

Employee Spotlight

By Cory Houle, Business Development Manager

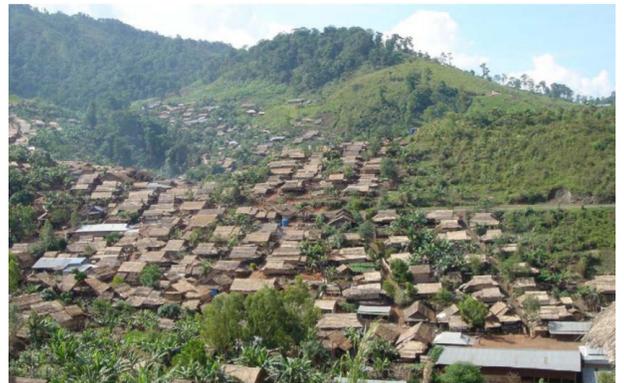


The shop at LWB continues to grow and as we bring in additional equipment to complete work in-house, we need more talent in the shop. In April 2021, **Pa Tha Yah** came in from the field after working sewer/water projects at Fairbairn (762), Cambridge (751) & Jones Falls (740). Due to Pa Tha's knowledge in automotive and mechanical abilities, he has begun an apprenticeship as 310T mechanic. Having Pa Tha at the shop is always a breath of fresh air with **his positive attitude and happy demeanor**. You can always find Pa Tha smiling and singing as he works; and he can always be counted on to jump in and help with any job around the shop or office.

Through our work with **7 Habits**, we learn about paradigms and how we see the world, and our past can shape that lens. Pa Tha's upbringing is no exception to this rule. His parents and thousands of others fled from Myanmar as the army launched an offensive against

the Karen National Union. The Karen people were forced out to neighbouring Thailand refugee camps, where Pa Tha was later born.

Refugee camps in Thailand boast living conditions in which there is no electricity and limited food (based on what is supplied by the Thai government or what is foraged or hunted in nearby forests). **Being born into this means, "never knowing what freedom is"**. There isn't an option to make a living or to leave the refugee camp to see the outside world. Your world is tiny and restricted. As a family, you find a small piece of land and build your own home with the

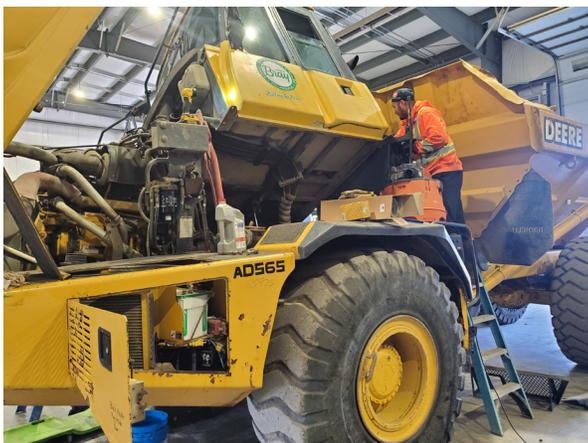


Thailand Mae Ra Moe Refugee Camp

available bamboo. You are supplied with a ration of rice, fish, beans, salt and vegetable oil, monthly. After school on Fridays, children venture out to the woods to find vegetables, bamboo shoots and potential sources of protein.

Pa Tha learned a lot from his parents and he still lives by 4 key rules they taught him:

1. *Respect everybody*
2. *Follow the rules*
3. *Live by your beliefs (whatever they may be)*
4. *Help others*



In 2008, the Thai government gave options to refugees in the camp to be relocated to the US, Canada or Norway. For many, this was a fearful thought, as they didn't know what else was out there. Pa Tha and his family had never even heard of Canada, but with a leap of faith, they seized this option. Upon landing in Canada in May 2008 (at the age of 15), Pa Tha was in awe. He was amazed by how cold it was, and traffic lights, not to mention **the ability to move freely**. The family was placed in a "reception house" for the first year. Going to school during the day and working multiple jobs, the family got by with the initial help of the government and never used the additional support of the Canadian welfare system after that first year. That time was filled with some fear due to the language barrier and new experiences, but there was much excitement about all of the opportunities that had opened up for them.

Pa Tha says "everything happens for a reason". Until last year, Pa Tha was working in maintenance at the Best Western Plus Hotel (in downtown Ottawa). The hotel closed due to COVID, leaving Pa Tha without a job until his friends, Moon and Ka Paw, told him about the opportunities at LWB. Pa Tha jumped on the opportunity, saying that "LWB felt like home" and he was "lucky to be at this company". Pa Tha has set a goal to become a licensed mechanic and to excel as a mechanic through to his retirement, giving him the ability to help others and the company, which is one of his main passions.

In his free time, Pa Tha can be found sharing his knowledge with family and friends. If he's not busy working and helping others, Pa Tha can be found hanging out with friends, fishing, playing volleyball, kickball and soccer.



Mae Ra Moe Refugee Camp - Classroom