Storm's wrath

from EBBS on page 3 hanging onto a tree to stop

from being washed away."

The landscape itself was scarred by Mitch's fury.

"There were canyons carved by the water, 10 metres (deep), where there used to be flat ground," said Mr. Hansell. "Whole communities were gone."

Mr. Hansell himself was in Managua when he first caught wind of Hurricane Mitch.

The 24-year-old physics grad had arrived in Nicaragua last year courtesy of an exchange program between York University and Nicaragua's Uraccon University.

He spent two semesters there teaching English. In his free time he picked up Spanish.

When the program ended Mr. Hansell moved on — literally. He traveled around, finally hooking up with CUSO, a Canadian organization that supplies volunteers for countries around the world.

Through CUSO, Mr. Hansell has been writing a social and economic report on a region of Nicaragua. Only he wasn't there when the hurricane hit. Instead he was in Managua.

"I was about to fly back to the Atlantic region," said Mr. Hansell. "I was told to wait until the storm passed. Instead of a storm it was the hurricane."

Mitch wasn't so bad to Managua, bringing nothing worse than seven days of nonstop rain to the capital. Then the stories started to roll in.

"I started to hear about the death," said Mr. Hansell. "I was feeling useless just sitting there."

Useless is an uncomfortable feeling during a natural disaster, so Mr. Hansell quickly reported to the nearest Red Cross headquarters.

Almost a little too quickly, since mud and flooding had closed the roads, barring the hardest hit areas from relief workers.

When the roads opened Mr. Hansell headed Chinandega, about 70 km from the capital. He drove over metal tracks provided by the military, since all the bridges had been washed away.

"Whole villages were gone. There were no trees," he said. "There was just the smell of rotting vegetation and animals and humans."

Once in Chinandega, Mr. Hansell helped distribute food and water. Others were on hand to give needles to prevent the spread of disease.

Around them, the village tried to come to terms with the sudden decimation of their lands.

"You'd see some people going back and digging for their families," he said. "They just did what they had to do."

Back in Campbellville for a short vacation, Mr. Hansell will be returning to CUSO soon enough.

This time he'll take with him the searing images that come from following in the footprints of a hurricane.

"I remember before hearing about disasters in other parts of the world and it always seemed to be so distant," he said. "But people are all the same. Wherever it is, the people are the same."

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Spicing up her school site

student Nicole Cadwallader puts the finishing touches on her part of a mural, adorning the construction site at Holy Rosary School. Dozens of the students had a hand in livening up the projects outer barriers

> Photo by GRAHAM PAINE





