

*In 1996 – in celebration of NCEM’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – the 252-page book “Light on the Horizon” was published and distributed. It is now out of print – however, the entire text of the book (including photo captions) is presented here in digital format.*

# *Light on the Horizon*

NORTHERN CANADA EVANGELICAL MISSION’S

FIFTY YEARS of MINISTRY to CANADA’S FIRST PEOPLES

*The history of world missions is simply the story of men and women who have taken Jesus Christ seriously – people who have recognized that they have been blessed in order that others, through them, might also be blessed.*

*It is also the story of those who have faced overwhelming odds – among them a small band of missionaries who, in 1946, set out to see the Church established among unreached Native peoples. The obstacles to be encountered in pursuing their task may not have been fully understood, but the goal itself certainly was. The next fifty years would bring difficulties, setbacks and victories.*

*This is the story of the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission. It is the story of those who have served by faith, with their eyes on the Light on the Horizon.*

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## INTRODUCTION

A couple of years ago I was handed what seemed my most difficult assignment ever – to “write” a book that would describe Northern Canada Evangelical Mission’s 50 years of ministry. I soon found out, however, that the job wouldn’t really be that hard.

It would be impossible. The task would, I’m sure, have challenged even the most skilled of writers – a class I don’t even pretend to belong to. (Good writers don’t end sentences with prepositions.) But I don’t remember being given a chance to decline the “offer” ... and you now hold in your hands the results.

Where does one start on a project like this? The several hundred people who have served with NCEM over the years could each easily fill a book with their own experiences. Writing a “complete” history of the Mission seems unachievable. God “alone” knows all that has taken place; He alone knows what has been of significance.

My hope is that this book will be seen simply as an attempt, however feeble, to give God glory for what He has done through ordinary people. I’m sure that those mentioned would have the same desire.



In one of his books, pastor and author Erwin Lutzer tells the story of a man who was losing his memory. The doctor told him that in order to restore his memory he would have to impair his eyesight. The man replied that he would rather see where he was going than remember where he had been!

The story, of course, is fictitious, but the lesson is valid. There is danger in getting too taken up with the past. Yet there is some benefit in looking back. There are, in fact, numerous accounts in Scripture where God’s people are exhorted to remember what He had enabled them to do, by way of encouragement for the future. If this book produces even a little of that same encouragement, then by God’s grace, the effort has been worthwhile.



The book is dedicated to all of NCEM’s workers, but especially to those who have served on stations where geography and slow response to the Gospel has made fellowship with other Christian believers difficult to find. Adding to this hardship some of these missionaries, especially in the earlier years, lived in primitive conditions and faced extreme physical challenges. They’ve never thought of themselves as heroes, though, and would quickly point out that many professionals – educators, health and government workers, pilots and others – have also left family and friends to live and work in these same places.

There “is” something that sets these servants of the Lord apart, though. These missionaries have done it not to earn a living, but for the sake of Christ. They have been God’s agents for change in needy communities where change seemed to come hard and slow. Their task often appeared impossible. But they knew that the God they trusted would never ask them to do something for which He would not strengthen them.

They have been opposed and criticized by the people they have sought to love. They have been misunderstood, sometimes even by their Christian brethren.

They have visited countless homes and families, and cared and prayed for countless individuals. They have opened their homes to friends and strangers, and have left their families to travel many miles for the sake of the Gospel. They have given freely of their money and possessions. For these reasons we honor them.



I would like to express appreciation for the many who knowingly and unknowingly assisted in the production of this book, but especially for the late Maggie Potter for her collection of information on the Mission’s first years; and my thanks to: Derrick and Jean Hiscox for their taped interviews with many of the NCEM pioneers; to the many missionaries who have written of their experiences over the years; and to my loving wife, Denise, whose missionary heart is big enough for me and our children, as well as for the many people whose lives she has touched through her ministry.

*– Rollie Hodgman*

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **THE BEGINNINGS: BY PRAYER**

When did this ministry begin? The Northern Canada Evangelical Mission had its official beginning two years and-one-day after World War II's D-Day. On June 7, 1946 a handful of a new breed of "missionaries to the North" along with some supportive friends met in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, to organize their work.

The 1946 meeting was monumental in establishing the Mission, as now the work could be legally registered as a charitable society. But it was certainly not the beginning. One must look back to 1939 when Stan Collie, who was to become the Mission's first director, took his first trip into northwestern Saskatchewan. But to more closely trace the Mission's real beginnings, one must go back even further to a time when Stan Collie had not yet even considered missionary service, for he had not yet begun a spiritual walk with his Saviour.

To those acquainted with NCEM's first years, the names of several missionary workers come to mind. There were Stan and Evelyn Collie and the other early members: Art and Martha Tarry, Gleason and Kathryn Ledyard, John and Hulda Penner, Ray and Catherine Bradford, Anne (Koop) Heal, Eleanor (Kennedy) Aslin and Sarah Olmstead. There were also William Nish and Hubert Smith, early Board members who, along with Christian friends in the Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan area, graciously supported the early efforts of these workers.

The Canadian Sunday School Mission's name comes to mind, as well, for it helped undergird the work of some of these missionaries during their first years on the field. Yet at this period in history, when so little was being done to reach Canada's northern Native people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, other factors were at work. They seem more evident in retrospect.

What were they? What developments were taking shape to bring the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to this neglected and needy part of the world?

### **A RUSTLE OF CONCERN**

One development was the previous involvement of a certain servant of the Lord. His name does not appear among the Mission's early members. His personal participation lasted only for a short while, but it was timely.

His name was George Isaac Reine. Of Swedish descent, he was born in 1907 in the Weyburn, Saskatchewan area. He went on to study at Winnipeg Bible Institute, graduating in 1936. His long-range plans were for missionary service in Africa but he first set out to work in a northern mining town in order to save money for future expenses. It was in 1937 that he caught his first glimpses of Canada's North. What he experienced there impacted not only his own life, but

would subsequently influence hundreds, even thousands, of others.

Isaac travelled first to Waterways, the “end of the steel” and present-day location of Fort McMurray, Alberta, about 300 miles northeast of Edmonton. He worked his way down the great Athabasca River to Fort Chipewyan, then up Lake Athabasca to Goldfields (present site of Uranium City, Saskatchewan), a gold mining town which had been abandoned for several years but which had revived with the discovery of other minerals.

Working days as stevedore, he unloaded boats and barges and also took up other employment that came available. He built himself a pole shack for the coming winter. Being a committed Christian and trained preacher, it seemed only natural for Isaac to begin an evangelistic outreach in his spare time. He started a little Sunday school and, in spite of opposition and ridicule, he held services in the typically sinful frontier town.

Following his winter at Goldfields, Isaac returned south, struck by the great spiritual needs he had observed. Most particularly, it was the great needs he had noticed among the Indian people he had seen while travelling. In and around Goldfields, and along the shores of the Athabasca River, he had seen numerous tent villages -- people with no one there to tell them about Christ.

Isaac himself would serve on only a few short stints among Indians in the North. But his involvement would show, more than anything else, that it was through prayer that God would make a way for the overlooked first peoples of Canada to know of His redeeming grace. He would be greatly used by God to motivate churches across western Canada to pray. His influence would also be seen in how he personally brought a number of God’s servants together to accomplish something that they could never have realized on their own.

## **SHARING THE BURDEN**

Isaac Reine had gained a burden he could not keep to himself. During the following months as he travelled throughout Canada’s prairie provinces in a preaching ministry, he was all the while seeking information concerning Christian outreach to Indian people like those whom he had seen camped along river banks and lake shores. Was anyone doing anything for them?

In 1938 Isaac worked again for awhile in the North, this time at Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, before returning to Weyburn. While he travelled and preached, he could not keep from telling his audiences of what he had seen in the North. He began publishing a newsletter and through it, as well as through his meetings, many Christians gained knowledge of a needy mission field right in their own country.

Momentum seemed to be building. Through Isaac Reine’s efforts many prayer warriors were being raised up on behalf of Canada’s Native people.

## **GOD DEALS WITH A HOMESTEADER**

In April of 1937 -- about the very same time that Isaac Reine was reaching Edmonton after his

winter at Goldfields -- God was dealing with a young rancher-homesteader and his wife near Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan.

Prayer was involved. And while “how prayer works” cannot be fully understood by human minds, its effects can at least in part be observed. Numerous Christians would soon begin to pray that God would send labourers to Canada’s North. Others were praying for the salvation of a particular man -- Stanley Collie.

It was the drought that drove Evelyn Martin’s family from the “dried-out South” up to Meadow Lake where there was some moisture. Three of Evelyn’s brothers had already moved there. The rest of the family loaded their things into a wagon and moved to join them when once again their planted crop blew away with the dust.

That is where Evelyn met Stan, a young bachelor working hard to establish a homestead. By then he had a pretty good start with some cattle, hay stacks and haying equipment.

Stan and Evelyn were married in 1933, but they allowed God no part in the life they had begun together. At least not at first. “We were too busy with living the worldly life and going to dances,” says Evelyn. Evelyn’s mother was a born again believer, but Evelyn and her brothers did not share their mother’s faith.

Like their neighbours, the Collies were eking out a bare existence. Yet Stan would often spend what little cash he could earn on liquor or gambling, and then was compelled to ask the grocer for “credit.”

Evelyn’s brothers stayed with them for awhile, but in 1935 the brothers left Meadow Lake because they had run out of work. It was not long after moving to Vancouver that they each made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ after attending meetings at a downtown mission. One of the brothers, Bill, wrote a letter to Stan and Evelyn, telling about his new-found faith. But because she knew what Stan thought of Christians, Evelyn was afraid to show it to him. It wasn’t long before another letter arrived; this one included a tract entitled Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment.

After the second letter came Evelyn decided to show them both to Stan. “He didn’t make any comments,” Evelyn remembers. “He didn’t even laugh. I thought perhaps he would throw them away or something, but he didn’t.” It was something new to Stan, and he had to think about it. Perhaps by that time Stan was already realizing that his life needed some changing.

## **A STRANGE TRANSFORMATION**

A strange transformation started to take place in Stan’s proud heart. He began to be concerned about his sinful habits. He could see that they were getting worse and that he was helpless in himself to be any different. A blazing temper and filthy and profane tongue had often grieved Evelyn. When their little golden-haired daughter began to lispingly repeat the words she heard around the barn, Stan made a genuine effort to reform, but to no avail.

