's people, unless we care for the ones around us. I wish I could go back, in time or place, to say that it doesn't matter. What I worried about- none of it matters, except this: that this experience will never be repeated; that this moment is the only one you have here. Later it will seem sad, and silly, these slights and this jealousy. Why all the attention to cattiness? Maybe it would be because it is easier to pay attention to squabbles than to notice how powerless you feel, how the world is unfair in so many ways, and how so many mouths go hungry. It may be cynical work, this social justice. Indeed, there is a special kind of spirit required to have ideals, and hopes, when you see so much cruelty, and poverty, and heartache.

What a difference it makes to go home, and to not have to lie in the dark afraid of corruption, hunger, and helplessness. The one thing that was asked of us, repeatedly over the trip, was to tell the stories- to be a voice for a cause. As a teenager, that voice can seem feeble, or trivial day-to-day concerns and drama can easily overshadow it. The final lesson, I think, is to allow that voice room to grow. Part of adolescence is the gift of time to explore, to question, and to change. Just like what happened when I went on a trip to Mexico.

Mark Meade, Graduate Theological Student, Louisville, Kentucky

I am an alumnus of the first group from Bellarmine University in Louisville in 2004. I don't have to make vague connections, CCIDD concretely changed my life. I visited CCIDD as a class in my studies of spirituality. Seeing the realities of the poor, studying the systems that keep them poor, and studying liberation theology and the spirituality of the people of Mexico made me an activist for change and challenged my faith. Before, I had felt like my spiritual life was stagnant and dead. This was because it was not connected with my desire for social justice. Linking the two brought dynamism to both. Now I am a member of the steering committee of the Louisville chapter of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Louisville chairperson of the Kentucky Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, and a member of the Louisville Committee for Israeli/Palestinian States. After my experience at CCIDD, poverty is not an abstract concept-- I see the faces of people crying out for justice.

Without a doubt, the CCIDD experience shaped who I am today and how I will work for change in the future. Many programs stress only service to the poor or studies in economic disparities. CCIDD is the missing link to uniting knowledge of the problems facing the 2/3's World, face-to-face contact with suppressed voices, and a way to act in a just fashion in the future.

I am currently studying Spanish and plan to volunteer at the Americana Community Center, which helps immigrant families in Louisville. Next Spring, I hope to take part in a Hearts in Motion medical mission trip to Guatemala. I have also considered Peace Corps or Catholic lay ministry in Latin America.

Debra Kriger, Kings College, University of Western Ontario, Graduate Student in Social Work, Experienced CCIDD in February, 2007

I can't begin to express how much my CCIDD experience enriched my life. The experience was one that made me aware of so many different things around me. It gave me a different perspective on things that I was already aware of, and introduced me to many things I was not. Moreover, it showed me that there exists hope and belief in being able to accomplish what needs to be accomplished. Through the experience, I met many people who are working hard against the current to make this world a better world for everyone, no matter what their background or future held. To me, this was truly amazing, breathtaking, and refreshing.

I would rank the CCIDD experience as one of the most integral experiences of my life. So much has changed with my lifestyle and my attitude upon re-entry into my home country (Canada). It has given me an experience on which to base my passion for social activism, and a new outlook on aspects of Canadian social norms. Moreover, it has

provided me with the knowledge that my voice can be heard, that one person can make a difference, and that there are many other people out there who want to participate the same way I do; this support may be the most important thing of all.

The CCIDD experience helped me to secure in myself what I wanted to do with my schooling. It humbled me in the sense that I realised that I was no different from anyone else, despite my house, despite my upbringing, and despite my schooling. There were people I met who did not have a grade 6 education, but who knew more than I ever will about social aspects integral to my program in university (Health Sciences). Social Activism and a Cosmopolitan idea of the globe have always been interests of mine, and I think this journey has, does, and will always continue to manifest itself in me in everything I do. The experience has given me the courage to do what I think is right, rather than what I think is acceptable. I imagine whatever I end up doing in the future, it will be with the lessons I have learnt on my CCIDD experience. Truly unforgettable, irreplaceable, and important. I encourage anyone who hasn't done something like this to go to CCIDD and experience it for themselves.

Elaine Knocks, Professor, Furman University, South Carolina

I first came to CCIDD with a group of seminarians from Duke (1992). I fell in love with the culture, about which I knew nothing, and returned home to do exactly what they asked of me--tell the story and take up your own story. My experience of hospitality among the poor of Cuernavaca is well-described by the hymn that we sang on the bus as we left: "When the poor one who has nothing..."

The truth is that I was book-smart and truth-lacking. CCIDD offered me that insight and started my personal quest for more truth.

I was glad to return in 2006 with my own students from Furman this time, and to watch them move from fact to wisdom in ten short days. The time we spent with you, Ray, was a highlight!

I would rank this experience of learning, at the top. For sheer joy (not the same as happiness, for we saw much that was sad), at the top. Only having a child is up there at the top with this experience!

As mentioned above, I came back, and I will come back again, bringing others--my students and colleagues in higher education--to learn more about their world. My students have formed a group here to take up the baton for justice work. They call themselves the Wind Changers. We are on the verge of creating a new Poverty Studies Program at Furman that will likely make a direct connection with CCIDD.

Jane Sprankel Director of Admissions, Graduate School of Social Work
Saint Louis University.

CCIDD enriched my life personally and professionally. I was personally challenged to see my own prejudices, the ways in which it oppresses and finally how I take my privilege as a right. Teaching this class helps me prepare future social workers to see the world as a community and

to see first hand how decisions made in one part of the world affect a community and an individual in another. It allows me to engage students in a conversation with people who are using their voice, talents, and resources as a way to empower themselves and their communities.

The experiences I have had at CCIDD I see as invitations. Not unlike Gerardo Thijssen used to say: "I invite you to leave the stands and join the team that needs you." I must admit I have not always responded to the invitations put before me but my consciousness is raised and I have a measuring stick to look at my daily choices. The CCIDD experiences remind me no matter what my day is each encounter, each decision allows me an opportunity to chose to be in "right relationship" with the world community, my local community, my family and friends and those I serve. By "right relationship" I mean a just and loving relationship.

The future and the present for me involve the following: Being more active in the political process in whatever ways I can; Making choices to better take care of the earth.

Walter Farquharson, Former National Moderator, United Church of Canada

Joan and I went to Cuernavaca and CCIDD in the fall of 1984. There is no question for me that this was a life altering experience. It is one thing to know about injustice and about systems that create and perpetrate injustice, it is quite another to meet and come to know real people who live out their lives in poverty. What was life changing, rather than simply mind changing, was the message of hope and the practice of compassion given flesh in the lives of so many of the people we met, and to experience the grace and authenticity with which they invited us into their homes, their lives, their struggles and joys.

We came home grateful to have been taught much about injustice but also about love and perseverance and ordinary day by day honoring of each other in the journey of faithfulness-seeking. The concept of reverse mission has many applications and I believe has reformed my work as a teacher, pastor, member of family and community.

We were stimulated intellectually. We met with prophets. We walked with disciples. We anguished and celebrated with sisters and brothers. We were challenged to live out of a different perspective of the world and the gospel. Many of the people we met in villages and settlements and many who lectured us and led us in times of reflection remain, twenty-three years later, very much part of our regular conversation, our imagining and our times of creativity. We will always be grateful to Ray and to those to whom he introduced us.

TESTIMONIES OF MULTI-TIME GROUP LEADERS

CAL O'BRIEN, VICE- PRINCIPAL, CATHOLIC CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

Catholic Central High School in Lethbridge, Alberta and I have been coming to CCIDD for the past 17 yrs. It has enriched me and hundreds of students during this time. Because of this program, 8 participants have volunteered in different parts of the world working for peace and justice with the forgotten poor. This program has laid a foundation for us all, in recognizing our responsibility to the marginalized and many of us have labored in their support. This program has had the greatest influence on my life

personally and I feel blessed to have been a part of spreading the Good News through CCIDD's programs and their dedicated staff.

DAVID SZOLLOSY, ONTARIO E. CATHOLIC TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

In 2001, Monica Godin and Dave Szollosy initiated bringing groups from the Toronto area to CCIDD as part of the program for granting Ontario teachers an additional qualification in Religious Education through the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association. Although the first year met a very good response from teachers, the next year almost saw the end of the project. It is believed that the events in New York of September 2001 discouraged many people from wanting to fly.

