

## Local 4-H member sharing knowledge Travels to Nepal as part of Canadian Foodgrains Bank tour

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Tracy Claeys said while some Manitoba communities are remote, they can't compare to the small villages she visited located among Nepal's mountains.

"It took us four hours to travel 50 kilometres outside the capital of Kathmandu," the St. Francois Xavier resident said. Claeys travelled to Nepal for a two-week tour with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank earlier this year as one of 10 members on an international food security learning tour for educators.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Tracy Claeys (in back on right) watches a woman use a simple tool to remove corn kernels more efficiently.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a partnership of 15 churches and church agencies working together to end global hunger. Together with matching support from the government of Canada, the Foodgrains Bank has provided over \$600 million in food assistance to people who are hungry since 1983. A group of churches in Starbuck, Springstein and Fannystelle annually donate the proceeds from selling grain grown on 80 acres of local farmland to the Foodgrains Bank.

Claeys, 44, is a Headingley 4-H Club leader. She heard about the opportunity for 4-H leaders to take part in a Foodgrains Bank tour late last year and was interested in the food security aspect. She works as a pharmacist but grew up on a farm and wanted to find out about Nepal's agriculture.

"I hadn't travelled to Asia or a developing country before. It was mind-blowing," she said.

She joined Foodgrains Bank staff, teachers and other 4-H leaders to fly from Vancouver to Hong Kong then Kathmandu. She was impressed by the Nepalese capital's history but said many buildings have been damaged by earthquakes.

The group left Kathmandu to visit villages in the Himalayan foothills, travelling to higher elevations along roads that Claeys said could hardly be called roads and where it was best not to look over the side into the valleys far below.

She said people living in the area are severely impacted by their remote location that makes transporting food and other goods and travelling for education and health services very difficult. They also visited locations in other parts of the country to see where Global Affairs Canada, the Mennonite Central Committee and other aid agencies are providing agricultural and educational support. Claeys said some successful projects involve women who are trained in nutrition and who help local mothers use readily available vegetables and grains to provide nutritious meals for their children.



SUPPLIED PHOTO BY CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK

Tracy Claeys, of St. Francois Xavier, is shown receiving a tika, a red dot on her forehead that signifies a blessing, from a community member in Nepal.

"They didn't know that rice isn't enough to maintain their children's health," she said.

Claeys enjoyed making a connection with Nepalese mothers as they all share a concern for their children's health.

"This is just another mom who has the same experience."

Claeys was amazed by the positive impact that the support programs like those delivered through the Foodgrains Bank and Canadian government are having on the Nepalese people's lives. She spoke about a metal device costing about \$2 that makes removing the dried kernels from corn much faster and easier for women.

She now looks forward to using her newfound knowledge when working with other 4-H leaders and members to develop food security projects. "We're hoping to bring some of that programming into 4-H."