Stan was being convicted of his sin. He didn't understand what was happening to him but, because of her Christian influence in childhood, Evelyn knew. "My brothers told us [later] that Andy was going to one church and Bill was going to another," recalls Evelyn. They had their churches praying for Stan, and on at least one occasion had the two churches meet together to pray especially for us.

That was when the conviction started. Interestingly, that was also the same time that a young preacher by the name of Fred Smith, serving with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, came up to the Meadow Lake district. He was a missionary candidate appointed to South America but had come out to that needy area in west-central Saskatchewan as an intern. The following account from the book *Collie's Corner: A Collection* tells what transpired:

*Fred began to hold Sunday services in the schoolhouse. One day, while visiting on horseback he had reached the Collies' nearest neighbour, one mile south, where Evelyn's sister was working at the time. After supper, with an eight-mile ride back to town to look forward to, he enquired if there were any more homes on that road. Hearing that there was one more a mile farther north, he determined to go there too.*

*Evelyn's sister tried to discourage him, fearing that he would only be insulted. However the reception was very different, and he obtained a promise that the children would be at the service the following day.*

*For two or three Sundays Stan hitched up the horses and sent Evelyn and the two children to the schoolhouse. Then one Sunday Evelyn said she wouldn't go unless Stan went too. As a final argument she burst into tears. The tears did it, and for the first time in his life, at the age of 31, Stan Collie heard the Gospel. The poor fellow was so conscious of his patched overalls and shirt that he didn't remember much. But the ice was broken, and he became a regular attender.*

*Gradually Stan began to realize that Jesus Christ was the answer to his problem. The road was not easy but much prayer was being made for them. Fred called when he could, and always pressed the claims of Jesus Christ. After one such visit, Stan accompanied him to the neighbours, and on his way home Stan decided that he should "get saved." He knelt in the darkness at the barb-wire fence by the side of the road. How long he stayed there he doesn't know, but the feeling he was waiting for didn't come. He began to think that he must be too bad to ever be a Christian.*

*Before he and Fred had parted that evening, Stan had invited Fred to come back Saturday and stay overnight in order to save the long Sunday morning horseback ride. Fred was glad to accept, and late Saturday afternoon arrived at the little cabin.*

*Even before the table was laid for supper, Fred had his Bible out, and the way of salvation was explained in detail. Supper over, and the chores done, the conversation was resumed. One objection after another was overcome from the Scriptures, but still the light had not dawned.*

*Twenty minutes before midnight Fred suggested prayer before retiring. Kneeling together he*



*asked them to follow him in a prayer of acceptance. Evelyn did so, and joy came into her heart! The Gospel story was not new to her. When she was a girl back in her home town she had attended a Gospel mission and had often “gone forward” at the altar call. The pastor and others had placed their hands on her and prayed, but no one had ever taken the Bible and showed her how to be a Christian.*

*After waiting in vain for some time for Stan to respond, Fred committed them to the Lord and they rose to their feet. “I guess it’s no use,” Stan said. “I’m beat.”*

*Fred felt compelled to go over the ground once more: “You admit you are a sinner, don’t you, Stan?” “Yes.” No one but he himself knew how deeply into sin he had gone.*

*“You do believe that the Bible is God’s Word, don’t you?” “Yes, I do.”*

*“And you believe that it says that Jesus Christ came to save sinners?” “Yes, we just read in the Bible that ‘Whosoever believes in Him will never perish, but have eternal life.’ “*

*Suddenly the light dawned! He had done everything that God required of him. Surely he had confessed his sin and repented. Truly he did believe. “I am a believer!” he realized. Then God would surely do His part! Joy flooded his soul, and shone on his face as he said softly, “I’m saved.”*

*“Then let’s kneel and thank God for what He has done,” said Fred, and again they knelt. Evelyn thanked God for saving her, but Stan was still silent. He didn’t know how to talk to God.*

*Finally, with a heart just bursting with gratitude, he began to repeat The Lord’s Prayer, but he could not remember it all. However, the work had been done. The Holy Spirit had entered into two contrite hearts, and two new names were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. As Fred grasped their hands in silence, they noticed the hands of the alarm clock pointing straight up. A new day had come ... and a new life had begun for the Collies.<sup>1</sup>*

Stan and Evelyn’s immediate response to their conversion was inner peace and joy. It was something that they could not keep to themselves. They immediately began telling others. The Collies started a little Sunday school right in their home for the district people. The weekly meeting soon moved across the road to the school house.

Before long Stan heard of the Canadian Sunday School Mission, which was holding its first Bible camp in their area. He signed up as a summer worker to visit homes and invite parents to send their children to camp. By horseback he visited every home in the school district and two other districts as well.

## **BEYOND MEADOW LAKE**

Before long Stan’s desire to serve the Lord would be taking him to regions far beyond Meadow Lake. His growing love for God would even cause him to consider full-time Christian service.

But it would be no easy decision for him to leave his homestead, and all that he had worked for.

Looking back, Stan mentions two particular influences. One was a missionary conference held in Saskatoon which he attended along with a neighbour. There he heard SIM missionaries speaking of their work in Africa. And there he realized, "There was a whole world out there that was lost, and ... I should be doing something to tell them of the Lord."

After the meeting he sought out one of the speakers and enquired as to the prospects of going to Africa. But his age, his growing family, and his lack of training were pointed out as factors that made the foreign field seem an impossibility.

A second influence was Evelyn's younger brother, Jim, who had gone up North one winter to trap with his neighbour. When he returned he had told Stan stories about the Indians who lived up there. Not many people in the Meadow Lake district knew much about the area to the north of them. Finding out about the Indians didn't make a great impact on Stan right then, but it lodged in his memory.

One day, after the Saskatoon missions conference, when Stan was out cutting and piling roots for a neighbour, the thought came: "Why couldn't 'I' go down there to these Indians?" Stan recalls that the thought caught him off-guard because he couldn't think of even one reason why he couldn't go! He remembers returning home later that day and saying to Evelyn, "How would you like to be a preacher's wife?"

## **FIRST TRIP NORTH**

The year was 1939. Stan had begun asking around, looking for someone with whom he could travel further north, but he was having no success. Stan would later write this about his first opportunity:

*One day after the Bible camp work had begun and I was riding back home, I stopped in at a neighbour's place. To my surprise, he gave me fifteen dollars that he owed me. I rode on into Meadow Lake to get some groceries to take home.*

*The first man I met upon reaching town was a Metis who I knew from Green Lake. I asked him if he knew of anyone going [north] to Ile-a-la-Crosse. He told me that Otto and Henry (the "Russian Traders") were. (Otto was Norwegian and Henry was German.) They were from Cree Lake and were outfitting at a local store and would soon be going to Patuanak, then further upriver to their post.*

*I looked them up. They told me I could go along if I brought my own grub box and helped with the construction of the boats they were making to carry their freight. I was overjoyed at this answer to prayer.*

*I bought a supply of groceries for Evelyn and rode out to our homestead, eight miles away. Evelyn packed my grub box and made me a mosquito bar. I had no tent, only a square of old*

*canvas duck.*<sup>2</sup>

The story of building the three big skiffs -- the many adventures in river rapids, the five Dene families who accompanied Stan and the traders and helped with navigation -- would take pages to recount. Stan recalled especially the following events as eye-openers on the trip:

*When we arrived at Patuanak we were greeted by a salute of gunfire as we rounded the bend at the north tip of the lake. You see, the Roman Catholic bishop was expected momentarily. When the people heard the motors of our boats, they thought it was him and his entourage!*

*We camped on a willow flat across from the settlement, on the swiftly flowing Churchill River. The settlement consisted of the Catholic church and other [RC] properties, the Hudson's Bay store, a few log cabins and scores of tents. Packs of loose sleigh dogs roamed at will. Most of the main tents and teepees were enclosed by chicken-wire fence, as a wooden grub box was no deterrent to a hungry dog who could systematically tear it apart. Our grub was slung from a tent ridge-pole when it was high enough. Otherwise we hung it from a tree branch out of the dogs' reach.*

*I had many interesting experiences during our week's stay at Patuanak. It was there that my heart was broken when I saw the hopelessness of this whole tribe of Chipewyan Indians. It was there that I said, "Here am I, Lord, send me." I knew that He loved and died for each one of them.*

*I had made no provision for my return trip. However, the Lord unexpectedly gave me a ride by fast Hudson's Bay canoe to Ile-a-la-Crosse, where I camped for several days. Then I got a ride in an old Model A along the telegraph line road. The car was almost down to the bare running gear. The fenders had been removed to keep them from being torn off. We had to continually watch for branches slapping our faces.*<sup>3</sup>

## **PREPARATION AND A SECOND TRIP**

Still looking to the Lord to direct them into full-time service, and realizing their need for Bible training, Stan and Evelyn spent the following winter attending the Pioneer Mission Bible School, 17 miles west of Meadow Lake. The summer of 1940 Stan took his second trip into the "north country," a tour of about 550 miles. He recorded this:

*One of the School staff members, Arnold McIver, had had his adventurous spirit stirred, and together we planned to travel down the Meadow and Beaver Rivers to look for a suitable location for Evelyn and I to make our home.*

*Arnold built a small skiff (flat-bottomed boat) about 14 feet long, and I bought an old Atwater Kent outboard motor. We launched out on the Loon River, which flows into the Beaver, that amazingly winding river.*

*Our first stop was at Green Lake, where we held an outdoor service attended by a fair number of*

*mostly young people. Arnold had his guitar -- I led the singing, and he did the preaching.*

*As in Green Lake, we also visited homes in [Beauval, our next stop], left Sunday school papers, and had many opportunities to witness for our Lord. Our motor was perking fairly well -- apparently on just one cylinder. But that was just as well, as we would find out later. Neither of us had run an outboard before. We followed close to shore, not realizing that it would have been safer out on the deeper water, away from reefs and shoals.*

*We looked over possible locations for building a home at Fort Black, across the southeast arm of the lake from the settlement of Ile-a-la-Crosse. We also looked at the north side of the town. We went on to Buffalo Narrows, 45 miles to the northwest, then over to the community of Dillon, on the southwest corner of Peter Pond Lake.*

*Again we visited homes and left literature. (I realized later that no one could read, let alone understand it.) At Dillon, Arnold painted "John 3:16" on a large stone on the lake shore, near to where we pitched our small tent.*

*Returning to Buffalo Narrows, we found that there was considerable interest in these two "Protestant Priests." There were a few white settlers in the community, Norwegian fishermen, and a few French men with Native wives. Buffalo Narrows was the centre of commercial fishing for the whole area, and it was there that we experienced one of our strangest and most interesting evangelistic services.*

*Where did we hold the service? We were offered use of the local pool hall! It was not very big, and the pool table was right in the centre. So what? ... the pool table made an excellent pulpit! We stood at one end and the congregation stood, or lounged, around the walls. Arnold played the guitar and I led in some Gospel songs. A favourite everywhere was "What A Friend We Have in Jesus." I do believe that the concept of Jesus being a "friend" was new to most of them.*

*We had camped near the lake shore, and in the morning a boy of 15 came and said firmly: "What is the name of your religion? I want to join it." We explained, of course, that it wasn't the changing of religion that would save him, but faith in Jesus Christ and His death for our sins. The boy prayed and asked God for forgiveness!*

*We soon began looking for a way to get back home. To go back up the river in the little skiff was out of the question. So Arnold sold the skiff to an Indian fellow from Ile-a-la-Crosse. On the bow was painted "Christ died for our sins." (I saw it several years later, still witnessing for Christ!)*

*I sold the motor to a fisherman, Alvie Norton. When he put it on his big canoe, it took off on both cylinders. The bow rose up and the stern sank down! If that motor had ever caught on both cylinders when it was on our little skiff, it would have been an early end to our trip. We hitched a boat ride to Beauval and a truck ride from there back to Meadow Lake.<sup>4</sup>*

## **SELLING THE FARM**

Stan and Evelyn's desire to launch out into full-time ministry was growing even stronger. They could easily have kept on farming, yet they were convinced that God was leading them north, even though there were many questions about their future. So with no arranged financial support they sold their farm and stepped out into the unknown.

