

Replies from Sandy Lake a glimpse of Indian life

As Christmas project this year, Acton's three schools, pooled efforts to send gifts to every child in the Indian reserve of Sandy Lake, Ontario. Last week, a bundle of thank you letters arrived at Robert Little.

Each letter told how the presents brightened the Christmas season in their remote northern community, and through the children's own words, a picture of their lives, begins to focus.

"One child writes: 'I am Donna Ray, 13 years old in grade six. I thought I would drop out and tell you about Christmas in Sandy Lake. My birthday is on Dec. 19, and that's our last day of school for our Christmas holiday. On Dec. 24 we go to Council Hall to get out the gifts. The Council gives out the gifts. And I want to thank you for the gifts you sent.'

On the same day, but at night we go to old people's house and have feast and at midnight our father go outside and shoot at the sky. We had fun that time. We had fun until it was over on January 1st. And I hope you people there had fun too.

We are living near school in winter and in summer we live far from school. Sometimes we ride in the boat to go to school.

A little boy says: 'I am a boy, 12 years old in grade six and my teacher's name is Mr. Jones and he is a good teacher. We play in the school playing games and my hobbies is looking at books. I really like school.'

Barbara Fidler tells about her Christmas: 'We had fun doing on the hills. And there is feasting in the night and sometimes after midnight. We go around the houses until we get full of eating. My father had a feast too. They had feast together at Tom Fidler's house. We go to C. Hall to get presents. Santa Claus gives us our presents. Santa Claus wears a costume and he gives us candy. Stanley Fidler says: 'I am a fighting guy. I am not strong. I am weak. I don't like to go to school. All I want to do is play. I like to fight too. Sheila Fidler writes: 'I have three brothers and three sisters. One of my sisters went to get a baby and hasn't come back yet. I think she is coming back Monday. If you want you can write to her. She has three children now. We live with her. She hasn't any baby clothes. I like her and she likes me.'

The picture becomes even clearer in the words of their principal Mr. Griffith. He writes:

Thanks for your kindness in taking time to send us so many gifts for our children. Most of the gifts were turned over to the Band Council, because we are anxious to give them as much responsibility as possible and of course they know their own people better than the teachers.

Our village has about 800 people of the Deer Lake Band. Before 1950 these people made their living by hunting, fishing and trapping. They were spread out through the forest of the area, in groups of about 30 led by the patriarch.

Now they live in the village under their elected chief and councillors. With almost all in this village hunting, fishing and trapping are side lines. Most of their income is welfare, possibly out of restlessness and insecurity and lack of positive thinking.

However, now we have heard enthusiastic statements in the last week. Some are eagerly asking for business training. In April welfare money will be in the hands of the Band Council. The idea is for all able bodied men to work for the village to get welfare. Clear land, build an air strip, cut lumber, and repair buildings will be a change from doing nothing.

At present, lumber is flown in while we sit in the middle of the forest. New houses are being built and if the present welfare goes for cutting timber, sawing lumber and building the homes, this will be a great saving and the local village people may regain some of the long lost pride in themselves.

A day school started here in 1960 with one room. A three room unit was built later and last year a splendid five room building was erected. It has a health room, library and showers. There is a R.C. school (2 rooms) here. It was in

St. Alban's Generation

The Young Generation is a dance committee for St. Alban's Church young people's group. Officers for 1969 are president Sam Schoonop, vice-president Rick Rocher, secretary-treasurer Margie Frizzell; board of directors Debbie Schoonop, Beth McCutcheon, Debbie Barr and Cindy Barr.

The committee decided on an entrance fee of 25 cents. Pop may be purchased for 15 cents and chips 10 cents. The age limit range is to be 12 to 16 years.

On February 7 they held their Valentine dance with an attendance of over 70 people with all of them dancing.

They hope for even greater attendance at the next dance.

operation before the U.C. school started. Next year we expect to see the two schools operate as one unit.

Several years ago two houses were built for the teaching staff. Last year a motel unit (4 units) and a new house were built. This year a house was built for the agency man. We have hot and cold water, oil heat and electric power from 4 diesel powered generators.

This year we seem to have a pleasant group of white people in the village. The local priest, Father Dumont, seems pleased with schools. The Bay manager and his wife are a fine couple with four children (4 years and under). The same can be said for the U.C. minister and his wife.

At the nursing station are two capable nurses so with a fine couple at the R.C. school and the helpful staff to help us at the U.C. school I feel very fortunate. Eight out of ten teachers are here for their first year in the village. Next year possibly only three will remain. The turn over in the north is a handicap to the children.

Sandy Lake is shallow and with a fine mud bottom thus the water is never clear. We were surprised to find no fishing in the immediate vicinity. There is fishing 25 miles away. On weekends last fall we were afraid to go that far in a small boat on the large lake in case a storm might keep us away from school.

