



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 22, 2016**

## **Canadian Christian Humanitarian Organizations Working in Cambodia Reveal a Hope-filled Story as Christopher Neil Awaits His Sentence for Sex Crimes**

**Ratanak International and Crossroads Relief and Development share an untold story in response to the sentencing hearing of the notorious child sexual predator.**

**New Westminster, B.C.-** With evidence soon to be concluded at a sentencing hearing of a Canadian man who pled guilty to crimes of sexual interference overseas involving young Cambodian boys, two Canadian Christian organizations are able to share news regarding a hope-filled initiative in the Cambodian community where these horrific crimes took place.

A B.C. courtroom will soon hear final evidence in the sentencing hearing of Christopher Neil, one of Canada's most notorious sexual predators, whose crimes committed against young Cambodian boys were depicted in the infamous "swirl face" photographs distributed on the internet a decade ago. The legal proceedings come eight years after Interpol began a massive international manhunt for Neil by releasing before-and-after images of the man's face obscured by the digital swirl.

Following the presentation of final evidence expected in court today, Christopher Neil, age 41, will receive his sentence.

Canada's laws allow for the prosecution of offenders who commit sex crimes overseas, but such cases are rare due to the challenges of obtaining the evidence required for a conviction.

The successful RCMP investigation was made possible with the assistance of Ratanak International (Ratanak), a Canadian Christian charity in B.C. working in Cambodia to help survivors of sexual abuse and human trafficking. Ratanak's Founding Director, Brian McConaghy, is a former RCMP Forensics Specialist with decades of service. He played an integral role in finding the building in which the assaults occurred, forensically processing the crime scene, locating key witnesses and liaising with the Cambodian National Police. Years of painstaking work and the presentation of this evidence resulted in the successful prosecution of this file in Canadian courts.

In 2012, the Cambodian building where Neil's crimes were committed went up for sale. Ratanak purchased the building with the intent to gain access to critical forensic evidence and, ironically, use it as a space of safety, compassion and healing for boys who are victims of

sexual abuse or at risk of exploitation. The purchase of the building was funded by the relief arm of Canadian-based Crossroads Christian Communications (known as Crossroads Relief and Development), a partner organization of Ratanak, who upon learning about the atrocities committed in the building, felt compelled to purchase the space for Ratanak. A Canadian citizen committed the crimes against young boys in the community and Crossroads felt Canadians should help fund this initiative and bring hope and refuge to the community through Ratanak's redemptive plan for the building.

Director of Crossroads Relief and Development, David Shelley, says the work done in this case by Ratanak's Founding Director Brian McConaghy was courageous and inspiring. "Brian exemplifies what it means to be the hands and feet of Jesus, to go into the dark places in the world and be light. The countless hours of his own time dedicated to helping locate the victims, confirming the location where these crimes were committed and his dedication to the rehabilitation of victims in the community is remarkable."

When asked about his work in the difficult context of international human trafficking and sexual slavery, Brian McConaghy commented that, "Working to protect the poor and vulnerable in developing countries from relatively rich and powerful western predators is not a choice for the Christian – it's an imperative. Seeking justice and restoring both freedom and dignity is not a suggestion, but a command – for we serve a God of 'sorrows and acquainted with grief' who demands we love those suffering among us".

The purchase of the building also allowed Ratanak to preserve the structure and particular features of the building should investigators require additional access for forensic evidence. Following the sentencing, Ratanak and Crossroads plan to renovate the building and continue to use the space as a safe place for Cambodian youth to receive care and safety.

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### **About Ratanak International:**

Each year in Cambodia, thousands are trafficked and exploited. With over twenty-five years of experience in the country, Ratanak International works with Cambodians to restore those robbed of freedom and protect the vulnerable. We walk with survivors on their journey from exploitation to freedom, showing them the same love Jesus shows us. Our programs work to prevent exploitation, protect the vulnerable, help the trafficked return home, and restore survivors of sexual abuse and human trafficking.

### **About Crossroads Christian Communications Inc:**

For over 50 years, Crossroads has been a leader in providing faith and values media content for people of all ages. *100 Huntley Street*, the flagship television program of Crossroads, was founded by Rev. David Mainse and is the longest running daily television program in Canada. Crossroads provides relevant messages of faith and inspiration for millions in Canada and, through the internet, around the world. Crossroads interacts with viewers via 24/7 prayer lines, receiving over 1,000 phone calls a day. Also, for more than 30 years, Crossroads has been a highly respected and effective not-for-profit aid agency. Having responded in times of natural disaster worldwide, Crossroads has raised funds and partnered with on-site, non-government organizations for emergency relief and long-term development strategies.