In October of 1940 the Collies set out with their five children, Evelyn's 18 year-old brother, and their scanty household effects. While on his second trip north Stan had made arrangements for a little fishing caboose in Buffalo Narrows in which they would live.

Travelling by team and wagon the first 120 miles to Beauval, the remaining 80 miles to Buffalo Narrows were to be made on the lake by scow (flat-bottomed boat). Their estimate of how long the trip would take, however, soon proved to be far too optimistic.

All that happened on that trip is a story in itself. The swamping of their scow -- resulting in the soaking and spoiling of much of their supplies -- was only one of the ways they were tested. They arrived in Buffalo Narrows the evening of the last possible day of navigation. The next morning they unloaded using hand-sleighs on the ice which had formed around the scow during the night.

The Collies spent their first night in Buffalo Narrows with a family they had never previously met, but who graciously took them in. Naturally they wanted to get into their own place as soon as possible. So as soon as breakfast was finished, Stan went down to the location where the fishing caboose had been sitting when he had made arrangements to use it.

There was no sign of it anywhere. To their great disappointment Stan would find out that it was no longer available. So the Collies stayed with their hosts until they found a large log workshop that would serve temporarily as their home. Their winter's grub-stake, 50 dollars worth, ran out before Christmas, but Stan was somehow able to earn enough doing odd jobs around town to keep them going.

## **SERVING ALONE**

The Collies served alone in Buffalo Narrows for about four years, except for assistance from a lady from Three Hills, Alberta, named in their prayer letters as "Aunt Jenny" (Sommerville) who came for a time to help Evelyn with the children. They began a Sunday school in their home and, along with visiting homes in the community, held weekly services.

Stan and Evelyn have talked very little of the hardships of those first years: the building of a house with only their children's help, of living on fish and cornmeal and cleaning stables for fishermen just to survive. No church was supporting them financially. Though content with what they had, Stan expressed his frustration with the situation once when he wrote, "The days seem to be so filled with making provision for the needs of our bodies, and there is so little time for telling the Gospel story."<sup>5</sup>

No doubt friends of the Collies back home in Meadow Lake were praying for them. Yet there

may have been a lack of understanding on the part of some about what Stan and Evelyn were trying to do. In those days being a missionary meant going overseas, not going north. The idea of considering these scattered Indian tribes a mission field was hard for some to envision.

## **MORE LINKS IN THE CHAIN**

By this time the Collies had begun to realize something of the vast extent of the area of which they had only seen the fringe. Realizing that a lifetime would be far too short for one man to evangelize the North, the Collies began praying more intensely for missionaries to be directed their way. They also began looking for a missionary organization which would be interested in expanding into the area.

The Collies' missionary call and move to Buffalo Narrows all took place without them meeting or knowing anything about Isaac Reine. It was not until 1941 or 1942 that Stan heard through Henry Hildebrand of the Canadian Sunday School Mission that Isaac, too, was interested in ministry to Native people.

In the meantime God had been placing together several links in the chain that would soon extend Gospel outreach to neglected Indian settlements. While the Collies were moving North and beginning ministry there, Isaac Reine was actively influencing others to pray and to consider giving their own lives to a similar purpose.

Born in England and immigrating to Saskatchewan at the age of 11, Arthur Tarry attended Briercrest Bible Institute, graduating in 1940. Looking back he says that two things stand out in his mind concerning his Bible school years. One was meeting a young lady, a fellow student by the name of Martha Skaar who would later become his wife. The other was hearing a missionary speaker telling of the needs in Canada's Northland.

The speaker was Isaac Reine. Art remembers Isaac to be a candidate for missionary service in Africa who had stopped in at Briercrest to share of his future work. But, as Art remembers, "He rather spent almost all the time sharing and opening up his heart about the Indian people in the North country." He told the students of the many villages with people who knew nothing of the Gospel.

And so it was there, one morning at Briercrest Bible Institute, that Art Tarry bowed his head and silently prayed, "Lord, if you would want me to go and reach the villages for Christ ... the North country, here I am, I'm ready to go."

Mr. Reine left Caronport that day without Art getting a chance to speak to him. After graduation Art served with the Canadian Sunday School Mission in Redfield, Saskatchewan, but he kept a burden for the people of the North deep down in his heart. Martha says that for quite some time even she had no idea that Art had sensed such a strong calling to ministry to Native Canadians. But she, too, had been impacted by Isaac Reine's visit to Briercrest while she was a student there.

“I can remember a picture he showed on the screen of a little Indian girl ... all dressed up in her fur garb, and all you could see was her little smiling face. [Isaac] mentioned how she was just typical of the many Indian boys and girls of the North who would never have a chance of hearing about Jesus,” recalls Martha.

Art and Martha married in the spring of 1941 following Martha’s graduation from Bible school. In the fall Art began serving as a pastor in Lac Vert, Saskatchewan. It was there that Art would again meet Isaac Reine, who had come to the community for a week of meetings. This time Art told him about how God had spoken to his heart through his challenge to the students at Briercrest.

Isaac shared with the Tarrys more of his own burden for the North. By this time Isaac had learned of the Collies’ ministry in Buffalo Narrows and gave Art their address.

### **A COMMON CALLING**

God was forming a team with a certain calling to a certain people. Correspondence between Isaac Reine, the Tarrys and the Collies was an initial step in the formation of a missionary band. More significant was a growing force of Christians across western Canada who were beginning to pray that the Lord would send workers to this needy mission field of which they had only recently been made aware.

Stan Collie later commented that until that time he, like Elijah, had felt he was the “only one.” But in the next few years he would be meeting many Christians interested in ministry to Native people, and many who had been praying for him and Evelyn.

In 1942 the Collies had the joy of having Isaac Reine visit them in Buffalo Narrows. They had been corresponding but had never met. Isaac reported later in his published prayer letter: “It was on the 20th of September that I arrived on the scene at Buffalo Narrows. I was thrilled at the attraction that these Gospel witnesses, Brother and Sister Collie, are to the Natives...”<sup>6</sup>

During that winter Isaac spent five weeks in a village north of the Collies. He also helped Stan build the little “Gospel Lighthouse” chapel, a building that would be used in the ministry there for over 40 years. (One of the missionaries who served at Buffalo Narrows in later years said that the little chapel seated 10,000 people -- 35 at a time!)

Isaac also reported on plans to reach other corners of this area. “There are outlying settlements to be contacted, and also the fishermen in their caboose camps on the ice,” he wrote. “For the summer we plan to make an extensive tour eastward by canoe. This will be a great undertaking.”<sup>7</sup>

### **MORE HELP ARRIVES**

In May 1944 Stan Collie met in Meadow Lake with representatives of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Western Children’s Mission, and the Canadian Sunday School Mission,

along with several local brethren interested in the work. The unanimous decision was for this new work in Buffalo Narrows to join the CSSM.

After this meeting it seemed Isaac Reine felt he could now move on to pursue his mission to Africa. He moved east for theological studies in Winnipeg, and later to Ontario for medical training.

Meanwhile the Tarrys had been corresponding with the Collies. After their third year in the pastorate Art and Martha could no longer resist God's prompting for them to go North. In August of 1944, with their personal possessions packed, they bade farewell to the little congregation who assured them of their prayers.

Their trip included a train ride as far as Meadow Lake, followed by a 150-mile truck ride accompanied by Herman Wiebe and David Krahn, friends of the Collies. Art and Martha and their two children sat on their furniture which had been piled on top of building supplies for their home. The first 30 miles they were reasonably comfortable, but as the road soon turned into a rough and winding bush trail, it became a long and tiring ordeal. Mud holes and sand hills necessitated numerous delays.

Mid-afternoon the next day the trail literally ran right into the lake. A telegram had been sent from Meadow Lake to Stan Collie to meet the Tarrys, but apparently he not received it. So Art and the two men caught a ride over to Ile-a-la-Crosse, two miles away, and made contact with the Collies.

Two days later Stan arrived with a 10 by 50-foot scow. With only a three horsepower motor it had taken him those two days to come 45 miles. The truck's cargo was unloaded into the scow and they then went across to Ile-a-la-Crosse where more lumber was picked up before heading on.

The little motor chugged away all that afternoon and evening and finally, at about four or five o'clock the next morning they arrived on the shore at Buffalo Narrows. The two men from Meadow Lake began construction of a four-room house just hours after arriving.

The Tarrys soon settled into ministry there. Several weekly meetings in the little Gospel Lighthouse church saw a fairly encouraging attendance from the community's Native and non-Native residents. The recently constructed fish plant had brought young people into the village for employment, and some were touched with the Gospel through the missionaries.

Under the CSSM a few others joined in the work, as well, to serve in northwestern Saskatchewan. Sarah Olmstead and Eleanor Kennedy came in the fall of 1944. Miss E. Plester came in specifically to serve as a school teacher for the missionaries' children. Mrs. Sommerville, who had assisted the Collies during previous summers, continued to help when needed.

## **HIS ROLE COMPLETE**



God was obviously at work in NCEM's beginnings. And not insignificant to the Mission's launching was the enthusiastic participation of one of God's servants -- Isaac Reine.