Our children seem quite bright and are settling down to work, but English is a problem. It is not used outside of school so the

older children try to avoid speaking out in class. For two years the classes were on shift, the school staff were crowded into two rather small houses and these crowded conditions caused the staff to be discouraged. So with no English speaking parents, no books or newspapers or television in the home, with the home too small to give a child a place to read, no books available on weekends, holidays, or during the summer months our children are behind.

The families are large and the homes are so small, no room for a cupboard or chairs it is impossible for them to have a book at home.

The soil here seems to be all clay. The trees are spruce, poplar, jack-pine, birch some balsam and a few willow.

The climate is usually rather dry but last summer it rained so that the clay was always mud. Last fall it was everywhere. This seems to have been a rather mild winter, it is seldom 30 degrees. Last year it dropped down into the deep 50's.

The Bay store is our post office and it is just over a mile away. Mail is to come in on Tuesday and Thursday but the last three days there has been a cloud cover on mail days so it comes on a later day. We have enjoyed our walks to the Bay so far we have not walked in any wind. The snow has stayed on the trees all winter.

I am enclosing some letters from our grade seven and eight pupils. From their own work you will see how far they are behind.

Phuture Phreeze's in various forms



HAPPINESS is a class effort in the high school snow sculpture contest. Over a dozen creations from life-size skidoos to giant turtles are on display this week on the school grounds as part of the first annual winter carnival. Judging is to take place next Saturday morning. (Staff Photo)

Free News YOUTH PAGE

fresh tracks
by Barbara McIntosh

VALENTINES

The big day is February 14th when a chubby little love god named Cupid aims his arrows at unsuspecting hearts. Since it had its beginnings in a Roman festival called Lupercalia, St. Valentine's Day has undergone a number of heartfelt changes.

In the 17th century, a hopeful maiden ate a hard boiled egg and pinned five bay leaves to her pillow before going to sleep on Valentine's Eve. This was supposed to make her dream of her future husband.

The Duke of Orleans is believed to have made the first valentine cards in 1415, by sending love poems to his wife in France from his prison cell in the Tower of London. The tradition of cards grew and became so popular in the 17th and 18th century that they started selling them in stores. Many still preferred hand made types of paper, lace, satin ribbon and crushed flowers.

However, for the so-called LOVE generation, the current rage in Valentine cards is about as romantic as a shoebox of rotten cabbage leaves. Upon conducting my own personal survey I have divided them into two classes (1) the cool card for the Valentine-sender who doesn't go for sentiment; and (2) the insult-your-best-enemy kind for losers.

In the cool class for example, there's a navy blue card with a single psychedelic pink circle beside a single psychedelic pink square. Inside it reads 'Ours is a strange relationship'.

Another states in bold black letters 'This Valentine is not sealed with a kiss'. Inside it adds in smaller print 'With you around why waste time on an envelope.'

Still another reads, 'Valentine, there's something different about you' and finishes off with a touching 'you're the only one who will go out with me!'

While these hardly compare in romantic charm with the Duke of Orleans' love letters from a prison cell, they are considerably warmer than the insult-your-best-enemy group. Take for example, 'Be my Valentine—nothing makes me sick'. Then there's 'Stay your same sweet self—if you were any sweeter you'd be revolting'.

Finally there's a winner that reads 'A Valentine's message just for you'. Inside is a scowling face and a tongue that pops out at you.

With such an impressive display of sentiment I'm wondering if Cupid will be able to cope with the results.

Delinquent

We read in the papers, we hear on the air of killing and stealing and crime everywhere. We sigh and we say as we notice this trend, "This young generation! Where will it all end?" But can we be sure that it's their fault alone? That maybe most of it isn't really our own? Too much money to spend, too much idle time, too many movies of passion and crime; too many books not fit to be read; too much of evil in what they hear said; too many children encouraged to roam. By too many parents who won't stay at home. Kids don't make the movies, they don't write the books, they paint a gay picture of gangsters and crooks. They don't make the liquor, they don't run the bars, they don't make the laws and they don't drive the cars. They don't make the drugs that addle the brain. It's all done by older folk greedy for gain. Thus in so many cases it must be confessed The label "Delinquent" fits older folk best.

Community support needed

TORCHLIGHT PARADE: Wednesday—7:30—from the post office to the high school.

VARIETY SHOW: Friday 8:00. Admission 50 cents adults, 25 cents public school.

CHARIOT RACE: Saturday 10:00 through town

SNOW FUN: Saturday morning at high school skidoo races, woodchopping contests, spike driving contest, tug-of-war, snow statues.

FOLK SERVICE: Saturday 7:30 Rev. L. Dubv.

Did you hear about the store that sold pink lemonade in a variety of colors?

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