

A Centennial Library at Inuvik

It was heartening to find Fort Norman carrying on their meetings in Slavey. They all participated, taking part in discussion, giving suggestions for meetings and special undertakings. Of course I understood only what was repeated in English. Some of it may have been to little purpose, but they were taking part — it was their meeting, their Women's Institute. One was not always successful in enlisting the outsider in living in the settlement and in giving leadership. They worked, had family demands, maybe saw the need but were not prepared to buckle down and really do something, or were not interested. It all calls for the sort of help that will help them to help themselves — the help that will involve them all along in expressing and identifying their wishes and needs, and as well create a desire and readiness to work to meet some of them. One must not decide for them or superimpose this or that on them.

All this is slow, sometimes frustrating; but again I repeat, I am convinced there is a place, a special place, for Women's Institutes. This calls for wisdom on the part of all — understanding, tolerance and a vital interest in them and forever appreciating that they want to be themselves, not made over like us. They are individuals in their own right — capable, resourceful, splendid in so many ways. We can learn much from them.

They need, and I believe, are ready for a Field Worker to work with them more continuously, to visit them from time to time, throughout the year, to undertake and carry on certain projects selected by them, some of which could be by local leaders. A start was made at this during the past summer. Results indicate a need for a more definite follow-through and guidance.

The appointment of two local Northern women as Field Workers — Mrs. Veat of Discovery and Mrs. Lambert of Destruction Bay, a delegate to F.W.I.C. Convention — is a start. I do hope that F.W.I.C. will be given the necessary financial backing to make it possible to expand and extend their work in this way. Distances are tremendous, making travelling costly; but if work is to be maintained and progress made on what has been started, money will be necessary. It will and can go to work for you in your own Canadian North.

I wish to personally thank the Women's Institutes in Ontario for their most generous financial share in making this highly commendable work possible. I am indeed proud of you; and, appreciating your past records, your desire and willingness to share, I know you will continue to help in the days ahead as you see the need, and evidence that acceptable and understanding leadership is being given.

THE INUVIK CENTENNIAL LIBRARY is housed in a modern, new building with a touch of the North in its architecture. Inside it is spacious, well equipped with shelves, tables, showcases and walls for displaying art posters, etc.

Immediately on entering, an array of original pictures by school children captured my attention. Nearby, a glass case housed some of the best in native crafts from different northern settlements. Reference material beautifully illustrated, books, and more books were there aplenty, enticing youth and adult alike to browse through them. Citizens of Inuvik, natives, outsiders, residents from many countries and from all over Canada have marvellous reading material available to them. Parents of many of these people with limited schooling never had an opportunity to enjoy such treasures. The entire setting of this library is conducive to reading, exploring, learning and to creating a desire as well as the reaches beyond the walls of the library with readers visiting the hospital to read to children.

Ellen Binder, an active Women's Institute member recently appointed librarian has been a prime promoter of the library. It stands now a great credit to Inuvik, the farsightedness and enterprise of the citizens who have worked to make it what it is. Ellen Binder is most grateful for gifts of books from outside, from many Ontario Women's Institutes and other groups who have responded liberally with books for the Inuvik Centennial Library.

From here on, priority will be given to procuring more and more children's books. What an amazing array they already have! It was a great sight to watch children quietly and gleefully enjoying them at the tables and later departing with a book for home reading.

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Looking across a lagoon at Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories.