Following his graduation from a missionary medical college in Toronto in 1949, Isaac lived for a short while in Hamilton and was employed with the Steel Company of Canada. While in Ontario he took up flying to help equip him for ministry in Africa's interior. He became a licensed pilot and acquired over 100 hours of flying time. Plans were made to leave for overseas service in 1950.

Isaac Reine never made it to Africa. On a windy day in June 1950, while approaching the municipal airport in Hamilton, his small training plane ran into extreme turbulence and dropped to the ground killing him instantly. He was 43 years of age, and unmarried.

Isaac Reine will not be remembered for a long and successful missionary career. But he should be remembered as a man deeply committed to Christ's Great Commission ... a man who, by word and by example, did not shirk from challenging Christian believers about their responsibility to reach the lost.

Most of all he should be remembered as a man who believed in the underlying role of prayer in missions. For it was while he was making the needs of the spiritually lost known, through prayer God was raising up a missionary band that would give many of Canada's First People an opportunity to hear of His saving grace.

### **“PRAYER IS WHAT DOES IT”**

If prayer was the underlying force in NCEM's beginnings, what role would it play in the years that followed? Looking back, Stan Collie responds:

*“For five years we opened up mission stations, sent in missionaries here and there, all over ... and there was no fruit. [There] didn't seem to be anybody getting saved.*

*“We had a Mission board meeting ... down in Big River. We [were] desperate. ‘If we can't get some Christian Indians they'll think this is just a white man's religion,’ I thought. We determined that all of us on the Board were going to pray definitely every day that souls would be saved.*

*“That year Tommy and Helen Francis got saved, and the Beatty boys over in Deschambeault ... In 1953 the revival broke out over at Round Lake ... and [later] at Moose Factory. We began to see Indians getting saved! Then, after Tommy Francis graduated from Mokahum [Bible Institute], we were travelling around together. There were a lot saved.*

*“But, I tell you,” says Stan, 50 years after the ministry was launched, “prayer is what does it ... to really wait on the Lord.”*

NOTES: 1--Collie's Corner: A Collection, written by Stan Collie; 2--Ibid.; 3--Ibid.; 4--Ibid.; 5--from The Collie Family (unpublished) written by Maggie Potter, 1945; 6--Unevangelized Northern Canada's Prayer Union (prayer bulletin published by Isaac Reine) No. 12; 7--Ibid.; Biographical Information of Isaac Reine supplied in part by his sister, Mrs. Norman Johnsrud; More detailed accounts of the Collies' involvement in NCEM's beginnings can be found in Journey to A Lonely Land: The Birth and Growth of the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission, and in Collie's Corner: A Collection (a compilation of articles by Stan Collie originally published in NCEM's Northern Lights magazine). The Tarrys' account can be read in their autobiography The Way He Chose.

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*The original printing of Light on the Horizon included photos with captions, and text boxes. Here is text from some of them:*

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**“S.S.X.G.”**

There were others besides the Tarrys who were directly influenced towards northern missions by Isaac Reine.

Ed Hickey was attending Winnipeg Bible Institute in the fall of 1940 when Isaac visited the school and presented the needs of Indian people in northern Saskatchewan. At the time, Africa was the only mission field that Ed had considered. In the following years Isaac wrote Ed personally. Ed remembers that Isaac's letters were always signed “SSXG” (Sinner Saved By Grace).

Ed served with the Royal Canadian Air Force from 1943 to 1945, and about 10 years later he and his wife, Marion, began their life's ministry with NCEM. “We learned that the work that had been so heavy upon Isaac Reine's heart had been taken up by the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission,” wrote the Hickeys.

“I believe God used Isaac to plant the need of the North in me,” says Ed. “I remember vividly how he spoke of Buffalo Narrows and it was no coincidence that I [served there] as a missionary.”

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

# **CHANGE: SOMETHING YOU CAN COUNT ON**

Imagine yourself falling asleep in 1946 and waking up in 1996. There's no doubt about it -- the changes you'd observe upon opening your eyes would scare you. And not just if you had lived in one of Canada's expanding urban centres. Had you lived in one of the remote Native communities where NCEM has ministered, likely the changes would seem even more acute.

Snowmobiles, trucks and cars would have replaced dogsleds; and frame houses would have replaced log shacks. But much more than that -- the people themselves, their work, their leisure activities, their communication and their mobility, even their relationships and values ... have been noticeably altered.

Not all, but many of these changes have been the direct or indirect results of developing technology. And technology would also change missionary life and work.

## **AVIATION**

Who can measure what the invention of the airplane has meant to the spread of God's truth? Of course, missionary work had taken place around the world for a long time without these flying machines. But, had they the opportunity, it's doubtful that missionaries from past centuries would have turned down this means of helping to further the Gospel. (Can you imagine the Apostle Paul refusing the possibility of visiting his beloved churches more frequently and for longer periods of time?)

As NCEM was formed and as its workers strategized ways of reaching its mandate, it seems that right from the start the general consensus was that airplanes were essential -- not just a luxury to save travelling time. Looking back, veteran missionary-pilot Ed Hickey says unquestionably: "[We] couldn't have operated as a Mission without airplanes. There was no choice."

To understand the situation, one needs to realize the vastness of this mission field. It was illustrated clearly by early NCEM missionary to the Inuit, Gleason Ledyard, who travelled both by dogteam and by plane. He told of how, when flying, he would look at the tundra below and then at his watch. Every eight minutes he would note that he'd just passed one of his camping spots ... one day's travel by dogteam!

## **JUNGLE PILOTS THEY AREN'T**

Airplanes were already proving themselves very useful on mission fields around the world by

the time NCEM started using them. One missionary jungle pilot in South America was reported as saying, “You just take off and jump over the jungle and in fifteen minutes you’re at your first station.”<sup>1</sup> But if airplanes were valuable for missionary work in jungle areas, how much more would they be of benefit in Canada! Many of the Native communities were not only inaccessible by road, but they were separated by vast distances. “It is not at all uncommon to fly 120 to 150 minutes here in the North to your first stop for fuel and then 90 minutes to your destination,” reported Ed Hickey.

Air travel in Canada’s North was already fairly commonplace by the 1940's. Though previous travel was restricted to boating in summer and driving dogteams in winter, bush pilots had been crisscrossing Saskatchewan’s northern areas for a few years. In its very first years NCEM mostly relied on commercial air and charter services when flying was necessary, but that had proved expensive and impractical. “You just couldn’t charter an aircraft when you needed it,” noted one missionary. And if the worker wanted to stay in a village for just a week, for example, the charter would have to make a second trip to pick him up, doubling the expense.

It was obvious from the start that the Mission needed its own airplane. Gleason and Kathryn Ledyard had brought a plane with them when they joined the Mission in 1946, but it was used primarily in their own ministry in the Arctic. When Mission director, Stan Collie, had seen what could be accomplished with their plane, he was convinced that aviation would be of benefit on all the fields.

“Yes, right from the beginning I realized that ... if we were going to reach the people in the North we had to fly. There’s no way we could reach people without having aircraft,” says Stan. When the Board sat down to discuss the matter, it wasn’t the necessity of an airplane that was in question, but the financial details of owning and operating one.

## **PLANES AND THEIR PILOTS**

While Gleason Ledyard was NCEM’s first pilot, it was Marshall Calverley (pictured on front cover, top left) who established aviation as a ministry that would benefit the whole Mission. In 1952 he and his wife, Erika, joined NCEM, bringing with them their own plane, a five-passenger Stinson Reliant. The Calverleys transferred ownership of the plane to the Mission for one dollar and Marshall operated it, charging a flat rate to cover the costs of its use.

From the start, the plane and pilot were very busy. A report by Marshall in May of 1953 read: “Flying time and distances have doubled due to the Lord’s making possible the opening of new fields in distant parts of the North ... Round-trips [from Buffalo Narrows] of up to 2500 miles are made servicing Mission stations that cannot be reached any other way. The plane has just returned from a trip through Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario which made possible the visiting of all our eastern stations.”<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the 1950's and 60's a number of other airplanes were purchased, sold and traded. Because of the Stinson’s high fuel consumption, and because of increased flying demands, it was traded for two four-passenger Aeronca Sedans. They were later replaced by a Cessna 170 and

Though a larger Twin Cessna Crane had also been used one winter, and a rear-prop “Sea-Bee” had been utilized for a time as well, it was soon realized that smaller (and less thirstier) planes would better suit NCEM’s flying needs. That decision was no doubt questioned on certain occasions by pilots who had to get the under-powered and loaded-down Cessna 170 off the water. Apparently at one missionary conference the discussion turned to the worn-out “170” that by that time needed replacing. Its high mileage was equated to the “number of times it had flown around the world.” Someone piped up and said, “And you can add another time-and-a-half getting it off the water!”

By the early 1980's the Mission was flying a fleet of three Cessna 185's, one of which had been donated by missionary Jack Norcross. In 1984 a Cessna 206 replaced one of the C-185's, and a twin-engine Piper-Aztec was added in 1986. It was later replaced by a twin-engine Beech Baron donated to the Mission in 1990. NCEM’s fleet has never exceeded five airplanes at any one period of time, a peak it reached in the early 1990's.

The Mission’s first plane was based at Buffalo Narrows, but soon moved to Meadow Lake in 1953 following the Headquarters location change. In 1964 an air base was established at The Pas, Manitoba, closer to the flying that was carried on in northeastern Manitoba and northwestern Ontario. Though planes and pilots have been stationed in several other points over the years, The Pas served as the Mission’s main air base for aircraft maintenance until 1989, when it moved to Nipawin, Saskatchewan.

The greatest need for airplanes in NCEM, initially, was to enable the “surveying” of fields and to expedite the opening of mission stations. However, the aircraft were soon being used for many other purposes -- all, of course, related to reaching the North for Christ. Missionaries were transported to and from their stations for furloughs, conferences, administration meetings, and for medical reasons. Groceries and other supplies and equipment needed to be transported. When an Indian Bible school was begun in northeastern Manitoba, students were flown to and from school and on outreach excursions. Missionary evangelistic teams regularly made use of the aircraft. A considerable amount of flying has been done for Native Evangelical Fellowship (NEFC) pastors and evangelists. And beginning in the 1970's the Mission’s summer program (NMTC) has relied heavily on aviation.

