
CROSSING BORDERS

Before traveling to any CPT project site, it's a good idea to check in with the primary support person for that project to get up-to-date information on entering that country.

Tips for Crossing a Border Successfully:

- Wear nice clothing and generally try to look like a stereotypical missionary. Appearances play a big role. This includes hair coiffure as well. :)
- Practice saying something pleasant and minimally informative.
- Act confident and stay relaxed. Looking or acting nervous will not be helpful.
- Know what your story is, e.g. who will you be visiting, why, how long, and contact info for that person. If you have a letter of invitation, show it to the official.
- Do not volunteer information that is not asked for.
- Have return ticket on you (they want to make sure you're leaving).
- Have about \$200 cash on you and a major credit card (they want to make sure you can pay for yourself and that you aren't seeking work in their country)
- Present stability. If they ask where your permanent residence is and how long you have lived there, they are looking for stability— they want to know you have a reason to return home.

For Palestine:

- Whatever your story, stick with it. Do not change it half way through. If you're a tourist, then you're a tourist. End of story.
- Words to avoid: volunteer, work, peace demonstration, protester, activist
- Most CPTers these days are not saying they're with CPT. If you do, then try to frame as praying and visiting with both Palestinians and Israelis.
- Reservists are saying they're tourists. If you go this route – then have some travel books and a few ideas of where you'd like to visit.
- Full-timers can arrange with Israelis to use their address as a place of residence. Be sure to arrange ahead of time to get permission— in the past, immigration has called the people listed.

For Iraq:

- Anyone that is working for an NGO or International organization just needs a letter from that organization and a valid passport. Upon arrival at the Baghdad airport they will be issued a visa.
- When LEAVING Iraq, the Jordanian border guards can be very picky about what they let you take out of the country. People have sometimes had trouble if they have purchased expensive rugs or even inexpensive copper or other metal items. It is common for the guards to say "these are antiques, stolen from the museums," and to refuse to let you keep them. Thankfully, CPTers have always gotten through – either by raising a fuss or by bribing the guards with cookies.

For Colombia:

- Words to include when speaking: Bogota, pastors, churches, Christians, visit, sing, pray, meetings.
- Words to avoid: Barrancabermeja, campo, Magdalena Medio, work, volunteer, study, CPT, civilian accompaniment, names of armed groups
- Reservist CPTers who enter into Colombia and need to get a temporal visa (as opposed to a tourist visa) say the following (in Spanish of course): "Good evening. Here is my passport. I need a Temporal Visitante visa please. I am coming to Colombia to visit churches and to attend meetings with other Christians. I will be here from (date) to (date). The church leaders suggested that I request a Temporal Visitante visa." (A Temporal Visitante visa will allow you to enter the country without the restrictions placed on tourists, and thus, the possibility of deportation is minimized.)

For Canada:

- When explaining the purpose of the visit, words to avoid: Kenora, protest, blockade, Grassy Narrows, volunteer, work, peacemaker, indigenous/native/ First Nations, G8/FTAA, invited to GN
- Avoid having on you: CPT literature, books on First Nations, knives, sharp objects, passport with foreign stamps (?), address books, journal.
- Roleplay answering the following questions: Have you ever been arrested, charged, or convicted anywhere in the world? Are you carrying any drugs, alcohol or firearms? Do you have any gifts for anyone? Is there anything you have with you that you will leave in Canada? Do you have food with you? Have you visited a farm in the last 14 days?
- If the questioning becomes more detailed or suspicious, then a letter of invitation from Canada office or a telephone call to the Toronto office may become useful.
- U.S. citizens do not need a passport or visa to enter Canada. However, they do need proof of citizenship (e.g., birth certificate) PLUS a photo ID (e.g., driver's licence.)
- Traveling by bus can raise suspicion. Have a return ticket and money in pocket – this cuts down on suspicion.
- At the click of a button or two, Canadian border officials can have access to U.S. FBI records that will include arrests for civil disobedience, even if charges were eventually dismissed. They can and have denied CPTers access to Canada until they obtained documentation from each jurisdiction where arrests occurred, confirming that the matter has been disposed of. Canadian border officials also have information about the nature of events, where arrests occurred, whether the event was "peaceful" or not, and can take that into account in deciding whether to admit you.

For USA:

- Definitely have a letter of invitation
- Telephone calls to Chicago office may be needed
- Anything that proves that you have reason to return home will be helpful, e.g., large sum of money in bank account, home ownership, family.

