

## **Impact Mexico Trip 2018**

A part of the 2018 Mexico trip that impacted me the most was seeing how happy the families we were building for were to finally have a house of their own. Even more, they owned the property their house was on. Everyday while we were building they watched with huge smiles on their faces, and after we finished for the day they got up to look around what would soon be their very own house. I was so happy after the week was done to hand them their keys and give them big hugs.

*Alexa 2018*

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Before the impact trip, I was extremely anxious about how it would go, and if I'd enjoy it. I was sure I wouldn't, because I had never done anything like it—and I am glad to say I was wrong. I learned so much more about my classmates and teachers, and bonded with them in a way I hadn't before. The whole experience was so much more than I could've imagined. Building the house itself was hard work, but it was totally worth it to see the excitement I saw in the mothers and daughters who were going to be living in them. I don't regret going—the sunburn I had been anticipating was thankfully avoided. Nothing could have replaced this experience!

*Lindsay 2018*

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I am so grateful that I got the opportunity to go on the Mexico trip with my grade 11 class. I couldn't have asked for a better group to go with. Although we were split up into two different groups building two different houses, it really felt like we were one team. We all did our part, and we really grew closer together as a grade. Even though I am not very handy, I felt like I still made a contribution to the final result. No matter what your skill level, you can still play a big role in this project.

It really felt good to give the houses to the families on the last day. It was really sad to see what they were living in before we built the houses for them. One family was living in a tent, and the other was living under a tarp held up with scrap wood and sheet metal. It felt so good to play a part in making these people's lives better through the houses we built for them. The Mexico trip was truly a life-changing experience, and one that I will never forget.

*Grade 11 Student 2018*

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## **Impact Mexico Trip 2016**

Grade 11 is the best year at Calvin by far. For many years I was anxious about going to Mexico on the mission trip, but as I got older I heard stories from other students about how great the trip was. Before leaving I wasn't terribly nervous, just more excited and ready for this change. I thought the group of students that went worked well together and we have become closer as friends. Our relationships grew deeper with some and new friendships have developed. I hope that now that we are home we continue to relate well with one another. The thing that impacted me the most was seeing kids in the neighbourhood help the group that made the Sunday school building. Some of the kids

didn't go to church, but wanted to help anyway. I will never forget my experiences in Mexico of building a home for some in need and hope I get to go again.

*Andrew Stienstra 2016*

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Mexico is one of the biggest events you experience as a Calvin student. As a kid you grow up hearing about it all through elementary school. Every year your class would take time to pray for the grade 11 students that would be going out that year to build homes. You'd pray for certain individuals and that each day of building would go smoothly. You can't help but get excited, knowing that one day elementary kids will be praying for you, as you go out to serve the Lord in Mexico with all your classmates. The Sunday before we left for Mexico, a grade one boy and his family actually came up to me at church and wished me safe travels and told me that him and his classmates were praying for my class and I. That was one of the first things that impacted me – and the trip hadn't even started! Knowing that there were kids at the elementary not just praying for my class in general but for me specifically meant so much to me. It helped me realize how great and supportive the Calvin community is. Finally stepping on to the bus, realizing that I would be experiencing the thing I grew up hearing about was the most surreal feeling. I was so ready to see what the Lord was going to do through my class and I. After a long bus ride, we finally arrived at the building site. I was in building group number two. In group two, we built a double house. This house would actually be used by a church, who would be using it as a Sunday school room as well as a sports equipment room for the community kids. We didn't get to dedicate the house to a family on the last day of building like most groups do, but instead we got to attend a church service that was held in the house we built. The majority of the church service was worship. The worship (although all in Spanish) was so full of energy! You could feel how powerful and special the songs were to all the church members. This was another thing that impacted me. I wanted to be able to worship like this, to dance around like no one's watching, and shout out as loud as I can to let everyone know that God is so loving, merciful, powerful, and amazing. At the end of the church service each of the church members embraced you and kissed and you, showing their gratitude. It was as if I had given them so much more than a tiny building. Seeing this was so humbling and is something I will remember forever. I know now more than ever that serving the Lord is the greatest thing I can do with my life.