With the great demand for use of the aircraft, much of NCEM’s flying has been coordinated through the Mission’s Aviation Department. A few missionaries have operated their own planes, and two or three field directors, including Ed Hickey and Ron Knightly, have also been pilots. And Stan Collie, who for a number of years served as Field Director, starting flying in the 1960's. He said that he often felt bad about taking up a passenger seat when he “knew there were others who should be coming along too.” And since he had to go, he thought he might as well pilot.

Though Mission aircraft have usually been available to fly workers, those who have had to pay the exorbitant costs of commercial flights in the North are especially appreciative of NCEM’s

aviation service. Commercially, in Canada north-south flights have been much more expensive than east-west. For single workers who began serving in northern Quebec in the 1980's, a one-way trip from Montreal equalled one month's support! A flight to Europe still costs less.

## **FLYING CONDITIONS**

Up till the 1960's most of the Mission's flying was done by planes equipped with floats or skis. Few airstrips had existed, but soon even the smallest of communities would have its own runway built. That change was significant. Without an airstrip, lake "freeze-up" and "break-up" had previously meant that twice a year there were up to five weeks with absolutely no flights in or out. Also, while a float plane is still good security when flying over lake country, it became more and more difficult for Mission pilots to find places to refuel or dock on floats.

Air travel would become safer, too. With a few exceptions, all of the Mission's flying has been by VFR (Visual Flight Rules) ... which has meant a lot of waiting for suitable weather conditions. (The high costs of maintaining IFR (Instrument) ratings, make it quite impractical for NCEM.) And while VFR still applies, in 1991 the Mission acquired its first GPS unit (Global Positioning System). Now on board each NCEM plane, GPS makes use of satellite technology to tell the pilot exactly where he is -- his air speed and distance from destination. Pilots who fly over the Arctic in winter, with its lack of landmarks, especially appreciate the GPS system.

## **TOUCHING LIVES**

It takes a lot of know-how and fortitude to be a missionary pilot. And while the flying (and landing) experiences of these pilots could fill many books, in NCEM aviation has been considered just a tool -- just an aid in a greater cause. It has enabled the spread of the Gospel so that lives were touched. This account from the early 1970's well illustrates how aviation assisted in front-line evangelism:

*The aircraft droned on through the January air of northern Quebec. Vander Neudorf shifted in the pilot's seat and studied the snow-covered landscape below. He turned to Ted Leschied seated beside him.*

*"According to this map, Ted, Camp Seven should be in that little bay straight ahead."*

*Ted glanced at the map and then let his eyes trace the frozen lake shore for some sign of a trappers' teepee.*

*"I don't see anything," he said finally.*

*"We'll circle again."*

*The weather was moody; the landscape below, strange, and when they found Camp Seven, landing conditions as usual were uncertain.*

*Ted Leschied of Rupert House, Quebec, joins Vander each January for a visitation circuit of the trap-line cabins. This type of missionary visitation is always well received.*

*On this particular trip they covered ten camps and spent five nights with the trappers. These camps often have more than one family. A family consists of husband and wife and pre-schoolers (the older children remain in the village in order to attend school). On an average the camps are from 50 to 100 miles from the village and separated from neighbouring camps by 20 to 50 miles.*

*The camps are teepee style or wigwam construction. Some are quite large; others very small. They always look “homey” and are comfortable and warm, at least while the fire is on during the day.*

*Ted and Vander have always felt welcome and realize that extra preparation is made for them to spend the night. Each meal is like a feast, with lots of meat; roast beaver, fried beaver liver, moose, white birds, rabbit or even sturgeon (for breakfast).*

*It is here by the warmth of the air-tight heater that opportunity is given to read God’s Word or play Cree tapes. The people listen attentively as they hear some of their own people testifying to new life in Christ.*

*As the night wears on, one by one the candles are extinguished. Looking up through the opening in the top of the teepee you see sparks being swept away by the wind as well as snowflakes reflected in the flickering light.*

*The blazing wood in the tin heater gradually turns to glowing embers and Ted and Vander fall asleep very conscious of God’s directing and protecting hand as they move from camp to camp.<sup>3</sup>*

It would be hard to estimate how many people have come to Christ as a direct result of the aviation ministry. One of the examples would be the spiritual awakening that shook Round Lake, Ontario, in the mid-1950's. Ed Hickey notes that aviation was crucial because it made it possible for the Mission to place Bible teachers there at a very strategic time.

In the 1960's a significant number of people were saved through the itinerant ministry of Native evangelist Tommy Francis, who visited many communities travelling by NCEM plane.

A third example is pointed out by missionary-pilot, Gary Brown, who says that aviation has been of particular importance for the strengthening of Native churches in northeastern Manitoba. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, Joe and Helen Pope and Mark Arnold regularly took three-week ministry trips every two months to about seven villages. Gary notes that it was on one of these trips that a couple of present-day church leaders at Island Lake were saved. Gary also observed struggling Christians in the other points being strengthened as Scripture was taught through the Bible Education by Extension (BEE) courses. He emphasizes the fact that having their own plane gave the team the liberty to go or to stay in each of the villages, as the Lord led. Commercial flights would have been very impractical for this ministry.

## MISSIONARIES FIRST

In NCEM it has often been said that pilots are “missionaries first.” What has that meant in practical terms? While a charter pilot’s job is to fly passengers from Point A to Point B (and then put his feet up while he waits till his passengers are ready to return), for NCEM pilots it has meant being part of the team. “If we were with an evangelism team, we were out doing home visitation,” says Gary Brown. “If we were with a carpentry team, we were doing carpentry. If we were with the TV crew, we may have found ourselves running a camera.”

Native missionary, Bill Jackson, tells of a team outreach trip that took place in the mid-1970's:

*There are obstacles in communicating to others. First, that of getting around to the different communities. Then, how do they receive you? And finally, how do they receive the message?*

*Such was our recent trip to the Northwest Territories. I put my trip off for a month so that one or two students from Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute could go along. I appreciate the testimonies of these young people whom I have had the occasion to take along on other trips.*

*This trip was different from start to finish. It was the coldest time of the year (December), the shortest daylight hours, and the busiest time of the year (just before Christmas). We went to the Slavey tribe.*

*From Ft. Nelson, B.C., KBI student Joe Kakagamic and I flew with capable pilot, Ron Knightly, to the Territories. The Slavey people were friendly and we were able to visit them in their homes. There are a few who know Jesus Christ as Saviour.*

*The Gospel is not new to many of these people. Missionaries have gone there in spite of the difficulties of travelling in the area. They have gone by foot or boat in the summer and dogteam or snowshoes in the winter. To a people who have been in darkness for so long we do not see changes come quickly. However, we are seeing the work of the Holy Spirit as God’s plan is made known to the tribes through the missionaries.*

*Quite a number of the people expressed their appreciation for our visit to them. We thank God for safety in travel. It was still very cold when we crash-landed on the Mackenzie River ... due to ice in the carburettor. We were about 10 miles from Ft. Simpson when the motor kept stalling and finally stopped altogether. Because ice-flows in late fall gather in heaps, the ice on the river was very rough. When Ron knew for sure that we were going to crash land, he radioed the airport.*

*The window in front of me broke, the door flew open, a wheel came in ... but none of us on board was hurt. We started to walk toward Ft. Simpson and before long a search plane came over. In spite of “six-foot Joe” waving an orange-lined parka above his head, they didn’t see us. However, about an hour later a helicopter did come and we were picked up.*

*We thank the Lord for His protection and we trust that He will honour His Word that was given*



during those days.<sup>4</sup>

## A PRAISEWORTHY RECORD

The above mentioned “crash landing” was reported in a rather matter-of-fact way. It could have been much more serious. NCEM has much to praise the Lord for. It’s a noteworthy record -- in 50 years there has not been one fatality in the Mission’s aviation history. There has been just one serious injury sustained (a quick recovery followed). And God’s protection has been seen in many forced landings.

One landing that stands out in pilot Gary Brown’s mind took place while flying missionary Renee Bradley and four teenagers home to Norway House, Manitoba, from a youth retreat at Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute in Alberta in early 1985. Gary says that the employees at Flight Services at La Ronge (Sask.) Airport still talk about it when they see him.

While flying over Montreal Lake, Gary experienced engine trouble and decided to try and make it to the La Ronge Airport. Soon it looked as if he had an engine fire, and that he would have to land on the nearest road. “I cut the engine completely and pushed the nose down, hoping the air speed would snuff the fire out,” says Gary. “From 5,500 feet ... in less than two minutes we were on the highway.”

Gary remembers that the kids didn’t say a word on the way down. But two of them accepted the Lord later that day as a result of the incident.

Stories of forced landings show God answering urgent prayer. Here is another account, this one written by Ron Knightly:

*I was on a long flight from Fort Nelson (B.C.) to The Pas (Manitoba). I had passed through snow and freezing rain. I had in fact passed the point of no return, meaning I had not enough fuel to go back.*

*Suddenly fog moved in and I was searching for a place to land. There was none. My prayer to God was a bit like David’s in Psalm 38:21,22: “Do not forsake me, O Lord! O my God, be not far from me! Make haste to help me, O Lord, my Salvation.” I admitted to the Lord that it was poor judgment and human error that had got me into this situation.*

*Suddenly I found a hole in the trees. Quickly I turned the plane, cut the engine, lowered the flaps to reduce speed and dropped in on what turned out to be a narrow, muddy oil company road between tall spruce trees. Somehow the plane was kept on the road. Mud flew all over but the Lord brought me to a safe stop.*

*Ten minutes later I was walking down the road thankful to be alive. I was very much aware of the hand of my Lord upon me.*

*Seven miles later I found an oil rig and drilling site and used a mobile phone to close my flight*

*plan. I walked back to the plane and waited for the night.*

*During the night a wind of about 60 km per hour came through, causing several trees to come crashing to the ground. It also blew my tent down. I groped around in the darkness for chunks of wood to tie the plane to. Finally I had to sit on the tie-down rope until almost daylight to keep the plane from moving.*

*By morning the wind had dried the road considerably and I was thankful that not one falling tree had hit the plane or fallen across the road. Soon I was winging my way up between the trees into the clear blue sky.<sup>5</sup>*

And for readers who still think of missionary aviation as just “flying off into a beautiful sunset” ... here’s a final story to convince you otherwise. It is written by Gary Brown:

*On one occasion, [my] assignment was to fly Cliff McComb, the Eastern-Field Director, to Quebec to visit the missionaries. Since this was my first trip to the James Bay area, I was rather apprehensive.*