Yet the program persevered as Dave returned to CCIDD with 6 participants. Since then the program has grown, adding Kevin Welbes-Godin and Fernanda Ferrara to the facilitation team and involving participants from all over Ontario.

We keep coming back because of the effect the CCIDD program has on our teachers. Almost every one reports that the experience has 'changed their life'. Almost every participant has become involved in some area of social action or social change since their return. One is involved in the political action committee, another works with migrant Mexican farm workers in Ontario, others are involved in the union. But all realize that they have a daily opportunity to affect long term change - in their classrooms.

JUDY BRAHAM, LUTHERAN CONTEMPLATIVE ACTIVIST, WISCONSIN

Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light for my path. Psalm 119:105

Since first coming to CCIDD in January of 1988, I feel as though I have never left. CCIDD not only challenges, but helps one define one's faith in Jesus, by attempting to walk in His footsteps. The dirt of the floors of the homes of the poor has never been washed from the soles of my feet, even in the cold winter months here, north of the river.

The causes of social injustice have always been a focus of mine. It hurts me to see others suffer, and to know that my actions increase the suffering of others is nearly unbearable. So, with a certain amount of fear and apprehension, I repeatedly went to, and took others with me, to CCIDD to visit with and listen to the poor. No amount of preparation could have shielded us from this heart-rending meeting with Jesus, to touch, to become captive to the life that is, not the life we make for ourselves. The chasm between Jesus and us is so sinfully and awfully wide. Ray, our ever present guide, Vermont born, globally intelligent lay missionary, wisely let us listen with our souls; souls giving ear to what has never before been understood.

My husband, Bill, says this: For me, the most remarkable thing about Judy's CCIDD experience is that it changed the way she sees things. It's not just that she learned new explanations for certain realities (though she did that, too). It's not that she saw some things one way before CCIDD and now sees them in a different way (though this is also part of her experience). Rather, life never stops being new. Every day she sees

everything with new eyes. This is not an easy thing for her - not only are her friends and family constantly surprised by her insights, but she herself never knows what the day might bring. This is not an easy thing, but I think it is a good thing. As Jesus says, Behold, I make all things new. Revelation 21:5

It is difficult to say what motivates me now. To continue to walk with Jesus, yes, but what is the focus, what is the project, what is the means? To give thanks in everything, not because of the gifts I think I might have received, the insights I might have stumbled across, the tasks my hands complete, no not because of these. To give thanks in everything to God because then my eyes and heart are on God and by doing so I commit myself only to God. Hence, it is not the gifts but the giver to whom I look.

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. Luke 1:78-79

GLORIA COPE, ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

My name is Gloria Cope, widow of the late Rev. Ralph Cope, an Anglican priest who 'passed over' to God's realm on August 7th of last year,(2006). Ralph was a very active co-leader with me for two trips to CCIDD, 1992 and 1994. An earlier trip in 1991, lead by Judith Carder and Andrew Hewlett of the Anglican Diocese of British Columbia brought us to our first 'Third World' exposure tour where we were to see how the other two-thirds of humanity live. The experience at CCIDD changed our lives forever. Ralph's ministry became totally liberated and our church grew along with our outreach. I helped lead a later trip to CCIDD in 1996 as co-leader with two other activists from Vancouver Island, Norma Emerson and John Mayba. Together we lead a group of young people whose lives were all changed by the experience.

We continued to take groups to CCIDD because Ralph and I both knew if we were ever to bring awareness and commitment to our fledgling outreach team at our home church, we had to expose them to the realities of the developing so called 'Third World'. Too, we felt that our somewhat apathetic society in Canada, that only through the kind of education that CCIDD offered, would we ever be in a position to begin to change the world not only in the 'Third World' but in our own world as well. It was pointed out by Ray and others that '*we from the North*' had a Christian moral and ethical obligation to work against the oppressive structures allowed to continue to exist in our society. The biblical message most promising was to realize that "Liberation Theology" was a way to approach our mission. The messages that come from a liberating theology, (throw feminist in there too) successfully brought fourth the Christ-like passion needed for our work.

The following is an example of just one experience I was able to act on as soon as I returned home. It is important to note that for Ralph and I at that time, now living on Vancouver Island, (retired from my job in Ontario as Ralph was from his military chaplaincy position at the military base in Kingston), we both were anxiously waiting to see where God was leading us. As well, up until that time, First Nations people in Canada had been invisible to me. I knew 'they' were there but really didn't see 'them'.

Aracela was the name of the young mother of five small children who... in the middle of our group's many questions turned to me and asked, "Where is Canada?" After explaining to her where Canada was as well as I could, she responded quickly with another question. "Do they have Indigenous people there?" she asked. I told her yes, wondering where her questions were leading us. And then she hit me with a question that was to have a life-changing affect on my personal life journey. Aracela, an indigenous Mexican woman, who carried upon her small shoulders the full weight of what life was for her and her family as one of the poorest of the poor, asked me, what life was like for indigenous people in Canada. At that very moment, First Nation's people in Canada became visible to me and I knew that in Canada too, they were the poorest of the poor. On my return to Canada after that particular trip I became very involved with learning about First Nations people and have been walking and working along side them ever since.

We all carry sacred moments in our lives.... I call them 'little epiphanies. My time spent with Aracela was one of them. The moment is still with me as if it is frozen in time. We are standing in front of Aracela's home. A home to her, a shanty to me.... but it was there that I was taught a huge lesson and challenge from the poorest of the poor in Cuernavaca, Mexico under the leadership of Raymond Plankey and his team.

JANICE BROWN, CATHOLIC LAY LEADER, PROFESSOR AT LOYALIST COLLEGE, BELLEVILLE, ONTARIO

Congratulations to all of those at CCIDD, past and present, whose dedication has brought the program to its 30th anniversary!

I cannot offer any reflection on the impact of the CCIDD program, without paying homage to the organization that first brought me to CCIDD. A few people from my area participated in the CCIDD program in the early 80s. They were so moved by the power of their experience, they formed 'C' Links (Christians Learning New Knowledge for Service). The purpose of this group was to organize new groups to go through similar learning encounters, and to provide emotional and spiritual support prior to and following people's experiences. I am very grateful to have been one of those participants.

While considering how my CCIDD experience(s) have impacted my life and my life decisions, I find it difficult to focus. The CCIDD encounter has been such an integral part of my life and has influenced so many aspects of my journey that I would find it impossible to identify each choice that I have made as a result of my CCIDD experience.

Following my first participation in the CCIDD program, I was inspired to help (with 'C' Links) to organize other groups and return as a group leader several times. In 1991, my husband and I pulled our three children out of school and lived at CCIDD for two months while I gathered information through interviews and CCIDD program materials. The purpose of this task was to (re)write The Leaven Program, a series of workshops to support adults to 'see, reflect and act, individually and with others' for social change. I have worked on peace and justice issues for the past 25 years. In my efforts to participate meaningfully with others to make this world a more just and humane place, I have studied, reflected and participated in a wide variety of programs, campaigns,

events and actions. Without a doubt, the most hopeful and encouraging experience for me personally has been to walk with others who have entered into the CCIDD program, and to witness their efforts and successes in searching out effective and relevant ways to work toward positive change when they returned home.

