

On the Job

How OEL Members Helped Illuminate a Remote Community in Northern Ontario

What started out as a call for help in an issue of *Weekly Dialogue* turned into an unforgettable experience for OEL members Richard Hansen and Jack Sanders earlier this year. Their mission? Volunteering on a Habitat for Humanity team to complete essential electrical repairs in a First Nation community in Northern Ontario.

By joining the thousands of Canadians who volunteer with Habitat for Humanity each year, Richard (of Richard Hansen Electric in Chatham-Kent) and Jack (of Townsend Electric in Durham Region) left their families and businesses behind to spend a week up north. After a screening process that included checking their licences, consenting to fly on small planes and establishing any potential food and medical requirements, both electricians were on their way.



Pictured here is Richard (left) and Jack (third from the right) with community members presenting donated supplies from Legrand. Other companies that provided donations included Kidde and ShuBee Armordillo.



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Upon arriving at the remote community, Richard and Jack were met with several feet of snow as well as warmth and gratitude from the locals who had heard about their mission. Community leaders expressed their appreciation for the team's willingness to lend a helping hand, and over the course of several days, they tackled various electrical issues throughout the community, such as installing smoke detectors and replacing outlets, light fixtures and switches.



Richard (left) pictured with another volunteer team member in the -45° outdoors.



Jack explaining to Chief and Council about the work being completed in the community.

As the project unfolded, Richard and Jack discovered the unique challenges faced by the community, such as harsh weather conditions and a lack of readily available resources. Fortunately, in preparation for the trip and on behalf of Habitat, Richard had approached several companies in search of donations: Legrand, which donated all plugs and switches, Kidde, which donated 40 smoke detectors and ShuBee Armordillo, which donated 400 boot covers.

Their original goal of completing 40 homes was quickly overpassed, as they finished off the week with a full 52 completed homes, some of which were built nearly 75 years ago.



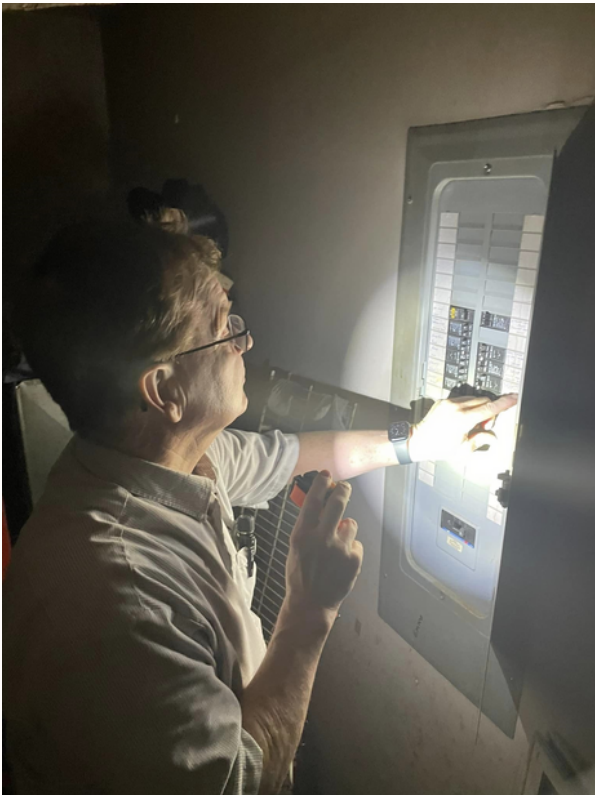
The Habitat for Humanity volunteer team pictured with Chief Atlookan of Eabametoong First Nation.



Their tireless work and expertise not only resolved immediate problems, but also imparted valuable knowledge to one especially inquisitive local assigned to assist the team. By the end of the week, Jack had found himself willingly – and unconsciously – mentoring him, generously leaving all his tools to the young helper who had not even a screwdriver. When asked what he learned from his experience, Jack doesn't think twice.

"How lucky we are to live where we live [in Southern Ontario] and to be able to access services," Jack says. He hopes that a potential future trip will allow some time to host a workshop to further educate community members on electrical safety.

Richard and Jack's story serves as a reminder of the power of compassion and the profound impact that selfless individuals can have on the lives of others. In the end, it's the simple acts of goodwill that have the power to brighten the world, one circuit at a time. ■



To learn more about Habitat for Humanity and the many ways that you can give back, visit their website at www.habitat.ca.