*On the day we planned to start out from our base in The Pas, (Manitoba), we became plagued with problems. We awoke expecting an early start only to find the wind blowing so hard we didn’t dare take off, for fear of capsizing (our plane, a Cessna 185 was on floats). We waited the day out ... The next day the winds had died down and the sun was shining beautifully. However, we had hardly flown 60 miles when we hit bad weather. It seemed our enemy, the devil, was opposing us. It was taking us four days to get to Rupert House, whereas it normally would have taken one.*

*Now the real test began. We were advised at Moosonee, Ontario, by a Christian radio operator, to get into Rupert House as quickly as possible as the weather was temporarily clear. Upon arriving at Rupert House we flew up and down the river several times to check out our landing on the swift-flowing Rupert River. I noticed all the docks had aircraft tied to them. However, upon seeing a plane pulling away, I decided to land using the dock where it had been. It was a good landing.*

*As we floated downstream, my intention was to turn around after a bit and taxi upstream to tie at the dock. Little did I realize the swiftness of the current ... and that the tide was going out! (Rupert House is located right next to the James Bay so the river is affected by the tide.)*

*Being raised on the prairies of Saskatchewan, I knew little or nothing about these tides. Soon it became apparent we were drifting out to sea. Every time I tried to turn the Cessna 185 into the current, it would weather-cock and continue downstream.*

*Finally, we were at the point of no return. The swells were getting bigger -- our chances of a take-off were out of the picture. Turning around seemed impossible, too, because every time I tried, one wing would nearly touch the water.*

*In simple faith we prayed like Peter, “Lord, save us!” Three small words, but something happened. Within a minute the Lord had turned us around and we were heading upstream out of the heavy swells. Once the plane nearly turned on us again, but the Lord kept us going in the right direction. That was a miracle.*

*Another concern was that the small floats on our plane were not fully leak-proof. Due to our heavy load, I was certain they’d be taking on water. Sometimes the floats would go under the swells like submarines. Each time this happened I was sure they were taking on more water and that we would eventually sink.*

*After we were finally tied up at the dock, and had stopped shaking, I decided to pump the water out of the floats. To my amazement there was none! God had just performed another miracle.*

*To me, as a missionary and pilot, it just reaffirms that we serve the true and living God. He’s the same yesterday, today, and forever, for which we praise Him.<sup>6</sup>*

## **THE HARDEST PART OF FLYING**

The past years have seen new roads pushing further north each year, making more and more communities accessible by car. In some respects, aviation’s role in NCEM has changed. Yet on a mission field as vast as Canada, NCEMers still take serious the Bible’s challenge to “redeem the time.”

In general, even with a road, two hours by air means 12 hours by road. And often the road isn’t the shortest distance between two points. For many years the trip from Buffalo Narrows to La Ronge, Saskatchewan, was 400-plus miles by road ... but only one hour by air! Redeeming the time? As one missionary puts it, “When we consider the work yet to be done we can’t afford to spend 75 percent of our time on the road.”

Yes, aviation has been of invaluable service to the Mission in seeking to fulfil its mandate. But it hasn’t been without personal cost. What price has been paid? ... the long periods of time away from family? ... life-threatening encounters?

These are real costs, and have not been easy experiences. But one pilot expressed it this way after a busy summer of flying: “The hardest part? It was flying over these villages and seeing them without a Gospel witness. Perhaps these people wouldn’t have a chance to hear the Gospel again until next year ... or perhaps never again.”

## **OTHER TRANSPORTATION**

While aircraft were considered essential for surveying and opening mission stations and for evangelistic outreach, other kinds of transportation have also played an important role on NCEM fields.

Dogsleds seemed the obvious choice for some of the earlier missionaries. After all, they were a practical and proven means of transportation for the Native people. Besides getting the missionary and his family around, dogsleds were useful for hunting and hauling supplies.

But by the 1960's there weren't many missionaries using them any more. In fact, by 1954 a couple of workers were already driving motor-toboggans (also referred to as power-toboggans, snowmobiles or ski-doo's). And right from the start their superiority over dogteams was preached.

Bernard Fredlund considered his power toboggan "capable of pulling loads of up to 2000 pounds depending, of course, on snow conditions." Not only that, the six- or ten-horsepower air-cooled engines which drove these first models could be removed during the summer months and used for other purposes. Perhaps the most highly held advantage was that there was now no need to feed sled dogs all summer -- which were used only in the winter.

In 1954 the purchase price for a commercially-built snowmobile was \$1300, but the NCEM staff at Meadow Lake believed that they could manufacture a similar machine for less than \$700. So for awhile the aviation workshop also served as a snowmobile factory. A 1955 issue of Northern Lights stated: "The first power toboggan manufactured in our own shop has been completed and delivered to Rev. Nils Folkvord, our missionary at La Ronge, Sask."

A 1956 report noted: "Art Wellwood spent several days at Headquarters getting acquainted with his new power toboggan. He had it trucked to Big Buffalo and rode it home from there. He arrived with a few bolts and screws loose (on the toboggan) but otherwise safe and sound. He is planning a trip to an outlying village right away."<sup>7</sup>

The following decades would see snowmobiles become a common means of transportation for NCEMers, especially for those who lived on isolated stations where cars and trucks weren't used as much.

## **BAD SLEDDING**

There's a quip that is sometimes used to describe Canada's weather: "...six months of winter and six months of bad sledding." It's humorous, but it does point out that the type of transportation used would need to suit the season.

Roy and Marjorie Markel, who served in the Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan area, were among the few early missionaries whose stations were accessible by road. But in those years, having a road didn't always ensure easy access. The Markels told of their planned trip to their new station by car. Just as they were starting out, a flood hit the area. The "road" became more suitable to travel by boat, and that's exactly what they used to move their belongings in.

In spite of great improvements to northern roads over the years, even in the 1990's driveability still depends on how much rain has recently fallen. In the early years many of the roads were just ungraveled trails, and cars and trucks easily bogged down in the mud. Four-wheel drive was the

answer ... or so thought missionaries Doug and Esther Day who acquired a Jeep for their ministry in La Loche, Saskatchewan, in the early 1960's:

*Recently we brought our Jeep over the trail to here and, in the eyes of the Natives, it is next to the ultimate in comfort, convenience and speed.*

*Accordingly, we've been showered with requests for taxi service. Sick babies and mothers suddenly have no other way to hospital; fathers must get back to hungry families miles away across a lake that suddenly has become impassable by dogteam. To answer all the requests would not only take our full-time, but tend to empty our gas tank as well. Saying "No" makes us unpopular.*

*Relief is in sight, though, since we expect to sell the Jeep very soon ... Meanwhile, we try to sift the legitimate from the heap of the curious.<sup>8</sup>*

Doug and Esther weren't the only ones who discovered that there were drawbacks to convenience. In 1961, Phil Howard, missionary at South Nahanni, Northwest Territories, wrote:

*As a means of covering great distances swiftly, the airplane is all but indispensable in our work in this vast Northland. But that other modes of transportation ought not to be shunned was brought home to me forcibly on a recent trip down the Mackenzie River as far as Fort Good Hope, and up the Bear River to Fort Franklin.*

*Travelling by river transport and by canoe, I reflected that we, as missionaries, need to know our country as well as our people. This is far more effectively done by employing time-honoured methods of travel than by hopping effortlessly over the country, and I always find such trips profitable.<sup>9</sup>*

## **BY LAKE AND RIVER**

"Time-honoured" methods of transportation would certainly include boats, for they had been used by Native people in these areas for centuries. Long flat-bottomed "scows" were one of the first types of boats used by NCEMers. After transporting the first missionaries up to Buffalo Narrows, some of the scows were dismantled, with the lumber used to build houses. But soon after, with the acquiring of the "Lac Vert" (named in appreciation of the Saskatchewan church that paid for the boat), the waterways became an avenue to spread the Gospel. John Penner was one of the missionaries who used the Lac Vert to travel to various points on the lakes in northwest Saskatchewan until 1950, when the boat was sold.

From the mid-1950's till the early 1960's missionary reports sometimes mentioned the use of boats in ministry. A 1955 report from Harold Roberts in Buffalo Narrows read:

*Mr. and Mrs. Tommy Francis, Cree Indians, who have been with us for the month of July, are on their way to visit other stations and reserves. While they were here, we were able to visit a number of the surrounding settlements and the people were very open to the Gospel. As Tommy*

*gave it to them in Cree, several came to a saving knowledge of the Saviour.*

*The boat, which was built at Meadow Lake in June, has already covered close to a thousand miles, and has proved a great blessing. Being closed in, we lived right in it, sleeping at times out on the water.<sup>10</sup>*

Travelling by water held its risks, though. A year earlier Edwin and Margaret Brandt, missionaries at Grand Rapids, Manitoba, told of an incident with their boat, the “Ambassador”:

*On November 18th five miles from home on Lake Winnipeg, the Ambassador driven by Edwin and two others from the Reserve were in danger of losing their lives. Every effort was made to reach shore in the heavy rolling sea. Suddenly the call rang out, “We will never make it!” -- and we didn’t, for the Ambassador sank into the icy waters.*

*Words cannot express our feelings then. My two men jumped in order to swim ashore, and both yelled back, “Do not jump, it’s too cold!” When all but the white top disappeared into the water, the boat stopped sinking, and I was left standing there with wet feet.*

*After unloading the fuel wood for about half an hour, we found that the Ambassador floated enough to enable us to get to the back and reach for the 15 hp motor (a new one given to us by our home church last spring). One of the men waded to me and carried it to shore.*

*Another hour saw the boat floating sufficiently to permit us to jump into the icy water and pull it to shore. After finding some dry matches and making a fire, every effort was made to see what could be done with the motor. It was impossible to walk home, what with wet clothes freezing and a river to cross.*

*God helped -- we limped home on our own motor power, even managing to get the lights working in order to see in the darkness.*

*Do you know what we found when we moved the Ambassador? It was sitting on a large rock, with water nearly two feet deeper all around.<sup>11</sup>*

In the James Bay area it was a boat that was used to open a number of mission stations. Interestingly, it was aviator Marshall Calverley (mentioned earlier in this chapter) who spearheaded the effort. No, Marshall hadn’t given up flying, but he had gone on record acknowledging that Canada’s diverse geography required various modes of transportation. The boat Marshall piloted was donated to NCEM by Christians in eastern Canada and U.S.A., and in 1961 it arrived in northern Ontario. In 1962 Marshall filed this report:

*From my porthole on the Mission boat, which has been my home for the past few weeks, I can see the coast of James Bay.*

*This past week has seen the opening of another mission station in the James Bay area. The Mission boat, making four trips with material from Factory River, where we dismantled the old*

*Hudson's Bay Company fur-trading post, moved in sufficient material to build a two-bedroom home for our missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Russell Mueller. This new station is located at Paint Hills, in northern Quebec on the coast of James Bay ...*

*Tomorrow I hope to return down the coast to Factory River and put on the first load for Fort George -- the most northerly Indian settlement on this coast ... Please pray for my Cree pilot and myself as we continue this work of opening these new fields. I would ask your prayers on behalf of yet one other -- one who spends many months alone each year that I may do this work for the Lord -- my wife.<sup>12</sup>*

## LITERATURE

If the Great Commission's command to "go" made transportation a significant consideration in NCEM's ministry, its command to "teach" made communication even more crucial. As it turned out, developing technology would not only affect the ways missionaries travelled, but the ways the Gospel would be proclaimed.