Some of those commitments by past CCIDD participants include:

- One woman became deeply involved in education and action regarding fair trade coffee and other products. During the past twenty years, she has promoted fair trade products within many schools and church circles, and assisted individuals and groups to become self sufficient in working for fair trade. Along the way, she has personally ordered, packed and delivered many hundreds of pounds of fair trade products in Ontario during the past 20 years
- Two sisters became involved in Sleeping Children around the World, following their CCIDD experience. They have personally traveled with SCAW to purchase and deliver hundreds of bed kits to children on three continents. They have also been responsible for the construction of a school in Chiapas, Mexico, dedicated to the memory of their parents. The construction of this school was done through The Arthur Frederick Community Builders
- During the first half of the 20th century the Canadian Government coerced and forced First Nations children to live in, and attend residential schools, with and without their parents' consent. Many emotional and physical abuses were perpetrated against these children over a period of many years. One woman has dedicated herself to raising awareness and more than \$20,000.00 for the 'Healing Fund', an initiative of The United Church of Canada, toward a process of reconciliation with Native Peoples who were wounded by the experience of the residential schools
- One woman developed 'The Just Fashion' show, which has been utilized by many elementary and secondary schools. This package outlines how to organize and perform an alternative 'fashion show' to educate students about the unjust conditions in the global garment industry. The package includes a list of solidarity organizations to support students' efforts to become involved in action for positive change in the garment industry
- One woman has involved herself in justice work at every level within the Anglican Church of Canada, including international participation in the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund over a period of many years
- Several teachers initiated curriculum writing projects within the Catholic School system. These projects are intended to bring students to a deeper understanding of being fully engaged as Christians within the context of justice issues around the globe
- The 'Tlama Clean Water Project' was formed in 2001 and has since educated many hundreds of area residents about the health problems of Tlamacazapa, Mexico resulting from contaminated water. The group has also raised over \$60,000.00 for the work of Caminamos Juntos, a community development program working in 'Tlama'. The 'Tlama Clean Water Project' was initiated by a small group of past CCIDD participants
- Others have become involved in local, national and international organizations, such as Kairos, The Maquila Solidarity Network, church groups and community organizations, in order to live out their various commitments, initiated or deepened during their CCIDD experience

I am very grateful for each face and voice that I have had the privilege of encountering along the way of my personal journey. CCIDD is responsible for some of the most impacting moments of my life. I wish you all the best in continuing this vital work.

MARY WRIGHT, NATIONAL JUST FAITH MOVEMENT, LOUISVILLE, KY

For six years, while with the Human Rights Office in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, I brought parishioners, pastors, university students and a few fourteen year olds from the greater St. Louis area to the CCIDD program. I kept taking people to CCIDD simply because I was transformed by the experience and wanted others to have this same powerful experience. I kept taking people to CCIDD because I wanted to share with them all that I was learning from the poor of Mexico and Latin America. I wanted others to join me in knowing the people, especially the poor, on the other side of our southern border, not just the statistics about them. I wanted others to have the opportunity to engage the wisdom, the joy and the pain of those who were living desperate lives of poverty and war.

All of us who participated in the CCIDD program through the Human Rights Office in St. Louis were profoundly affected by their experiences and time at CCIDD. We all left CCIDD with stereotypes shattered. We all left evangelized by the people and our experience. We returned to our comfortable lives, less comfortable, less content and less able to offer easy answers and broad generalizations about our neighbors south of the border. We came back ready to speak up and out and to engage in dialogue with others in our parish and community circles. One of our participants was a professor from St. Louis University (SLU), and as a result of his experience at CCIDD, we created a new class for the masters program in the School of Social Work. All students who take this class participate in the two week CCIDD immersion.

CCIDD changed our lives, our views and our ways of acting. CCIDD taught us to look not just at the poverty we saw but also to look for the richness of people. CCIDD inspired us to continue to engage “action on behalf of justice” --- and to do so for the long haul.

COLIN WHITEBREAD, TEACHER, POPE JOHN PAUL II H.S. TORONTO

As a teacher who has participated in six trips to CCIDD since 2000, I would like to congratulate all the people who have made this special program in Cuernavaca, Mexico possible, on this their 30th anniversary. My co-workers Joe Modeste and Mary Lou Halferty designed many programs at our high school in Scarborough, Canada that enabled our students to experience firsthand the challenges of social justice. Our goals were always to accept the gospel’s call to live a more just lifestyle in as concrete way as possible. Classroom learning was always more meaningful when we actually visited and helped out at a variety of agencies. We were excited when we learned that there existed a program in Mexico where students and teachers could experience, analyse, and celebrate the life of Mexicans and their efforts to make their world a more just place. We had never fully lived the process of “reverse mission” which is such a key philosophical principle that guides the heart and soul of CCIDD’s vision. All of us had

our own ideas of how to bring about justice more fully. Ten days in Cuernavaca taught us that we truly needed to listen to your side of the story.

Our inaugural visit included eight teenage girls and three teachers. We were quite apprehensive and naïve about this venture. Many prejudices and stereotypes filled our imaginations. It wasn't long before we realized that this was about to be a life-changing and hope-filled journey. Aside from the initial sensory feast that Cuernavaca offers, the people and challenging program at CCIDD was beyond our wildest dreams. We walked, traveled in their vans, visited places few tourists would discover, and listened to the stories of courageous people who were trying to make a difference. We participated in simulation games, shared our questions and reflections, swam in the pool, celebrated an indigenous ritual in their sacred mountains, enjoyed the teasing of Hector the Protector, and cried tears of deep emotion as we wrapped up the memories of our ten days in our closing liturgy. Did we change Mexico? Highly unlikely, but we left prepared to ask new questions and challenge our lifestyle back home in Canada.

About seventy students from Pope John Paul II experienced the magic of CCIDD. Not one regretted the preparation or effort required to fully learn from the trip. Although there were great similarities in the philosophy of the program, each trip was unique because CCIDD always found new and vibrant people to lead the programs. I went six times and learned so much each time. On July 20, 2006 we had a reunion of about half of our members. It was so powerful to hear how the CCIDD experience influenced their lives and future life choices.

I could write volumes about our trips, but would like to conclude by acknowledging the vision of Ray Plankey whose whole life made the concept of reverse mission a living reality. This life-giving program could not exist without growing pains and moments of suffering. The Spirit works through real flesh and blood. Despite their difficulties over the years, the team of CCIDD has been committed to a truth that is greater than the sum of all its parts. This is why CCIDD has made a difference in so many lives North and South. I tip my hat to Ray and all the great people who have worked there the past 30 years! Bravo!

REV JOSEPH GOSSELIN, LA SALLETTE MISSIONARY AND PASTOR

In past years, some three times I have brought groups to experience the CCIDD program. The purpose of doing so was to give others exposure to the realities of the developing world, both positive and negative ones. . As a young priest, I was blessed with the opportunity to work in the Philippines for some three years. It had a profound impact on my life. I was hoping that those who would experience CCIDD would be likewise moved and changed. I was not disappointed. Without exception all who made the CCIDD experience were moved by the harsh plight of so many of our poorer brothers and sisters and yet returned with a deep appreciation of the richness of their culture, the beauty of their faith, the strength of their family ties, the profound sense of solidarity and the commitment to the common good. Their precious values touched us and taught us. Our CCIDD experience was profound and life-changing. Please accept my thanks to you and your many collaborators who made possible these life-changing experiences.

DONALD MACMILLAN S.J. JESUIT CHAPLAIN, BOSTON COLLEGE

I have taken groups to CCIDD for eleven years with another one added this August. I keep organizing groups for CCIDD because of the life-changing and life-challenging realities of the poor that impact the students. The political reality changes the way we think of Mexico and the United States. Every agreement between the two countries seems to favor the United States and Mexico becomes a pawn in some power game. We also get the impression that certain people in Mexico like it that way. However, the poor continually suffer with no visible signs of a better life for them. I have been eleven times and hardly see a change in the social structures of the people with whom we visit. If anything, it all seems worse. We know we are not there to fix things: that smacks of colonialism and a band-aid mentality. But we can fix our own lives and the way we process ideas and think. Justice becomes a way of life not just a topic for discussion. We can work for change at home and how our actions at home affect others.

The groups have constantly talked about the prayer life of the poor. They see their struggles and can't figure out why they are happy and not rebellious. Some of those we visit have strong ties to the church especially through the Christian based communities. The BC students are always impressed by these meetings. They have discovered that prayer and spiritual conversations can be about God and the relationship with God but also can be about how they live together in ways that Jesus teaches in the Scriptures. One memorable visit with a CBC community was the presentation on the genetically-engineered corn sold to Mexico by the United States. The people prayed to God for support as they decided to stand up and voice their fears at the deception visited upon them by Mexican authorities who were in alliance with United States companies. They spoke about the farmers being driven out of work because the imported corn was cheaper than what they could grow and sell at market.

As the meeting continued we were impressed about their calm approach and prayerful attitude throughout the presentation. Some of us felt that if a similar situation arose at home, we would have been screaming and shouting about the injustice. I suggested that we should do that at home. We should bring to the attention to the common people of the United States what the big companies and global market are doing to "developing" nations. Some of the students did research when they returned but then, finishing college and moving on kept interfering. Some have continued to raise awareness in their neighborhoods, families and work-places. It takes small groups to eventually cause big changes.