FACTS, FEELINGS, and LEARNING AFTER CROSSING ANOTHER BORDER

by Erin Kindy

[On June 24, 2004, CPTer Erin Kindy traveled by bus through North Dakota on her way to Canada to join the Kenora team. After a long interrogation she was turned back. The following day, she successfully crossed into Canada, after the border control person reviewed a letter from the CPT Canada office, interviewed CPT Canada Director on the telephone, and saw that a CPT chaplain from Winnipeg was coming to pick up Erin.]

FACTS (some of them)

When I was asked to get off the Greyhound bus and go in to speak to an immigration official, I figured it was just a random check, though now I'm not quite so sure. A background check with the question of whether you had ever committed any crimes anywhere in the world seemed to be standard procedure. I told the official (who would only give me her badge number and not her name, for security reasons) that I would be visiting my friends Matt Schaaf and Lisa Martens near Kenora.

Almost immediately she asked if I would be participating in the logging protest going on there. I explained that we'd been invited by the First Nation community to be present there and was up front with her. From then on she was fixated on thinking of me as a protester. It appeared she had very little knowledge about the Grassy situation. She said the "record" they had on me indicated that I had been in Grassy from May -July 2003 and was present at some logging blockades. She mentioned at least twice that they had been, "told about" me. Was that meant to be a scare tactic? She wanted to know if we talk with the police in Grassy and I explained that we do.

The official seemed suspicious that I wanted to stay two months again (a long time in her eyes) and was worried that I did not have enough ties to home. What that meant is that I do not own or rent a house, I do not have a job I need to return to and I did not have a return ticket (I planned to cross the border with someone who will be coming to Canada later this summer.)

The official explained to me that as a non-Canadian I did not have the right to enter Canada (it would be a privilege.) After expressing her concerns and why she would recommend that I not be allowed to enter Canada she explained what I might be able to do in order to change that decision. She mentioned that if I were allowed in later it would be probable that someone would have to post a cash bond in the "thousands" of dollars so that I would comply with some conditions for my entry into the country. She thought there are enough "protestors" in Canada and that if I needed to protest something there are many things in the US to protest and asked what protests I had been a part of in the US. She explained that I was being treated the same as Greenpeace "protestors" or people who wanted to enter to go to the G-8 conference protest. She seemed interested that I had been in Colombia and wanted to know about if there had been any protests while I had been there and if I had been at them.

Finally, the immigration official had me sign a paper saying that I was voluntarily withdrawing my request to enter Canada for that moment and explained that signing the paper also meant that I had been told what I must do in order to re-try to cross the border, that I had to come back to that border crossing in order to do so (or I would be assumed to be avoiding them), and that the onus for compliance was now with me: I had to declare myself and say that I needed to talk to the immigration officials if I tried to cross again. I thought we were done then, but I was taken to the US border officials who also did some brief questioning and searched through my belongings. The bus I came in on had to take me back to the first town in the US. That night! I stayed in a motel in Pembina, ND, called Doug and the Grassy team and the following morning I made contact with a local pastor who very graciously was a wonderful help in getting the faxes I needed, allowed me to hang out in his church and use the church phone and even invited me to lunch!

FEELINGS (some of them)

It felt invasive to have my belongings searched and though I was not patted down I definitely felt I was treated as, "guilty until proven innocent."

It was an interesting experience for me to be part of the group to be excluded. I am very accustomed to being in the "in" group and experiencing the exclusion that so many people experience a great deal, even in just a small way, was a way of learning what solidarity really looks like.

It was wonderful to feel part of the CPT team, even as I was alone at the border. Gene, Doug, the Grassy team, my pastor and others worked hard to make it possible for me to get the appropriate information in order to try to cross the border again (the second time successfully.)

Yea that we have church connections! That helped me by providing a link to an unknown pastor in Pembina and allowed chaplain and fellow CPTer Loren Friesen to come and pick me up for my second try at border crossing. I was humbled by the caring of so many people, known and unknown, from near and far.

After I crossed into Canada I pondered a bit the artificiality of borders and how one day I could be seen as a persona non grata and the next day I was granted entry into the country without me changing a bit! Borders are just an invisible line in the dirt guarded by power and violence. I'd glad to be one of the people crossing those borders again and again in order to demonstrate how similar, though unique we are.

It felt good to realize that my calm and open manner of answering the questions the immigration official asked seemed to calm her down. She started out grouchy at the end of a long day, but as we talked she shifted until at the end she was clearly, and in a semi-friendly way, explaining what I could do to try to cross the border the next day.

