

## **You Put Me Here For a Reason**

*Gail Wilton, Teacher, Mamawi Atosketan Native School, Ponoka, AB*

At my job interview, several people indicated that the children there are great and it is a hard place to leave. I had been at the school for a couple of days when I thought to myself, “No, it isn’t!” I remember leaving the classroom one day depending on the aide to handle things while I was gone. I left the building, but not unnoticed by the principal. I told her, “I can’t do this. I really can’t do this!” I felt completely defeated. She responded soothingly, “Yes, you can.” I don’t remember what else she said. I do remember, however, from deep within myself, calling desperately on God – “You put me here for a reason. I don’t know what it could possibly be but it’s all up to you now because I can’t do this alone!” I took a deep breath and said, “Okay, lets do this!”

That simple, yet sincere prayer was just the beginning of what has become a wonderful experience with many incredibly awesome children and staff. Are there still little bumps in the road? Rarely, they are usually mountains far too large for me to climb alone, but with God’s help, we climb them together.

Every morning began with worship and prayer. God impressed me to ask the students if they wanted to pray. I asked faithfully every morning. No one ever volunteered.

I wondered how I could reach these students. On a daily basis, I was dealing with some very trying situations. I remember vividly, one young girl who refused to have anything to do with me, or anything I had to say. She made rude remarks to distract the class and was trying hard to get them to follow and was succeeding. When I addressed the situation she responded by picking up a chair and throwing it at me. I didn’t know at the time but that was the beginning of a wonderful relationship.

One morning, at the end of worship I asked again if anyone wanted to pray. I expected, as usual, a couple of students to say they would pray only to say, “Cha!” which I quickly learned meant “just kidding” or “only joking.” Then the young girl who had just a couple of weeks before thrown a chair at me, said, “I’ll pray.” I waited for the “Cha” but it didn’t come. “No, really, I’ll pray. But I’m not praying unless everyone bows their head, folds their hands and closes their eyes.” Now, you have to understand that this was a very tall order! Why? These students have experiences on a regular basis that no one should have to ever deal with, especially children. One thing they didn’t have was trust. For them to close their eyes would be letting their guard down and would leave them vulnerable. They had to look out for themselves to avoid being hurt. I could hardly believe what happened next! Not just one or two, the whole class bowed their heads, folded their hands and closed their eyes! I was dumbfounded! I couldn’t get them to do that! Then this young girl looked at me and said, “I don’t know what to say.” I had to scramble for words because this was just so unexpected. I explained to her that Jesus is her friend and she can talk to Him the same way she would talk to one of her best friends. She simply looked at the class and once again every head bowed, hands folded and eyes

closed. Her prayer was short and simple and even contained a couple of “Chas” – she had just made a new friend!

Later that year, the young girl asked if we could speak privately. She explained how she felt so alone at the beginning of the year and that she felt no one really cared about her. Her mother was always busy and her father didn't live with them anymore. I had difficulty holding back the tears when she said, “Because you showed me you cared about me I didn't do something really bad and I wanted to keep going.” I asked her if I could pray with her. She agreed. Then she gave me a hug and said, “I love you, Mrs. Wilton”. I replied, “I love you, too, and so does Jesus.” She smiled and said, “I know.”

God has spent a lot of time over the past three years teaching me that I don't need to know where He is leading; I just need to have faith to follow.