Some of the students have stayed in touch with Boston College after graduation. They let me know that the CCIDD experiences still help them manage their choices. The recent immigration issues certainly remind us of the Mexicans and others who are trying to get into the United States in order to help those at home and improve their own lives. Many of the BC students attend the SOA protest in the fall and pay particular attention to the issues of Chiapas.

Obviously I think the opportunities at CCIDD are rewarding and beneficial. I would not have kept coming for eleven, now twelve years, if I thought otherwise. I am grateful to CCIDD, Ray Plankey, the countless volunteers and directors, the Mexican staff and the hosts at Tlamacazapa, Los Patios de La Estacion, Cuentepec, Amatlan and Tepotzlan. I am grateful to the many speakers and facilitators who have helped us on our search and journey. People like Ray Plankey, Gloria Cruz, Ross Gandy, Fr. Brendan, Gerardo

Thijssen, Ofelia Laureano, the Sisters at La Estacion school, Kim Erno, Michelle Ortiz, Lisanne Morgan, Nacho, Delle McCormick, Sr. Kathy, the children at the various orphanages, the United Artisans, and last but should be first, Isidro of Tlamacazapa, plus many others whom I am forgetting. And thanks to the Mexican staff: Hector, Jorge, Bernadina, Rogelio, Manuel. Maru, Herlinda and those no longer working at CCIDD, especially Amelia and Yolanda who have died. All have contributed a great deal to the learning experiences of the BC students and staff.

**REV. HOWARD FRIEND & BETSY FRIEND, PARISH EMPOWERMENT
NETWORK, WELLSRING/KARITAS FOUNDATION, BERWYN, PA**

What a privilege to “say a word or two” about CCIDD! CCIDD is so much more than simply a place or an address, and you, Ray and Gaby, are so much more than just founders and/or directors. As a favorite Old Testament verse states it, “the soul of David was knit to the soul of Jonathan.” I think there’s more than a touch of “soul knitting” between us.

Remember that odd start? Thinking I was dialing the sisters’ number, I got a man’s voice, yours. “This obviously is not a sister” I blurted out, which you confirmed. But the reason for my call, as it turned out, was better directed to you anyway – looking for an opportunity to plan a mission trip. You invited us right over, and promptly designed a two and a half day mini-mission trip for Betsy, Howard and Erik. This was 1985.

The pump was primed! We haven’t keep count, so we can only guess that we brought eight or nine groups, surely totaling more than one hundred participants in all, the majority sponsored by Gladwyne Church. We had our “wrinkles” from the typical CCIDD program – home stays, community work sites, morning prayer in the garden for instance.

How can we even try to name the gifts that flowed to us through you and CCIDD? The impact on individual, thus family, thus congregational, thus community lives. Reinhold Niebuhr, a theological giant of a generation past, said that we set and seek to achieve only *penultimate* goals . . . the *ultimate* goals belong to God. The Bible says that we are to plant and tend and water and prune . . . but that the *harvest* belongs to God. St. Paul says that we are to love, seeking to be called in alignment with God’s purposes, but it is *God* who “works it all together for good.”

As a momentary break from writing, leaning back and closing our eyes, we see a parade of many of those one hundred plus faces pass by in our mind’s eyes – huddled together in a squatter’s home in La Estacion; hanging on every word of Gerardo Thijssen; sitting in a biblical reflection group on the lawn by Casa Grande; tears flowing down every cheek, as Moises and Gloria told their story; eyes taut with disbelief and pain watching one of the compelling CCIDD videos – just to name a very few or so many scenes. We watched minds changed and hearts broken open; old, familiar and closely held ideas yielding, however reluctantly, to an in-breaking of new ideas; lives more than just rattled by information that stirred and challenged, but turned upside down.

But even more important, we were privileged to see lives shift direction, priorities change, the challenge of the trip experience kept fresh by people who were, truly, “new persons in Christ” when they returned home. As one participant said it, “I had thought the air ticket *down* was to do mission. I came to realize it was the air ticket *home* that took me to the real mission field!” We could chronicle a dozen such lives right off the bat, and add many more as the remembering expanded. One most meaningful and most touching to me you know well, Comunidad’s board president elect, my son Eric!

People with “Plankey prints” all over them!

But we return to my biblical musings of a paragraph or two ago. Even as folks like us name, with joy and delight, the *visible* evidence of the mission of CCIDD and the ministry of Ray and Gaby – and our heartfelt affirmation, appreciation and love – the deeper joy is in the invisible, entrusting it all to God’s creative weaving of that larger tapestry we will never view in full.

Wasn’t it St. Francis who said, “Preach often . . . use words if necessary!” So, we have offered a page or so of words, but it is in the silence – where the deepest, though inevitably unspoken, unspeakable words reside – that we hold the truest spirit of celebration.

ERIK FRIEND, HOWARD’S SON, COMUNIDAD A. C. PRESIDENT

I never had attended a CCIDD program but many friends and family had done so. I was a student at the Center for Global Education in Cuernavaca for the spring semester of 1988 and wanted to stay in Mexico. I approached Ray and he accepted me as a volunteer. I think those first months, I did little more than drive and run errands. But I was addicted to Cuernavaca and would be back very soon. In 1990 I returned to Cuernavaca and CCIDD to start a business with the plan to create worker/owner cooperatives. CCIDD again opened its doors in exchange for mechanical repair on the vehicles. Though I had no direct relationship to the center’s programming, I know that my presence and contact with the people and events of CCIDD influenced my own work and my project was continually enriched. Years later, in 2001, I served on the board for a year in an attempt to give back some of that wealth I had received. It has been a blessing to be part of CCIDD’s history, to have accompanied so many dedicated and wonderful people over the years, and to feel part of the CCIDD family together with the Mexican staff. Today I continue to work with CCIDD through my participation in the Lutheran immersion programs based out of Mexico City. It is beautiful to see CCIDD moving ahead in such a positive way, with a new energy for changing times. There can be no doubts about CCIDD’s impact on my life.

TESTIMONIES – FORMER STAFF

ANNE CORDON, PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTOR, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

I came to CCIDD in the fall of 1984, a short time after completing my graduate studies in Public Health. Although not particularly focused on health issues, CCIDD deepened my knowledge and understanding of how poverty, politics and religion impact the lives of many in the Americas. As a new wife, the work at CCIDD brought my husband and I together as we worked interpreting the stories of Guatemalan and El Salvadoran refugees living in Mexico. I also become a parent at CCIDD, and far away from my family, the CCIDD staff embraced us as their own. I am forever committed to learning to be a more compassionate, open-minded and spiritual citizen of the world after my CCIDD experience.

During my time at CCIDD, I, along with others, was moved to tears by the struggles and joys of the individuals we interviewed and families we visited. Numerous people in the several dozens of groups that I had contact with at CCIDD spoke of the impact CCIDD had on them and how they were inspired to be better people. I do believe that

CCIDD fulfills an important role in bringing people together and “putting a face on poverty and the Third World.”

I feel that working, living, and helping visiting groups at CCIDD and getting to know the people, families, the sights and sounds of Mexico were invaluable experiences. I rejoice in CCIDD’s 30th anniversary and hope that many, many more people pass through its doorways to experience a renewed solidarity with others in the world.

JORGE CORDON, ARCHITECT

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Based upon my working experience in the high lands of Guatemala and soon after my work in CCIDD, I was able to begin building a vision of my future work. My commitment with society is permanent and, at this time, I am working with poor families in the neighborhood of Escudero in the city of Tecate, Mexico near the U.S. border. The principal goal of the project is to provide dignified housing for these families, which is a basic right we should all be able to enjoy. Based on my experience at CCIDD, I have envisioned and executed this effort where groups of youth from the United States work together with members of the local community to build homes. This year we are celebrating the 10th anniversary in this effort and, with God’s help, we hope to continue long into the future. Thanks to CCIDD for inspiring our program: the TECATE BUILDING COMMUNITY. Congratulations CCIDD on your 30th year.

SUZN MORGAN, CALGARY, ALBERTA

HERE I AM LORD

In 1992, I arrived on CCIDD’s doorstep after taking leave from my job at the World Citizen’s Centre, an international development education center, in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. At age 39, this was the first time in my life that I was free from obligations and ties and could pursue my own desires. I came to Mexico on a leap of faith and a one-way ticket. I wanted to see to what my soul was calling me. I had never before traveled beyond my own country. I didn’t speak one word of Spanish. I came for a 2-week peace & justice education program and stayed 2 years.