“God of mercy, sweet love of mine, I have surrendered to Your design” – Multiplied by Needtobreathe (Theme song of Mexico 2016)

*Danielle Algera 2016*

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Going to Puerto Penasco was an amazing experience. While the work was hot and sometimes difficult, every second was exciting knowing that we were giving our work to such an incredible family. One moment that stood out to me was when I was playing with some of the young kids that would be living in the house that we were building. We were sitting in the sand, using stones as passengers for a small plastic rocket. The rocket would “fly” around and then “crash” back to the ground, followed by lots of giggles, then we would fill it up with stones again. It was so touching seeing these kids so full of joy and silliness, and including me, a stranger who barely knows their language, in their games. I had a great time. The kids and the community there are amazing.

*Emily Unger 2016*

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Mexico was an amazing experience, I really loved the whole trip. One highlight for me was definitely playing with the kids. They just jump on you and always want to play, and have piggyback rides, and be spun around. Even though we were just with them for a short time I already had so much love for the kids, and it was hard to leave them on the last day. Another highlight was on the last day just before we dedicated the house, the mom of the family we build the house for came around and gave everyone in our group bracelets that she had spent the whole morning working on. It really touched me and showed me how thankful she was that we built a house for her family. I also really enjoyed the church service that we went to on Sunday evening, I loved seeing the passion the the people in the community had for Jesus and it was very inspiring to see. The whole mission trip was a fantastic experience, and I wish I could do it again.

*Carli Reimer 2016*

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### **Impact Mexico Trip 2014**

As principal of the collegiate, I was extremely blessed with the opportunity to be part of the Grade 11 Mission trip to Mexico in March 2014. 71 students, parent volunteers and staff ventured down to Puerto Penasco by bus and had an experience of a lifetime serving the Lord in a different way than we are used to and given the opportunity to grow in our personal faith as well. It was a humbling and great learning experience for all involved. Worship to our Lord can be presented in a variety of ways and one way is in physical labour for people that we do not even know but are in need. How often we take for granted our personal blessings that we have in Canada and finding ourselves wanting more. What a surprise for me on my first mission trip to see the conditions that others are living in. Sand/dirt floor, no plumbing or serviced electricity, scrap wood for walls and a roof. Being involved with a build that creates a 11 x 22 foot house on a concrete pad does not seem like much to our Canadian standards but is a huge blessing for others in need. Our Mexican families were grateful, meanwhile they in different ways ministered to us while we were their building their homes. I would encourage all of us to look around and reflect on our personal blessings and give thanks to our Lord and Saviour. I would also encourage us all to do the next important step which our Lord wants us to do. To go out and make a difference in other peoples lives that need to experience Christ's love through willing servants. To God be the Glory!

*Ray Algera 2014*

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As a group of Grade 11 students representing our school, city, and country, we came together as a group to serve in a magnificent way. The journey began and ended with our large group taking a lengthy bus ride to and from Mexico. There are a few things that can help better understand what our time spent on the bus was like. The bus rides consisted of any games you could think of playing, sleeping in every comfortable (or uncomfortable) position imaginable, flooding convenience stores and restaurants at any given hour, and an obstacle course of bodies when you're trying to make your way to the squishy bathroom. These are a few aspects that are fairly easily explained, but some things about the bus ride cannot be as easily visualized, such as the hours you would spend staring out into the distance at the snowy mountaintops, or the red sand covered

in cacti. Pictures don't always do the scenery justice. God's creation left you so in awe of the beauty we were so fortunate to experience.

Upon our arrival in Mexico we settled into the daily routine. The day started off by waking up to a beautiful desert sunrise and with a wonderful breakfast prepared by the cooks. We then headed off to the unescapable heat to work vigorously on our family's new home. After our day was finished we were sometimes rewarded with a much needed cool off in the ocean that included swimming, chatting, and bargaining. After dinner at the camp we would all gather together as one around the fire to praise, worship, thank, discuss, and enjoy the presence of God for he was the one who had presented us with this mission. The Mexico Missions Trip is so much more than just specifically building houses. It's the building of long lasting friendships, relationships with the families you meet, having a greater appreciation of your teachers, and last but not least the connection you make with God. Being thrown into a life where you live in a tent where you have no running water, electricity, air conditioning, is something you learn to quickly adapt to. There's something about the feeling you get when you're serving God with your class without any distractions that has a long lasting effect on you. As my good friend and Calvin alumni Louisa Hofer once said, "Such experiences can be life-altering... If you let them."

