

a memoir...



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Managing Director
2007- Present

I was standing in the hallway at the 2008 Canadian Youth Workers Conference in Toronto. As people began to converge around me, I noticed that the dozen or so of us in conversation had all worked at Muskoka Woods at some point in their lives and were now youth leaders all across Canada. As I thought more about it, I realized that the ministry of Muskoka Woods has even reached beyond Canada to places like Romania, Ireland and New Zealand. Today there are many former staff and guests serving and investing their lives in youth ministry all across the globe.

For me, Muskoka Woods is a place that allowed me to use and cultivate my giftings and passions. It's an environment where I can combine many of the things I love to do: playing sports, working with kids, speaking, planning and programming. I remember the year I was Senior High Section Head and was asked to speak at Impact for the first time. Being the huge sports fan that I am, I was so excited to have Gino Reda introduce the Impact theme from the TSN Sports desk. At the end he said, "Well Muskoka Woods, thanks for watching, now over to Chris Tompkins!" What a moment! The more significant part of that night for me was that it was a great opportunity to discover how speaking and teaching would be part of God's calling on my life. Muskoka Woods trained, supported and nurtured me in my gifting and played a key role in helping me discover who I really am. I love that I'm able to continue that tradition with the next generation who are working towards what it means to follow Jesus.

Throughout our 30 years of ministry, God has been faithful to us, despite our unfaithfulness, shortcomings or failed attempts – through the good and tough times. I always try to remind myself that God loves and cares for the guests and staff who come through our gates even more than we do. We have a lot of guests who don't have the same kind of spiritual input that many of us do and I believe that God is faithful to us at Muskoka Woods because He is faithful to them.

One of things I love about our 30 years of ministry is seeing staff wrestle through the difficulties of life and become unbelievable people, living inspiring lives for God. When someone really clicks with who they are and sees God at the centre of it all, it makes all our work worthwhile. I love that we have been part of that story for many staff. I look forward to seeing the lives of this generation of staff in the years to come. God's work in their lives inspires me to continue to do what I do here at Muskoka Woods. Who knows – maybe some of them will be joining us in the halls of future Youth Workers Conventions!

Chris Tompkins