Television, video, fax, e-mail, and Internet ... these modern communication avenues common in the 1990's weren't even dreamt of as possibilities for spreading the Good News when NCEM began. Not even telephones were available for missionaries in the earliest years.

There was, though, a mass communication method that had been used by missionaries around the world for a century. And NCEMers would be quick to use it. Even before the Mission was officially started, Stan Collie had been handing out tracts and Sunday school papers on his first trips north. The Shantyman was probably the paper most often distributed by early NCEMers. Admittedly, its effectiveness was limited because only a portion of the people could read English. And the paper was not geared particularly for Native readers.

The Mission's desire to begin producing its own literature was not so much for evangelistic purposes, though, but to improve communication with the supporting Christian public "in the south." Besides their own personal correspondence with supporters, the workers used a regular newsletter to report on the work. The first issue -- a "mimeographed circular letter from the missionaries at Buffalo Narrows" -- was mailed out in December 1944. The second issue saw an expanded four-page mimeographed leaflet sent to about 200 friends in March 1945, and bore the name Northern Lights. Martha Tarry had suggested that since they were "lights" for Christ in the North, the paper should be called "The Northern Lights."

### PASS THE INK

The printing quality of the first mimeographed issues left a lot to be desired, even by 1940's standards, and it was obvious that the Mission needed better printing equipment. In 1946 it was decided that a press be purchased. A second-hand model was located in Winnipeg and purchased for \$250. Shipping the heavy piece of equipment to Buffalo Narrows would be no easy chore,

though, as the station was 200 miles north of the rail head.

So at Meadow Lake, the end of the rail line, the press was loaded onto a transport truck and taken the slow 150 miles “over felled spruce trees and through muskeg and sand” on the trail to Fort Black (near Beauval). At Fort Black the truck was met by two missionaries with a scow that carried the press the remaining 50 miles on the lakes and rivers. Somehow the 1500-pound press was transported the last leg of the journey to its destination -- a space beside the missionary house, where “a room was built around it.”

None of the missionaries at Buffalo Narrows really knew anything about printing. In fact, it wasn't until the press arrived that they realized that “metal type” would have to be purchased. When it arrived some time later, the missionaries began teaching themselves to use the press. They discovered that by applying and releasing pressure on the foot pedal, the press could be operated. The sheets of paper had to be fed in and out individually by hand.

Of course, the type had to be set first. Art Tarry, one of the self-proclaimed “rookie printers” wrote this about the procedure:

Each individual letter had to be hand-set. The words were spaced by plain pieces of lead. Each letter of the alphabet was in a small paper bag; it was like picking candy out of a bag. We soon made compartments for the letters. We found, too, that the letter “e” needed a much larger compartment than the other letters.

On one occasion, unknown to us, some children stole some of the letters. Stan and Martha stayed up till four a.m. rewriting an article without using as many “e’s” and “t’s.” We should also mention that after an article was printed, each letter had to be put back in its compartment. It took almost as long to “un-set” as it did to “set.”<sup>13</sup>

In August of 1946 an issue of Northern Lights came off the new press, with its format changed from a four-page newsletter to a monthly 12-page digest-size issue. In 1950, Lowell and Geneva Graf, friends of the Mission who had already helped early NCEMers in other practical ways, gave a “Christmas present” -- a donation to purchase a motor for the press. In the first seven years the circulation of Northern Lights jumped from 300 to 3800.

## **PRESSING ON**

From Buffalo Narrows, the Mission's office moved to Meadow Lake in 1951. Owen Salway, who had already served at Buffalo Narrows primarily as printer, continued that same work at “Mission Press” -- as it came to be known -- in Meadow Lake. A Linotype machine was purchased in 1953 (which automatically set metal type from molten lead), and a couple of “automatic” Heidelberg letter presses were added. Owen was joined by Abe Heppner in 1955, and the two continued to work together in the Printshop for a number of years.

The Mission's move of its Headquarters to Prince Albert in 1965 would bring about more changes in the printing department. While the letterpress equipment in Meadow Lake remained



in use for a few more years, a new offset printing facility was up and running in Prince Albert by the early 1970's under the leadership of Bill Faulkner. The January 1972 Northern Lights was the first issue produced on the new system of printing that used photography rather than raised metal type.

Initially the printing facilities in Prince Albert were situated in the Faulkner home, located a few minutes outside the city. In the fall of 1976 Kit Elford joined Bill to begin full-time work in the Printshop. With the operation expanding, printing equipment soon began outgrowing the limited space. And for other practical reasons the Mission was wanting to see the Printshop moved onto the Headquarters site in the city. However, zoning bylaws made such a move impossible.

When land for a new Mission Headquarters was located five miles west of Prince Albert, it was the printing department that would be first to use the site. In 1979 an unused radar building sitting across the lake from Beauval (northwest Saskatchewan) was purchased, dismantled, moved to Prince Albert and reassembled.

In 1979 Kit Elford took on the operation of the printing department alone. The following years saw several pieces of equipment and a number of staff added to meet the increasing printing demands of the Mission. Through the 1980's and 1990's an average of about five staff have served in the Printshop.

Office forms, stationery, envelopes, booklets, brochures, missionary prayer letters and prayer cards are among the various items that have been printed. Mission Press has provided virtually all of NCEM's printing needs over the years without it having to rely on commercial printers.

One exception came in 1976 when the Northern Lights circulation was growing, and the Mission felt the need to upgrade the magazine's quality by adding full-color. Switching to bimonthly rather than monthly mailings, a commercial printer was hired to print the magazine and did so until late 1982. By that time the Printshop's equipment had been upgraded sufficiently. The Northern Lights was again printed "in-house." The cost savings were 40 to 50 percent.

## **FOR NATIVE READERS**

While Mission Press has served NCEM's administration and its field missionaries, it has also played an important role in evangelism and in serving the emerging Native Church.

Literature outreach began when the first missionaries in Buffalo Narrows published and distributed The Visitor, an evangelistic paper produced especially for local readership. In 1956 the Mission began producing a bimonthly magazine called Cree Christian, later renamed Cree Witness. It contained testimonies, sermons and stories by Native readers and for Native readers in the Cree and English languages. It reached its circulation high of around 3500 in the early 1970's, but ceased publication in 1980 because of lack of editorial staff.

Tracts, devotional booklets, and Sunday school papers in English and Native languages have also been produced by NCEM and used in evangelistic outreach over the years. (When the Cree

Witness ceased publication, the gap was filled by the Indian Life and Muskeg Moccasingraph papers, both produced by sister organizations.)

With the knowledge that God had greatly used literature in discipleship and Church leadership training around the world, NCEM also began producing numerous Bible study materials especially suited for Native Canadians. Bible Education by Extension (BEE) texts have especially been effective.

In the early 1990's it was becoming apparent that, even though there was generally a much greater selection of Christian media resources available, many Native people were unaware of them. Especially in the more remote areas was this true. In response, NCEM's printing distribution department began an effort to expand its outreach. Besides its mail order ministry, which had already been carried on for many years, a number of missionaries began setting up "extension book stores" on their stations. "People are so hungry for Christian material," reported one of the field missionaries who has made use of this avenue of ministry.

## **MAKING IMPRESSIONS**

Just how effective a tool has literature been on NCEM fields? It's probably true that the missionaries who have laboured long hours behind the scenes with paper and ink have sometimes wondered if it was worth the effort. Was it really necessary to produce material particularly for Native readers?

Reports filtered back from time to time, though, and reminded them that lives were being touched. John Unger wrote this in 1959:

It seems that I can see him still, as I saw him the day I visited him, sitting on a small box (his only piece of furniture), crowded against the tiny window on the sunny side of the room. With his shaky hands he held a paper close to his eyes, for the many, many years of hunting and travelling against the glare of the sun and snow have left his vision impaired.

But now he has found a paper, and he reads ... He has found something written in his own language, and he feels that he must tax his failing eyesight to the limit now to discover what the paper says, for it speaks his language.

As we see this man -- and there are many like him -- straining his eyes for something to read in his own language, we long to be able to press into his hand something which will witness to him of Christ, the only Way ... something which will attract his attention and then, not only satisfy his hunger to read, but will witness to him of his need of a Saviour, and thus fill the deep longing in his heart.<sup>14</sup>

## **AUDIO & VISUAL**

The value of using visuals in teaching was realized early, and flannel-graph was the first method

used in helping Native people “picture” the Gospel story. Soon workers were also using more sophisticated audio-visual technology. Some of the first reports of the utilization of photographic slides and filmstrips came from Ray and Cathy Bradford who served at Camsell Portage and Uranium City, Saskatchewan. In late 1948 they wrote:

“The attendance at the services went upward the last while. The lantern pictures were a great drawing card and we are glad for those who came and saw them, for many of them were those who never come to church. Oh how we long to see conviction seize these hearts! ... I believe these pictures caused them to see the truth as they have never seen it before.”<sup>15</sup>

Some of the settlements were still without electricity, but missionaries in these places, too, were able to show slides and filmstrips. A 1952 memo from Headquarters to the missionaries read: “We are now able to purchase a projector that is operated from a gasoline lamp.”

Other reports from workers mentioned the use of portable record players. Records with Gospel messages in Indian languages (produced by Gospel Recordings) were played on hand-operated machines. A memo to the workers in 1959 offered “...nice new hand-wind gramophones from Gospel Recordings available to any missionary at \$10.50 each... .”