I don't believe this mission should stop when we get back into our regular everyday lives. One of the biggest struggles we will face is how to bring what we learned home and how to utilize this, but I have strong faith in who we have backing us up. We would like to thank everyone behind the scenes because this missions trip wouldn't be possible if it wasn't for the family, friends, school, and community backing us up every step of the way. They were back at home praying for our health, safety, and concerns we expressed before leaving. As a group we still need to continue praying for our journey back at home in trying to keep serving God here in our own community. Thank you all for supporting this mission with God that we as Class of 2015 were able to experience all together.

*Ashley Lissenberg 2014*

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Our entire grade had been looking forward to Mexico for a long time, but especially since the start of this year. I guess it was a bit surreal how we were finally those grade elevens who would go. It never really hit me that I was actually going until we had our work day and Spanish lessons – however even after those, it didn't feel close until I was doing my last-minute packing before heading to the school on Thursday evening. I was a little bit worried myself that because it didn't feel like departure would ever come, I wouldn't be ready for the whole Mexico experience. But when we got onto that bus, I felt nothing but excited and as "ready" as one could be for such an experience. I quickly fell out of of "normal" routine, and began to appreciate even the small things (such as a bus floor at 3 a.m, and random gas station stops to stretch out.) In Mexico, living in tents soon became a new "normal" as well. Working was awesome, because our group at least had a lot of fun, worked really hard as a team, and got to see progress each day. The biggest thing I'd say that impacted me was the people in the area we were building in. I think that so often, we assume that we are the more "privileged" with all the stuff we have in our lives. Yet the people we met and the family we were blessed to build for seemed genuinely happy and thankful. They knew their neighbors and those around them. It was a close community that possessed a real, contagious joy and I was most definitely blessed by that. The trip as a whole felt too short, (which I suppose is better than it feeling too long!) There were memories made that will last a lifetime, new friendships with some amazing

classmates, and people that changed my perspective that will stay with me forever... and have left me desiring to do more and go new places... or maybe even go again someday.

*Bryanne D 2014*

1 Timothy 6:18

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They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share

*Shaelynn Proulx 2014*

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### **Inner City Experience (I.C.E.) 2018**

I went on the ICE trip back in March and honestly the whole experience was life changing. Going into it, I was not as excited because I was staying home in Winnipeg and not going all the way to Mexico, but it was seriously an amazing experience. You go in thinking you are going to serve people and you come out as the one has been served. Some of the people I met on the trip helped me as much as I helped them and that is something I will never forget. As well as spending a week with my class was a great time, getting that final time to bond with them until we graduate and go our separate ways. I made some new friends and talked to some new people. All in all, this trip was an unforgettable experience that I am so thankful I was a part of.

*Reed 2018*

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I went into I.C.E. feeling many things, but the one thing I didn't feel was excitement. I had what I thought to be a clear picture of what was going to happen, and I wanted none of it. I could see the week perfectly: sleeping on a hard floor in a crowded room, talking to strangers I had nothing in common with, and hearing non-stop about what I figured was a non-fixable problem that I knew plenty about. Still, I forced myself to half-genuinely pray that God would show me what he saw in these people, and to break my heart for what breaks his. God, in all his wisdom, ignored my lack of enthusiasm and gave as I asked, despite knowing I hardly meant it. Over the course of that week, my perspective changed in a way I never expected it to. During my week at Siloam, I saw countless people in different circumstances- some struggling, others just finding their footing, and others boldly and proudly taking steps towards a better life. Each day I saw more of the effect that labeling a person as 'poor' has. When we think of a person as poor we expect very little of them, and we take away much of the substance they have as a person. A 'poor person' does not have hopes, dreams, goals, likes or dislikes. 'Poor people' are characterized by a lack of material goods, and less than polite assumptions by society. A person categorized this way cannot help but feel less than human, and this only pushes problems further. Each person in this world is unique and adored by God, and we need to treat them as such. No matter a person's situation, God hasn't abandoned them, and we are to stand with them as well- whether they live in a fancy house or not. Jesus' command to love our neighbour doesn't just go for the people we live next to, and it doesn't stop with the people we know. Each and every person is our neighbour- from the lady passed at the park to the man begging on a street corner, and we are to treat them that way. The love one person needs isn't the same as what

another needs, and the recognizing that can go a long way. The problem of poverty isn't a small one, and it won't be solved overnight. Yet each of us loving even just one person and choosing to treat them as someone Christ died for goes a long way. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "He died not for men, but for each man. If each man had been the only man made, He would have done no less." If that isn't enough to convince us that each person is worth our time, I'm not sure what is.

