

FWIC – Into the North

The Federated Women's Institutes of Canada (FWIC) has launched a new project to assist children and women and focus on improving the lives of families in Northern Canada. Hopedale and Sheshatshui in Labrador are the first two communities selected.

Hopedale is located on the northern Labrador coast, among the large bays that open up to the Labrador Sea. The Moravian Missionaries first established this community. The first mission building was erected in 1782 and was declared a National Historic Site in 1990. Hopedale is the second largest Innu community in Northern Labrador. Currently, about 250 of its 610 residents are aged 18 and under. The residents still rely on wild food and travel far distances for firewood.

Sheshatshui is an Innu community in central Labrador. The area was a traditional summer gathering place for the Innu who resided inland most of the year, living off the land by hunting, fishing and trapping. They came to the area to fish and to meet with their priest,

camping close to the Hudson's Bay Post where they would trade furs for supplies. When the Roman Catholic Church was built in the late 1950s, some of the Innu started to settle. Today, the community of Sheshatshui has a population of about 1,300 and is in the process of becoming a First Nations Reserve.

Hopedale and Sheshatshui are isolated communities with very real needs, especially for the children. Issues in these communities include teen pregnancy, maternal, infant and early childhood care, access to medical care, family violence, substance abuse and unemployment. Recommended community leaders provided a list of their needs, which included:

- funding to purchase nutritional food, water and supplies for new moms and children (for safety reasons, bottled water is required for drinking)
- funding for breakfast programs
- supplies for women's shelters
- books for children and women
- educational resources
- baby items.

FWIC is asking all members and Branches across Canada to help improve the lives of the women and children that live in these two northern communities. WI members are always so generous when they see a need, and there is a real need right here in Canada!

For those members and Branches sending cheques, please make them payable to FWIC, with Northern Canada Project on the memo line. All cheques should be sent to FWIC, PO Box 209, St. George ON N0E 1N0. FWIC is also collecting baby items, such as blankets, sleepers, sweaters, etc. Please send these items directly to Margaret Yetman, 10 Barbour Dr., Mount Pearl NL A1N 2H8.

Note that the first target date is July 1, 2005, but items will continue to be accepted throughout the summer. FWIC plans to continue this project by working with and assisting communities in other regions of Northern Canada.

Extracted from information distributed by FWIC.

Schoolhouse Comes to Life

Having not been open to the public in almost twenty years, the old Rombough one-room schoolhouse looked about what one might expect – a little dusty, a little dark and a little run down. Although there haven't been students in the desks since 1945, they were occupied again one Friday evening last October. This time by members of the Reidville Women's Institute. Member Helen Brown arranged to have the Branch's regular monthly meeting in the old building. Helen gave a presentation about the history of the Rombough schoolhouse and about the history of education in the area. A trustee for the local school board, a former teacher and the fact that she lives across the road from the school, Helen was an obvious choice to make the presentation.



Extracted in part from an article by Seth DuChene in The Napanee Beaver, October 13, 2004. Photo courtesy of Seth DuChene.