Right from the beginning I was drawn to CCIDD and the way opened up before me to stay on in Cuernavaca, initially to study Spanish and eventually to become a member of the CCIDD staff. It was a steep learning curve! Through the following years, I came to have a profound appreciation for the CCIDD program. I was honored to work in the areas of Hospitality and occasionally as program co-leader. I felt blessed to live in community with the ex-pat and Mexican staff and with the leaders and participants in the programs. It gave me a whole new appreciation for what being a Christian could mean. It transformed my view of who Christians were (or could be).

I returned for my second stint at CCIDD in 1995 after living and working in Guatemala for two years. This time I worked primarily in the area of Hospitality Services. With each year, I grew in knowledge and respect for the work of CCIDD and for its founder and director Ray Plankey (Raymundo). During this 2-year period and with my increased fluency in Spanish, I had more in-depth relationships and friendships with Mexican people from many backgrounds and with Central American refugees living in the area. Because of my work at CCIDD, I also had countless opportunities to meet with so many people striving to make change in the world. These interactions significantly deepened

my understanding of the very personal impact of social injustice and of the varied ways people were confronting it.

Throughout its years CCIDD has always been a local and international support for other like-minded groups. In 1996, the Christian Foundation for Children and Aging, out of Kansas City, a child sponsorship agency working in Mexico and Central America, approached Ray. They wanted to explore the possibility of partnering with local agencies to set up child sponsorship programs in poor communities in the Cuernavaca area. CCIDD agreed to support their work, assist them with local contacts and to lend a hand with setting up the initial phase.

During this interaction, it was decided that CCIDD would create its own sub-project under the CFCA umbrella to assist the many impoverished families that CCIDD had contact with. It was a way to help meet pressing needs for food, health care and education. I and my friend and coworker Diana Farquharson, the staff nurse, were seconded, to our immense joy, to head up 'sub-project CID'. I spent the next 9 months doing some of the most rewarding work of my life. I returned to Canada in 1997.

In 2002, five years after returning to Canada, I felt the pull to return to CCIDD yet again. I called up Ray and asked if I might come to CCIDD for 6 months if I could help out. And that is how I found myself back at CCIDD and being asked to do the one thing I particularly didn't want to do. I was asked to be the primary caregiver for a dying Mexican woman. I struggled with this placement but eventually discovered the blessing hidden within that work. I wrote a short article about this experience that you can read in Ray's soon to be published autobiography.

My years in Cuernavaca were very rewarding and I have found that my life has continued to be influenced by my CCIDD experiences into the present. In Canada, in the four years preceding my third CCIDD sojourn and in the four years after it, I went to school part time at Alberta Bible College, in Calgary, Alberta, earning my BA in 2007 with a double major in Counseling and Ministry. I know that this too is fruit of my years at CCIDD and although I don't know where this new path will lead me, I have no doubt but that it is in God's hands. I rest confident in the Biblical promise as written by Paul to the Philippians that "*he who had begun a good work in you will carry it on to the completion.*" (Phil 1:6 NIV).

MICHAEL HOYT, SOCIAL WORKER, EDMONTON, ALBERTA

My CCIDD experience as a program director in 2003 enriched my life in varied and unsuspected ways. An example was a debate around the breakfast table among our CCIDD staff about what movie to take Raymond's godchildren who were visiting the city for the first time. They lived in a poor isolated mountain village in the state of Guerro. The young charges were being introduced to many things that day that we take for granted. Some of us thought an animated cartoon would confuse them. Others thought a children's story about a boy magician would frighten them. Raymond listened before voicing his thought that the movie would not be that hard to explain. He was concerned about how to explain the heaps of fresh food and other goods at the supermarket where he planned to visit afterwards. These children were familiar with meals consisting of rice, beans and tortillas, sometimes with only one food or another appearing at each meal. It was this profound but practical discussion about the most

fundamental issues, like the unequal distribution of fresh and plentiful food in the world, and what can we do about it that helped me to mature. Working through an understanding of right relations through “see judge act” and the faith that communion can come about any time we open our hearts to others are my gifts from CCIDD.

My experience of CCIDD continues to question me about the right way to live. I have no doubt, none, that where I choose to go and what I choose to do will always be informed by my CCIDD experience.

My wife and I helped in the formation of a group that went to El Salvador in 2005 to commemorate the life of Archbishop Oscar Romero who practiced being the voice of the voiceless during a time of horrible oppression in that country. I have worked on the executive board of Change for Children Association, a Canadian NGO that builds partnerships to promote sustainable development projects in the south and educates Canadians about social justice issues. I’ve learned to ask better questions of myself and those close to me about how we ought to live our lives.

DELMY GARCIA-HOYT, SOCIAL WORKER, EDMONTON, ALBERTA

“I have to listen to what the Spirit says through the people and, then, yes, receive this message from the people and analyze it and together with the people build the church”. Archbishop Arnulfo Romero, September 30, 1979

I worked at CCIDD on staff in 2003. At a personal level living at CCIDD and living in community with all the Mexican staff assisted me to become more in touch with myself, my culture, and my language—all things that I had grown distant from since I left El Salvador abruptly 20 years ago. But most of all it assisted me to begin a personal healing, not only by sharing my own personal story with the groups that came through CCIDD, but by listening and learning from all the beautiful people that I had the opportunity to meet in all the different communities. It took me back to my upbringing in the base Christian communities in El Salvador. It also enriched my marriage as I had a dream to work in an experience like CCIDD with my partner.

“Memory makes us comprehend the present and project us to the future.” This is what Padre Pedro Declerq wrote me in one of his books when we visited him in El Salvador while we were at CCIDD in September 2003.

A challenge I gave to myself while at CCIDD was to talk about my experience to others, rather than just remembering quietly every anniversary or memory in solitude for my dear brothers and sisters who worked and died in painful agony while they were tortured and gave their lives, while they were riddled with bullets during the civil war in El Salvador. CCIDD gave a safe space to look back, began my healing and move forward with more strengths.

Another highlight was with all the communities that we visited, where we met real people, that talked, reflected that they were insecure, that worked hard and suffered the inequalities of the present society. But at the same time we saw the other truth of the poor; we saw their creativity and solidarity, their commitment and heroism, their faith and hopes, their commitment and charity. We saw what they gave and continue to give the best of themselves to others.

“I will not cease being the voice of the voiceless as long as there are people who are oppressed, who are marginalized from participation in the creation and the benefits of the development of the country”. Bishop Romero, May 20, 1979.

I have remained an activist in my own community, supporting new community programs with the Hispanic communities and have continued as an active member with Change for Children Association for the past 20 years. I have continued to raise uncomfortable issues with groups, and to challenge and take position on difficult issues.

I know that one my tasks here on earth is to *“plant seeds that one day will grow”*, that I foster *“seeds that have already been planted, and that one day will develop.* I am aware that I *“might never see the end results,* I am only a *“worker, not a master builder, minister, not messiah.* I know that we are *“prophets of a future not our own”.* Bishop Romero.

I know with certainty that I have to continue to honor and keep the memory alive of those who have been killed in the name of justice.

PAUL PORTLAND, FORMER CCIDD DIRECTOR, PRESENTLY GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE SAVIOR IN ROME

During my brief time of ministering at CCIDD, I had the opportunity to attend a family reunion of my four brothers, their wives, and me. In the family room of my brother's house in Washington, D.C., the men were talking about what they had made in the stock market and how they could have done better (they should have bought Google early on). In the kitchen, the four wives were talking about where they could buy things for the least money.

That struck me as a paradigm for our consumer society: buy for the least possible while earning the most possible. My brothers are not bad people. They are very involved in their parishes and volunteer. They give to charity. They started with nothing and earned everything they have. But like most of us in the richer countries they don't have the experience to connect the dots: that big profits in the stock market might come at the expense of debt in developing countries; that cheap food, clothing, and other products often come at the expense of poor, exploited workers in underdeveloped countries.

The mission of CCIDD, helping people make these connections, is vital in our world today, from a faith perspective to make our religious belief and practice credible; from a human perspective to make our world more just and stable. I am proud to have been a part of the CCIDD experience and to continue supporting it with my prayers.