*Grade 12 student 2018*

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When our class prepared for our inner city experience, I heard people say they were nervous, didn't know what to expect, or just didn't want to go. Hearing this made me feel anxious about it too, even though I've grown up around the area with family/friends previously owning and directing the Lighthouse Mission. This means that from a young kid to age 12, plus volunteering at Union Gospel Mission the seven years my dad worked as a chaplain there, I know a lot of the people we were going to be serving and dealing with. So, looking back, I'm not sure why I was nervous.

Once we got to The Vineyard and settled in, we walked over to Siloam Mission for dinner. That was pretty exciting but the next day, walking over for breakfast, had myself and I'm sure others, a little unsure of what the week will hold. Our class prayed, and then we went into the different places we signed up in to volunteer. Some went to inner city schools, some to women's shelters, some went to UGM and others stayed at Siloam. I myself, along with five other guys, went to UGM.

With my father working there and everyone in the building knowing me well already, it felt normal. I knew what needed to be done and my classmates and I did it.

What impacted me the most was probably how my classmates wanted to keep coming back and stay at UGM. Also how they touched the people's lives who came through the doors of the mission during the week.

I also really liked how every night we all had group discussions and reflections about the day. It was a key part of it, in my opinion. I feel like it would have been different if we didn't have the space to debrief.

Also important was how I connected to people in my class that I haven't really talked to at all and got to know everyone a bit more. One night all the girls stayed up until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning; all of us just talking and giving each other advice about life, boys and school. Even though staying for night was on our own time, it was very nice memories from I.C.E.

*Mellinda 2018*

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## **Inner City Experience (I.C.E.) 2016**

I'm generally not the type of person who opens up to other people immediately, as such I went into the Inner City Experience looking forward more to working in the kitchens and doing general labor, because I enjoy that kind of thing. I was pleasantly surprised when I spoke to people in the drop-in at the Vineyard Church and easily made conversation. Willingness to create community structure and to welcome in new people without hesitation is the biggest thing I noticed during this trip. One of our speakers during the

week, Suhail, said something that I think sums up this week perfectly. He said that generally people go into inner city missions like this expecting to be the difference in other people's lives, but rarely do they expect to learn this much from the people living in these situations. Before ICE, I had not expected that I'd want to go back and talk with the people I had met, but now I think I will go as often as I can.

*Rhys Wiebe 2016*

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I.C.E was an unexpected, life changing, and vulnerable experience for me, but oh so amazing. Going into it I did not know what to expect of my classmates, of my self and of the trip in general. We did not hear a lot about what we were doing, but spending time in the inner city. I went into the trip with a some what negative vibe towards it, but I left feeling so refreshed and renewed. Something that really stood out to me a lot during this experience was how Jesus valued community. How he loves us so much that he create us; every human being regardless of where they have walked in life to be in community with others. Jesus is the perfect example of this, He ate with the sinners, and His disciples were all broken people and eventually became his best friends. I learned that when someone does not have a community around them and people who love them they fall apart and will very much eventually fall into sin and sorrow. Which a lot of people in our city have fallen into. I was very surprised at how much the inner city actually valued this idea. Siloam mission, vineyard church and many other amazing places that our classmates all got to spend the week at, all embraced this idea of community. This changed a lot in me because I began to rid myself of all the stereotypical ideas that float around about the inner city and my feelings towards the people of the inner city has changed and I understand that there's more to a person then what we see, and that everyone deserves love, and a friend.

