

## The Allens of Inuvik

DID YOU SEE AND HEAR VICTOR ALLEN of Inuvik on television when he was guest speaker at the Fourth National Conference on Northern Development in Edmonton? He spoke for his people in a simple, practical, down to earth manner.

Victor, an Eskimo, and his wife Bertha, a Loucheux Indian, are most commendable northern citizens. They have a family of seven and are determined to give them every opportunity for an education. They stopped school, but not learning, at grades 4 and 5.

In her Christmas letter, Bertha told of her community activities — church women's group, Ingamo Association (Indian Eskimo), Women's Institute, a member of the swimming pool committee (as one who had lost a son by drowning); and as well she attends night classes in shorthand. She did not add that she spends five days in the week helping with food service at Grollier Hall Hostel.

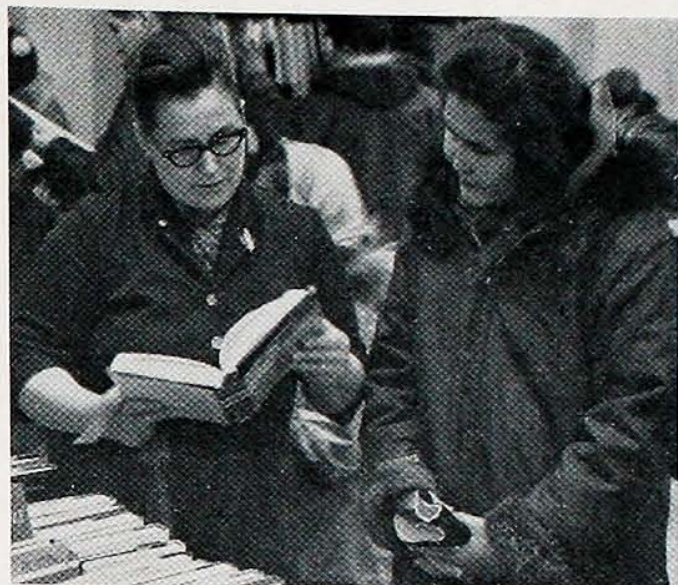
Victor is not in any activities this year since he is taking some schooling in the mornings. His eight-year-old daughter, Velma, is greatly elated when he turns to her for help from time to time and calls her his teacher. Jerry and Yvonne are in grade 8; Yvonne, much to their delight, is looking forward to nurses' training when "if and ever" she finishes grade 12. They are disappointed that Jerry is not too interested in studying. He still would rather be a trapper. Both his parents realize there is no future in trapping in the Delta as they knew it. Knowing it is not wise to force him to stay in school against his wishes they hope they will find a course that will interest him. Bertha and the four older family members find time to enjoy cross-country skiing. As well, both Victor and Bertha are associate editors on the Inuvik paper, *The Drum*, with Mr. Butters, the editor.

Their ambition, industry and wisdom make us feel humble indeed. We are also compelled to say that school grades are little indication of resourcefulness, ingenuity and capacity to do many things and to achieve; and Victor and Bertha were surprised to be recipients of the Centennial Medal for serving the nation.

But are they not a most deserving family!

She writes of herding with her husband in 1954 when they were part of a native herd camp:

"We stay with the herd twenty-four hours, then someone comes to take our place. This was life. I really liked the native camp and I often get lonesome for the Eskimo Lakes



Left to right — Mrs. Binder and Mrs. Bertha Allen examine books in the Inuvik Centennial Library.

Camp. In the long spring days we used to go jigging lake trout and this was really fun. We used to get firewood with sled deers — reindeer trained to use harness.

"I now feel so old I can never roam Eskimo Lakes, driving sled deer, learning to ski and rounding up reindeer with my husband. Life has changed. We don't use wood stoves now. This is easier, of course; I did not have school-age children at that time. I am glad we have day school here. I'd rather stay home all year round and have my children with me than live in camp and have my children sent away to school."

It seems school days were happy days for Rhoda in '46 and '47:

"The boys used to clean fish and bring wood for the big furnace and we girls used to do some kitchen work and knead dough in the big round washtub. We left this dough overnight and it is put into the pans and baked next day. We changed work every four weeks, some helping with the laundry and some sweeping floors, or washing dishes and going to school, too. In ratting season we used to go trapping rats and we ate the meat and got a little money to buy a projector for school and hospital use. Mind you we got into a lot of mischief, too."

When in Charles Camsell Hospital, Edmonton she was asked if she lived in an igloo. "No, she never lived in an igloo but slept in one once when caught in a storm when travelling." In her earlier days she lived in log houses and tents in summer. She recalls her father building some sort of a hut using willow frames and moss for roof. "Supposing I was really stuck and have no place to camp I believe I can build one," added the resourceful Rhoda.