DELLE MCCORMICK, FORMER CCIDD DIRECTOR, PRESENT BORDER LINKS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WORDS TAKEN FROM HER OCTOBER, 2005 INSTALLATION CERMONY AT BORDERLINKS

In 1989, I was living in an expensive high rise on the Upper West Side in New York. My daughter went to the best private schools. My husband was a financial consultant with a big NY firm and I was working as a professional actress (which means I auditioned a lot). I found this great Quaker Buddhist Presbyterian church (I thought they were all like that at the time!) and heard they were going to an interfaith retreat center called the Cuernavaca Center for Intercultural Dialog on Development (CCIDD) in Cuernavaca, Mexico for a "reverse-mission, cross-cultural immersion program. I had no idea what that meant except that we were supposed to encounter God through the people-made-poor of Mexico. I had never been anywhere with Bible carrying Christians before and, although that was a little scary, I decided to go along. Like so many who

have participated in Border Links programs, I was changed forever through that experience. I saw a model of church as an agent for positive social change and the Bible as relevant to people's lives. I came to realize that the model of rugged individualism, which I had internalized, was much less effective and gratifying, than working for change in and through community. I discovered to my horror, that as a US citizen, a "tourist", and Christian, I actually was complicit in the suffering of the people I met. And paradoxically, I found the more my heart broke open to the suffering of the people, the more capable I was of feeling love and joy.

I remember so clearly standing on the back of a flat bed truck that had taken us into a squatter's community. I was filthy and furious and sad and exhausted and I said, "I feel so alive!" My minister at the time said, "Pay attention to that. That means God is up to something." And I did

I returned to the US and quit working as an actress and sold produce for two years. I wanted to learn something about power, my own, not power given to me by the dominant culture. I went back to school and began to simplify my life. I attended my first protests. My daughter suspected I might be involved in a cult, I was so happy! She was relieved to learn it was only a Presbyterian Church!

Eventually, I discerned a call to seminary. I remember selling all my stuff at a huge yard sale, in which I made \$7,000 so I could go to school. My friend who was helping me could not for the life of her get it, why I would sell my jewelry and fur coat! I don't want to sound like I am bragging or to imply that these changes came easily. They didn't. If I had known then that I would end up selling everything and going to live in Mexico, I probably would have had a stroke. But my story shows that one step at a time, we can turn our lives around.

While I was in school, I kept going back to Mexico. I couldn't figure out what this gringita who spoke not a word of Spanish was doing there, but I kept following that yes I had felt in the beginning. I hooked up with a women's craft cooperative and sold their stuff at my church. Half way through seminary I got a grant to study Spanish for five weeks. I went and stayed for a year and a half. I knew I needed to be able to say more than "Donde está el baño?!" Much to the dismay of my seminary professors, I insisted on staying until I knew what God was up to. During that year and a half I made my way back to CCIDD, the center where I had first gone with my church, and became their spiritual director and trip leader. All this made me even more uppity and when I returned to seminary I would never again be able to imagine ministry divorced from solidarity with people-made-poor.

When I did graduate, I was ordained to serve as pastor and director of CCIDD in Cuernavaca. CCIDD was an 80 bed interfaith retreat center, with a multi-national staff. Program participants came in equal parts from the US and Canada, faith communities, school and universities, and non profit organizations. Two studies we did at CCIDD gave significant information about the people who came on programs: Over half were taking antidepressants (perhaps they came to CCIDD as a last ditch effort to make meaning out of their lives) and 94% of those who passed through our doors reported a dramatic change in their world view. A study two years later showed a very high percentage had changed their lives as a result and reported feeling greater satisfaction and joy in their life work. This is the same work we are engaged in at BorderLinks and I

would guess that if studies have been done here, they would show similar results. Programs like this matter. They seed hope in individuals and communities by creating bridges across difference, creating new understanding and appreciation of diversity, and even stronger bridges of solidarity.

After five years as a stipended volunteer at CCIDD, I began to get stirrings that it was time to move on. I dedicated one full weekend to meditation and fasting. I told God I was ready to let go, all she had to do was show me where and how. Nothing spectacular came to me, so I broke my fast and went on about my evening. I know, it doesn't usually work to expect God to adhere to our time lines, but I had reached that level of desperation and readiness, so I thought God might take notice. That evening as I sat down to supper, the phone rang and it was a friend who was in Chiapas, who said the UCC/Disciples missionary with the Catholic Diocese of SC was leaving and she thought I should apply.

I had dreamed of some day going to the mountains and working with some radical nuns, but I wasn't too keen on going to a war zone. But as time went on, it became clear to me that this was my next calling and I accepted the position. I would say that Chiapas was the experience that has most informed my sense of ministry, of God, and community. I was invited to serve as a pastoral agent - a female, Protestant pastor - among Catholics, most of whom were people-made poor of Mayan decent. I had the honor of working beside men and women who were Jesus to me, so courageous and committed, so determined to change themselves and the world. One group, CODIMUJ, a 10,000 member diocesan women's organization, met weekly in every community to read the gospel with a woman's eyes, mind, and heart. They believed that educating themselves about their history and culture, gender and religion was essential to their well-being and the well-being of the world. There were called the Abejas, a group of Catholics dedicated to non-violent practice of Jesus, Gandhi and MLK, who, in 1997 were attacked as they fasted and prayed for peace and 45 members of the community, mainly women and girls and including 5 pregnant women, were slaughtered. Another group, CAPaz is dedicated to healing and transforming trauma. Melel Xojobal teaches a culture of peace to children who live and work on the street. The list goes on an on of organizations and individuals who work for peace and justice with dignity.

DIANNE FARQUHARSON, NURSE, BELLVILLE, ONTARIO

I was the nurse at CCIDD, beginning my assignment in January 1996. For me, it was the most challenging and rewarding professional job of my career, looking after the health of CCIDD participants, staff and Mexican contacts. I felt the trust and support of the entire staff and was routinely asked to reach beyond my comfort zone. My experience at CCIDD set me firmly on a spiritual path and accelerated my personal growth. I have continued to be involved with justice issues. My focus now is the Stephen Lewis project, "Grannies for Africa" and the challenge of HIV/Aids. Because of my experience at CCIDD, I feel better equipped to weigh issues and to be a force for peace and equality. During my time at CCIDD, I met dedicated academics and was challenged to widen my world view and to participate passionately. My close contact with CCIDD lasted nearly a decade. It brought many gifts such as lasting friendships, an appreciation and respect for Mexican culture and language and a sensitivity and bond with the Mexican people. In my life the CCIDD experience remains vivid and pivotal.

JUDITH CARDER, CCIDD OFFICE DIRECTOR 1991-94

Doing the program at CCIDD opened my soul; working at CCIDD changed my life. Most importantly, I learned to live in community, sharing with others the challenges and joys of life. The “Mexican” staff taught me that even in difficult times, there is time for laughter, music and dancing, and delight in each other. From the “North American” staff, I knew wisdom, deep thought and compassion. Courage and humility I learned from the Mexican and Latin American visitors knocking at CCIDD’s gate requesting assistance. The program guests taught me that people can learn and change. From Ray, Gaby and the many program presenters, I knew of active faith and endless hope.

Sharing in community enabled me to live anywhere, meet and talk with anyone, and love all. CCIDD prepared me to work with the indigenous peoples of Chiapas in the Zone of Conflict after the Zapatista uprising and share in the struggles of indigenous peoples on my return to Canada. The importance of family, the care of elderly parents and young nephews has been strengthened and enriched by experiences in Mexico. Being involved in my community working to make it better for all is another CCIDD and Liberation Theology legacy. My studies and work in ecological restoration sprang from both the environmental degradation witnessed in Latin America but more importantly, those working for the healing of the planet who I met because of CCIDD.

It is due to my CCIDD experience, that I live my life committed to compassion, strong in faith, sure in justice and active in love. CCIDD has been a true blessing in my life and I know an important part of so many others’. May God continue to bless the work and lives of all those involved with this passion become a reality!