*Felicity Pollard 2016*

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On this trip I was blessed to see God working through the hearts of many different people. Whether that was classmates, teachers, or new faces I met along the way, I got see God's strength, joy, compassion, and power working within those around me. I found myself humbled, encouraged, and joyfilled by this sight. I got to see connections being made and barriers being broken between people of "two different worlds". It was easier to find similarities in our lives than I thought it would be. Although several of the people I met have different lives than I do, we were able to find things that were the same. We connected and started to form relationships. One idea that was very quickly destroyed was the idea that we were only there to help them. I learned many things from different people I met, and I was encouraged and humbled by the amazing individuals that I got to spend just a short week with. ICE was a great opportunity to serve others and to see how God is working within our city.

*Chelsea Asman 2016*

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The biggest way this trip changed me was altering my perception of how dangerous the North End is. All I had ever heard about the North End was negative, usually stemming from the news. Before this trip, if I was asked what I knew about the North End, I'd probably have said that there are a lot of murders, stabbings, etc. Now I'd be comfortable saying that although those things may occur sometimes, it's not nearly as frequent as people make it out to be. I've also learned how caring and compassionate the people from that area can be. Even the smallest things like smiling and acknowledging a person as they walk by you can change their whole day for the better!

*Zachary Haaksma 2016*

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### **Inner City Experience (I.C.E.) 2014**

Our experience at Siloam mission opened the eyes of many. Coming from very sheltered lifestyles, we didn't know what we were getting ourselves into. Walking into Siloam was the first step to getting out of our comfort zones. Waking up on Monday morning, realizing that I had drop-in first was a little unsettling. The drop-in is a place in Siloam where people can come enjoy a good meal and socialize with friends and even play some games. When we volunteered there, we helped clear plates, engaged in conversation, and played a couple of rounds of crib. The first twenty minutes of the drop-in I only cleared plates, not talking to anyone, until I eventually built up the courage to sit down beside an older gentleman and start a conversation with him. After talking with him for twenty minutes I realized that everyone in the Siloam drop-in is a person just like you and me; they enjoy simple conversations and the company of others.

Drop-in wasn't the only experience that started with discomfort. Working in donations involved reaching into one of dozens of garbage bags and finding a variety of clothes such as 6XL shirts and female undergarments. During the time in donations there was a girl in our group that didn't know what long-johns were. She picked them up and was asking what they were, so I decided to enlighten her. She threw the long-johns on the table and screamed, and we realized that hard work can be fun.

Later in the week, a group of us went to Grace Point Church to fix bikes to be donated to community families in need. For the 14 hours we were there, we fixed 120 bikes. Going into this, we had no experience fixing bikes, but after the first two hours it became a bonding time because we depended on each other for different skills. This trip really showed us that there are many ways to help our community if we are willing to step out of our comfort zones. Thank you for all of your support and prayers while we went on our trip; we felt that God was protecting us the whole time.

*Mathieu Boulet & Trevor Dalmaijer 2014*

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The most surprising part of I.C.E for me was the way that our grade managed to come together. With all of our phones and technology at home, we were able to focus more on each other rather than being distracted by the rest of the world around us. We were able to engage in much deeper and more meaningful conversations and create stronger bonds different than the ones most often created just at school. We found ourselves talking to people we don't normally interact with and playing cards and laughing with



people we don't normally hang out with. There was a new sense of community found on this trip that will hopefully follow us for our last few months of school together.

*Brianna Horch 2014*

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I could tell you stories about Ron, the endearing old man thrice divorced with a passion for the betterment of the lives of homeless people. Perhaps Wayne, the ACDC lover with a scruffy beard and a nearly toothless grin. But all I'll say is something one of the men told me.

His name is Joseph. He has a long black ponytail, tan weathered skin, and weary brown eyes. We chatted a bit and near the end of the conversation, as he was packing up his few possessions, he quietly said, "A lot of people in here are lonely. They just want someone to talk to. Or listen to," he paused, "Or both."

Joseph's words yanked at my heart strings. I could offer money, or labour, but what they also need is time. Some company to pass the hours waiting for the next mealtime. Someone to tell their stories to before they're lost. Talking instead of wandering, listening instead of drinking, joking instead of smoking. When Maddie and I visited them the following week they were overjoyed that we hadn't forgotten about them. These are people that need attention and care, same as any other person. Give a few hours and see the difference it can make.

*Embiny 2014*