DONALD GRAYBILL, FORMER 1983-84 ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF CCIDD

My time at CCIDD came at a critical point in my personal, spiritual and professional development. From the perspective of spiritual growth, CCIDD provided an intellectual and spiritual framework of liberation theology through which to critically analyze and interpret the dynamics of poverty, struggle, and underdevelopment associated with the poor people’s struggle for justice. CCIDD’s programs provided a broad spectrum of experiential evidence of the historical struggle that activist Christians should and must confront if we are to truly seek to create a kingdom of heaven here on earth. In many ways, CCIDD helped me find a reconciliation and bridge a schism between what I had come to judge as a passive, hypocritical institutional church and the vital mandates of a vibrant and activist Christian faith that is clearly championing the causes of justice, reform and changes that empower and transforms. CCIDD was a catalytic doorway to a tremendous expansion of not only my spiritual life, but also upon the intellectual bases upon which my future professional path would lead.

The testimonies of the Central American refugees, the local poor, the community organizers, priests and base communities all were transformative and transforming. As I was able to reflect and internalize the powerful dimensions of those experiences within me, so was I also able to assist and facilitate others in the visiting CCIDD groups who were on their own pilgrimage of critical reflection and personal growth. I arrived at CCIDD as an adult educator, community organizer, and development activist, but

lacking a coherent spiritual framework through which to filter and focus my Christian faith. The CCIDD experience provided me the spiritual “cement” through which to harmonize the calling of my faith journey with my professional development. I left CCIDD with a heightened critical awareness, and renewed dedication to my calling as a development educator and change agent on behalf of Christ’s message of liberation and transformation.

The CCIDD experience has influenced all the steps I have treaded since leaving it. First, the experience served as the focus of my own doctoral research as to how critical pedagogy and transformation education could be applied in a cross-cultural program setting. So, the CCIDD experience provided me a vital and truly inspirational focus for pursuit and completion of my doctoral research which, in turn, has opened up many doors in my ensuing international education and development career of the following 22+ years.

Second, CCIDD provided me with a spiritual grounding in liberation theology that continues to fuel my spiritual growth and inform choices of career as well as responsible parenting. Although not the initial spark of my personal change process, my time at CCIDD in the early 80’s was a time when the broader dynamics and politics of development and underdevelopment in Latin America was under scrutiny, and when America’s foreign policies were being questioned and challenged. The interweaving of the responsibilities of activist faith viewed within a framework of international, national and personal accountability for reform has molded and shaped all my subsequent pursuits.

Thirdly, since my career has been largely in adult education and training, CCIDD provided me with a valuable set of insight into educational methods, tools, techniques and strategies for presenting information, cultivating critical reflection, and supporting paradigm shifts and action planning. Many, many workshops I have designed and led have, in some way, been incrementally built upon the active learning methods I learned and practiced at CCIDD..

Since CCIDD, I have been continuously involved in international development work---from being a trainer and training director for a small NGO which designs and implements tailor-made training programs for international participants from around the world, to leading training and organizational development efforts for a huge, multilateral NGO focused on serving and saving children in development countries. For the past seven years, somewhat paradoxically, I have led a very large technical assistance contract funded by USAID focused on improving education in developing countries, especially countries in crisis, and preventing exploitative child labor practices in developing countries. In all these situations, I have tried to live true to those insights of service, change, empowerment and transformation cultivated at CCIDD.

In my mind, CCIDD is much like a prism which helps filter and separate the different rhythms, beliefs, and undercurrents of our heart and spirit for critical reflection and examination. It is a place wherein much of what you get out will depend on what one puts in or is willing to risk in introspection. Ray Plankey has been a magnificent conductor of the symphony of CCIDD across time and in the lives of so many who have been touched and in some way transformed by the stories of Marta, La Estacion, Tlamacazapa, Ross Gandy, Gerardo Thijssen and so many. Those of us, who have lived

and served the mission of CCIDD, even for a very brief time, have added our textures and colors to the institutional weaving over time. We have left, and continue to leave, some imprint of our own search, or own yearning for action and for justice. Indeed, the CCIDD property, the rooms, the paths of outreach into poor urban neighborhoods and rural towns are as vibrant and as important today as they have been for thirty years since its earliest beginnings. What Ray Plankey and Gabriela Videla started 30 years ago has never been simply a place or a possession, but rather is more like a lighthouse which sends and magnifies a bright beacon of hope, charity and commitment to justice out into the world through the lives of the participants it welcomes. Its message is ever-more relevant and needed today as it ever was. Dare to believe! Dare to stand true to your faith and take action on behalf of Christ's love! Right the wrongs! Be a people of the Beatitudes! Pursue that which unites us across denominations and differences! Dare to listen, to examine yourself, to take a risk, and to welcome transformation in your heart, faith and life! God will support you and lead you at every step.

IVONNE PLANKEY, THERAPIST

CALGARY, ALBERTA

I had a somewhat unusual childhood...I literally grew up at CCIDD, living on the grounds for many years, and spending a lot of my time there even when I didn't. I met hundreds (if not thousands) of people over that time, many of whom left a deep impression on me. The very nature of the CCIDD program creates intense bonding within groups and staff, and even as a child, I could not help but soak up that energy. Inevitably, there would be strong connections with people who came into my life for only ten days at a time, and in that sense, my early years were marked by a lot of goodbyes. The centre felt eerily silent and abandoned when a much loved group had left. And yet I would not trade those experiences for anything: they contributed to my unique perspective and taught me many lessons early on about faith, self-discovery, and a deep sense of purpose that I have carried with me from childhood. Oh, and I also met my future husband there when he came to a program in 1984.

The CCIDD vision has had the ability to stir passions, question old patterns of thought and belief, bridge the gap between cultures and peoples—in short, transform lives. I was blessed to watch that happen as a kid, and then as a program leader on staff in 1993-94. I was even more blessed to be deeply affected by my connection to those who came through. For this, I will always be grateful.

NANCY PLANKEY VIDELA, SOCIOLOGY PROFESSOR, TEXAS A & M

To say that CCIDD has been an important part of my life would be an understatement. The CCIDD experience suffuses my memories – I remember the first group I ever worked with at age 9, the Sisters of Mercy. I helped my grandmother at the Latin American Hotel by chopping vegetables, cleaning bathrooms, sweeping bedrooms, and when I was done with the chores, I would sit in the back of the room where a discussion was taking place. During the *siesta* break after lunch I walked downtown with the sisters or swam in the pool with the big slide. I often went out with them on visits to the community too, visiting Ángela at Patios de la Estación, Marta at *** or the Base Christian Communities. As the youngest in the group, I sat in the back row of the Ford van, where I seemed to hit my head on the ceiling with every bump on the road. I also remember the day the sisters' program ended. My dad and I took them to the airport, a trip I would make hundreds of times in the years to come. On the way home, I sat in the

back row of the van. This time I sat there not to laugh with the bumps on the road but to hide the stream of tears. In no time I came to feel a special bond with the sisters and just as quickly they were on their way home again. I missed them terribly. Over the years, this scene repeated itself many more times.

I experienced CCIDD in very personal ways. I made great friends, experienced intense relationships, learned from an early age of the inequality and evil in the world, but also discovered the wonder of solidarity and the hope of real social change. In the process of welcoming and saying good-bye to so many wonderful people who passed through CCIDD, I also grew up. Besides chopping vegetable, I began doing simultaneous interpretations, debating politics, leading group discussions, and preparing liturgies.

After college, I returned with my boyfriend Rob Mackin (now my husband of 17 years) to be a program leader. In this new capacity, I learned of the rewards and challenges of working in a social justice community, where ideals are tempered by practical day to day negotiations. I cherish those two years of intense work which deepened my conviction that the place where I could best use my talents to help build a more just society was through education. Rob and I continued our journey through graduate school at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and now are both assistant professors of Sociology at Texas A&M University. Here I continue to challenge young people to think critically about the world around them, to become involved in building peace and fighting for justice.

It was at CCIDD many years ago that I learned of the importance of *concientización* or awareness building as a path towards a more just world. During the years that I grew up at CCIDD and when I returned as an adult, I learned how to be an effective educator, a social movement organizer, a human rights campaigner, and hopefully, a better human being. A big part of this education came from my family, but an important portion of who I am today I owe to the thousands of people who touched my life through CCIDD – the labor organizers, the squatter families, the human rights workers, the refugees, as well as the many Mexican and North American staff members, and, of course, the CCIDD participants. Thank you.

MICHAEL MACDONALD, ASSISTANT TO THE BISHOPS OF CHILPANCINGO AND TLAPA (GUERRERO, MEXICO)

In the late 70's, I came to Mexico for the first time with a group of high school students to spend 7 weeks in the mountains of Mexico. That exposure to the situation of poor indigenous peoples impacted all of us, and we returned again for the following summers. In 1981 I heard of CCIDD in Cuernavaca, and decided to incorporate that experience into my summer-long program with the high school students. Later, in the mid-80's I incorporated into CCIDD as a program director for several years. To this day, I consider that CCIDD experience and the opportunity to work with CCIDD's founding Director, Ray Plankey, as one of the most important and "blessed" experiences in my whole life.

Why do I say this about CCIDD, when I do not say it about other incredible experiences I have had in Mexico and Nicaragua and Panama and El Salvador and Cuba and Peru and other Latin American countries?

I believe that CCIDD helped me and literally thousands of others to look at life and death, faith and politics, poverty and justice, spirituality and religion, economics and gospel, in new ways ... “new ways”, that is, for me and for other “normal” people with the privileges of a First World upbringing and education. CCIDD helped me to become aware that “poverty” is caused by “impoverishment”, that the world as it is has to be changed, and that being a disciple of Jesus surely means being called to witness to a God of justice and to a world permeated by the love of a God of Life.

CCIDD’s unique program, based on a pedagogy developed by Ray Plankey, is a mixture of experiential education, penetrating analysis, guided reflection, and challenging encouragement to “be involved” in helping to create a more just and loving world. Even after 30 years, the CCIDD experience continues to challenge hearts and minds and to offer alternative ways to interpret the world and to live the gospel. For that I am ever grateful.

Editor’s Note: Mike returned to the mountains of Guerrero, neighboring state to the south of Morelos, upon leaving CCIDD where he has been working with the church and the poor indigenous people for the past 15 years. He was Chancellor of the Diocese of Tlapa and now functions as a special assistant to the bishops of Chilpancingo and Tlapa where he is heavily involved in both ecclesial and developmental projects.

KATE ROGERS, PROGRAM DIRECTOR 2003-2004, CANADIAN NOW LIVING TEMPORARILY IN CUERNAVACA WITH MEXICAN HUSBAND

I look back on my time at CCIDD as one of the defining moments of my life. Although choosing to come to CCIDD as a program facilitator seemed a natural step on my path in search of participation in and understanding of social justice, my time there was extremely challenging mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. The ‘issues’ I had previously ‘studied’ became real before my eyes in the people, families, communities and organizations that live with and challenge injustice on a daily basis. Those two years were truly a turning point for me. Reflecting on the many people who taught me during those years, and who touched my life and consciousness with their insights and courage, I am reminded of Gerardo Thijssen’s plea for us to ‘get out of the stands’. That is still my goal – to be active in creating positive change in our world. In this sense, my CCIDD experience has opened various opportunities for me and has guided me in a certain direction. I have recently completed my Masters degree in Adult Education and Community Development at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education; a Canadian graduate school known for its strong social justice perspectives and involvement in local and global issues. I wrote my Master’s thesis on the Cuernavaca social movement, *Frente Civico*, and had the opportunity to spend four months with various members of the movement, learning from their insights and joining them in their current activities. Also, through the connections I made while at CCIDD, I have the opportunity to be currently involved with local community organizations working for social change. My CCIDD experience has become a part of who I am, of how I identify myself, and of who I hope to become.

THE FOLLOWING ARE REFLECTIONS BY TWO ACTUAL CCIDD PROGRAM DIRECTORS AND TWO CCIDD KITCHEN WORKERS

ABRIL OLMOS LOYA, PROGRAM DIRECTOR, CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO

Thanks to some happy coincidences, I heard of CCIDD and began to work as one of the program directors. My life has been enormously enriched since I moved to Cuernavaca and have met the other people working at CCIDD as well as all of the other organizations and people who are related with CCIDD in one way or another. If I were to mention one, I would have to mention many others and there is not enough space here to begin to do so.

I now know better my own country. I have learned a lot about the relation between spirituality and social justice. I have raised my awareness about the cultural diversity within my country from the aired north to the profound and old cultures of Indigenous Mexico.

The experiences that have most impacted me in my CCIDD work is to have looked into the faces and heard the real voices of those who struggle for justice, those who faced extra-ordinary situations, those who defended what they believed in and those who suffered the consequences of questioning the unjust status quo.

Those persons now have a face and voice in my mind and heart that will always be there. I am sure these same faces and voices remain in the minds and hearts of the Canadian and American participants whose lives have been changed by the experience as mine has been changed too.

I think it is them, those who speak of their daily struggles, who are the principal “capital” of CCIDD, its major resource, those that give strength and hope in a future not only for CCIDD itself but for those specific local struggles that form a part of the necessary global change in forming a better world.

PAULINA RODRIGUEZ CAÑIZARES, PROGRAM DIRECTOR, ARGENTINA

How could I have ever imagined at the beginning of 2006 that today, July of 2007, this Argentinean would be in Cuernavaca writing of her experiences working at CCIDD. I don't think I could have but surely God had it in mind. It is God who weaves our destiny although we many not be aware of it and invites us to walk down new roads filled with challenges and satisfactions.

These past nine months working on the program team have been an integrally enriching experience from many points of view. I have widened my vision from just my home country to all of the Americas. Now, my challenge is what do I do with all of this newfound knowledge and awareness?

A beautiful part of this experience has been how warmly I have been received by so many people here in Mexico. This is especially true of the staff here at CCIDD who has embraced this foreigner from the far South demonstrating to her how important it is to be able to live in community each one supporting the other.

This experience is not just mine but belongs to each one who is a part of the Dominican Youth Movement back in Argentina since, for good or bad, I also represent their dreams and utopias for social justice. Utopias which were forged in the rural villages of my province where I encountered the face of God around the simple things like the typical tortillas and the very sweet mate tea. So now I am able to find that same face of God with people eating tortillas with peppers and beans while drinking jamaica water. Those people from the small villages and all the Mexicans who I have shared with these past months define today my options and animate me to continue on the road to building a world which is just and fraternal for everybody.

Today, it is comforting to know that although it sometimes seems like we are swimming against the current of history searching for impossible dreams, we are many from Canada to Argentina who dream and consequently work to a greater or lesser degree for the dignity of all.

It is for this reason that I celebrate now the 30 years of this project of CCIDD that has reoriented many life projects like it is doing with mine.

MARIA EUGENIA COLIN, ASSISTANT COOK AT CCIDD

The 11th of August of this year, CCIDD will be celebrating 30 years of having received groups here in Cuernavaca. I did not have the pleasure of working here since the beginning but I am content that Amelia has told me of how things were some years ago.

Amelia lived close to me in one of the poor neighborhoods and each time we would see each other, I would ask her to recommend me to work at CCIDD. One day when a new person was needed, she brought me to CCIDD. New workers were given the test of cleaning thoroughly the kitchen. I did it well and was hired in November of 1991.

Another thing that I will never forget is something that happened once when we had a meeting. I told Mr. Raymond, "Thank you for giving me work because it is hard to find a job at my age". I felt very good when he responded, "You are here because you do well your work so you do not need to thank me". I like it here because we can know so many new people who come to visit. Sister Kathy is working hard to get new groups to come to CCIDD.

God gives me life and accepts me as I am. I give thanks to Mr. Raymond, his wife and daughters who have treated me so well and shared their friendship. Also, to Sister Kathy who is struggling now so that CCIDD can continue forward if this is God's will.

BERNADINA MARTINEZ, CHIEF COOK AT CCIDD

One day I saw in the newspaper that someone was advertising for help in a kitchen. I came to an interview here at CCIDD and was hired on the 4th of November of 1989. I

started as the kitchen assistant and later was moved to the responsible cook for the evening meals. Four years later, I was promoted to the chief cook.

My life is the kitchen. I like to cook very much. I like people to tell me how good the meal was or make suggestions. I have made many friends, some from very far away, because of this job. I very much like the Plankey family who has been very good to me and my family.

My happiest memories of CCIDD go back to when we were all working here: Amelia, Gloria, Yola, Maria, Julieta, Licha, Barbara. They were all my good friends. We all got along very well together and went out to have fun and amusement.

CCIDD is the best thing that has happened to me. It is a good job that has given me all I needed both economically and morally. CCIDD helped me when my husband died last year but I wish to especially thank the Plankey family for their support at that time. I do not know what would have happened to me without this work at CCIDD. This job is the maximum.