Early reports also told of “Public Address Systems” -- electrically powered units that would amplify sound sufficiently to broadcast outdoors. Sometimes they were used along with a record player. A report from the Collies in Buffalo Narrows in 1948 said this:

*The Gospel of Jesus Christ still goes forth in this little progressive town. After each Sunday evening service we now take the Public Address System downtown and have an open air meeting. The attendance is fair. The first night there were at least 60 standing around. We have been placing the microphone on a tree stump beside the road, but we now notice that someone has cut the stump down so we cannot use it. There must be someone who would rather not have us give forth the Gospel in this way.*<sup>16</sup>

In the 1950's reel-to-reel tape recorders became available, and were used for language study as well as for playing sermon tapes. John and Helen Giesbrecht were among the missionaries who used their tape recorder for evangelistic purposes. One of their reports from Cumberland House, in 1956, told of plans to operate it along with a public address system out “on the road.”

Tape recorders, of course, required electricity. In the late 1950's Doug and Esther Day's home at La Loche, Saskatchewan, still had no power, but their tape recorder was adapted to run on wind-charged batteries. It seems it wasn't a breezy enough location, though. In 1959, while out on a language study term, Doug wrote, “Out here at Meadow Lake where the electric power is plentiful, I am able to put in long sessions at language study on the tape recorder.”<sup>17</sup>

## **MOTION PICTURES**

16mm films also came into use on NCEM fields. With the exception of the JESUS film (cf. Chap. 3), these were all in the English language. Their effectiveness was perhaps somewhat limited because the film stories and settings would not always have been culturally relevant. But

in the mid-1970's something extraordinary took place -- two evangelistic movies were filmed right on NCEM fields with Native actors.

The first film was titled "Silent Thunder" and, interestingly, wasn't originally intended for Native audiences. Well-known Christian author, Bernard Palmer, who wrote the film's script, tells how it came about:

"Silent Thunder" had an unusual beginning. Ken and Doris Anderson fell in love with Dore Lake when they came to Camp Carmel in northern Saskatchewan to work with my wife, Marge, and me on the script of the movie "My Son, My Son." Before the script was finished Ken was fascinated by the lake, the bush country and the people, and saw the possibility of using all three in a children's film.

The basic story line was worked out and (because the story takes place on a northern mink ranch) sent to Ted and Carol Johnson, Dore Lake mink ranchers, for checking accuracy. The script itself made two trips north for verification before the Johnsons gave their final approval of the presentation.

Casting was not easy. Noel Pechawis, who played the part of the boy, Strong Deer, was found at a Bible camp near Big River, Saskatchewan. Barney Lacendre played the part of the mink rancher and Mrs. Ernestine LeLiberty the part of his step sister.<sup>18</sup>

Bernard Palmer and Ken Anderson were attempting to create an interesting children's film for use in "the south," but in God's providence it was also used to reach Native people with the message of Christ. Ironically, although the film was made on location in northern Canada using a northern story and a cast of northern people, Bernard says that at first only a few missionaries saw its potential for use on their stations. But a few months after its release they saw it differently. He wrote:

Reserves where few will turn out for a preaching service have seen crowded halls when Silent Thunder has been shown. Native Christian patriarch, Barney Lacendre, who played the lead in the film, has seen its effectiveness in sharing Christ increased measurably. Missionaries who have used the film have seen some doors open that may otherwise have remained closed.

"I have shown other films from time to time," one missionary said, "but I have never seen the turnout and response we had with Silent Thunder. Usually there is confusion and noise as people come in or leave during a film, but not with this one. They sat, transfixed, until it was over."

On one reserve where it had been difficult to get more than 25 or 30 to attend any kind of service, the hall was filled. At another, Barney, who has gone along for many showings, was approached by the chief. "A lot of our people are out on their trap-lines right now," he said. "If you'll come back in a few weeks I'll see that everybody comes out to see this film."

A Christian couple who live at Beauval, Saskatchewan, said that two boys came to them almost a year after the showing there and related the story in detail. "It's the best film I ever saw in my

whole life,” one of them said.

On still another reserve Silent Thunder has been shown four times and the people still enjoyed it. “Only I don’t see why it’s called a kids’ film,” a number have said. “Anybody would enjoy it.”

Barney has had the privilege of talking to a number about their need of receiving Christ after they saw the film. “I even had one woman come up to me in Meadow Lake and tell me she had seen me in the film when it was shown in northern British Columbia,” he said.<sup>19</sup>

Because Silent Thunder was so successful, a second film, Little Eagle, was planned soon after and filmed in the late summer of 1975. Ronnie and Karen Merasty, children of a Christian Indian band chief near Meadow Lake played important parts. NCEM Margaret (Budd) Bear also had an important role. A number of boys from the Meadow Lake and Mistawasis Reserves also appeared in it. Unlike Silent Thunder, which had an all-Native cast, Little Eagle had several non-Native actors. Little Eagle premiered the summer of 1976 and began being used along with Silent Thunder on NCEM stations and Bible camps. There was talk of translating the two films into the Cree language, but plans never materialized.

## **RADIO**

The tremendous assistance radio has been to the spread of the Gospel is undeniable. In the early 1920's, when radio began in North America, evangelicals were among the first to use it. NCEM was in existence a little over ten years before its radio ministry began, though the desire to see it started could have been present earlier. However, with many northern homes still without electricity then, few would have owned radios.

The first recording of NCEM’s “Indian Gospel Broadcast” was released from CKBI Prince Albert (Sask.) in November of 1958. After all the planning and preparation, it seems the missionaries were gripped with the thrilling realization that God had opened to them a “great door of evangelism.” One of them wrote: “We were conscious that the message in Cree was at last going into Indian homes, otherwise unreached with the Gospel. This marked the beginning of a new era in reaching non-English-speaking Indians for Christ.”<sup>20</sup>

John Unger coordinated production of the 15-minute Cree broadcast and initially did a lot of the preaching. (In fact, because of John’s fluency in Cree many listeners were unaware that they were hearing a white man each week.) Guest speakers on the Cree broadcast included Gilbert Charles, Albert Tait and Stan Williams -- though Albert and Stan’s eastern dialects made understanding difficult for western listeners. Bill Jackson became a regular speaker on the broadcast later on.

### **THEY’RE LISTENING!**

From the start there was no doubt -- the Cree broadcast was being listened to. Missionaries in the

Meadow Lake area, Roy and Marjorie Markel, tell of carrying a radio and large battery pack on their ministry trips. Sometimes an aerial and pole had to be taken along too. The Markels would gather the people in a centrally located home and tune into the Cree Indian Gospel Broadcast.

Soon Cree people were listening to the broadcast in their own homes on their own radios. By 1960 five stations had been added. Letters from the listening audience indicated an amazingly large area covered by the broadcast -- six provinces and the Northwest Territories.

There was reason for the Mission to be excited about this new ministry. It was being broadcasted into scores of places where Cree-speaking Indians had no other evangelical testimony because of a shortage of missionary workers. And there were other reasons to rejoice. The program was being beamed into areas that were closed to the Gospel and would not allow evangelicals to enter.

Besides the Cree broadcast, a program in the Ojibway language was begun in Ontario. In 1964 Jack Gordon told about missionary work on an "iron curtain" reserve, and how radio was proving effective:

*We are told that almost 50 percent of the world's population lives in countries where the Gospel is wholly or partially banned. We have one such area on the Manitoulin Island -- a reserve with close to two thousand souls.*

*... Other Christian workers have tried to work on this reserve and have been put off. Stan Williams and I have gone in several times in a hit-and-run fashion and held meetings. On one occasion we were asked not to sing too loud ...*

*... How do we reach these people effectively? By way of our Ojibway Broadcast. We know they are listening. Many are listening behind closed doors ... One man wrote and said, "I do appreciate hearing the Gospel in my own language, even if I am not of the same faith." Another from the same reserve said, "We like the broadcast, but it is too short."*

*We do long to hear of souls being saved; perhaps we may never know until we reach Glory.<sup>21</sup>*

But the broadcasts did much more than just reach in by radio. Jack also noted that, as a result of the radio broadcast, increased personal ministry was made possible:

*...One of our first openings in West Bay came through the Indian Broadcast. One family wrote in, we paid them a visit, and today we have a mission station established on this reserve of six hundred souls. This family has broken up and gone, but the work remains, with the Williamses doing a good job. So, whether or not we are able to enter these reserves, God is able to use this end-time instrument, the Radio, for His glory.<sup>22</sup>*

Stan and Margaret Williams continued to serve as missionaries in the area, with Stan faithfully broadcasting the weekly Ojibway radio program for many years.

## CHYPEWYAN BROADCAST

While Cree and Ojibway people were being reached by radio, there was also a desire to see this same means used to reach the Dene (Chipewyan) tribe, many who were living in the Cree broadcast region. In the early 1960's one or two Chipewyan programs were aired on the Cree Gospel Broadcast. Not surprising, response to this experiment was negative, since most listeners were Cree and were disappointed when another language came on.

But a Chipewyan radio ministry remained on missionaries' hearts, particularly Bud Elford's. There were 35 Chipewyan villages and he knew that missionaries couldn't get to all of them.

So in June of 1967 Bud and his family moved to Cold Lake, Alberta, with the purpose of inaugurating a Chipewyan broadcast, along with translation work. By Christmas 24 hymns had been translated and nine of them taped. A program introduction and four messages were taped and made ready for broadcasting. But it was all "in faith," says Bud, "for we had made no approach to a radio station."

The Lord initially provided an opening on CFCW Camrose (Alberta), and the 15-minute program began airing on January 21st, 1968, and was aired each following Sunday afternoon. A month later the program began broadcasting on CHFC Churchill (Manitoba) on Tuesday evenings. Churchill was a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation station and charged no fee. But "CBC caught up with us," says Bud. In 1969 the Director of Programming let Bud know in no uncertain terms that "CBC is not at all sympathetic to this type of program."

The results of the newly-begun Chipewyan radio outreach? A few months after the broadcast began, the Elford's reported: "Quite a number of Indians have written in to say they are listening. Others requested hymn books so that they could sing along with us. These letters have been a blessing especially when we realize how difficult it is for some to write."<sup>23</sup>

It was an encouraging time. God had provided recording equipment, and all indicators were that people were listening. Besides letters, the Elford's also had received indirect reports from many and widely separated villages. For instance, they heard reports that right in nearby Cold Lake, the Catholic priest had been bringing a radio to church and the people were listening to the Chipewyan Gospel Broadcast as part of their morning mass. In Garson Lake (Sask.) there was no resident priest but the local Catholic people would gather in the church, sing some songs, pray a prayer, and then "open the radio." That would be their Sunday morning service.

The Chipewyan Broadcast also served the purpose of launching a Scripture translation project. The whole Book of Mark was read on the broadcast and by the time the publication was produced it had been read several times on the air and was familiar to the readers.

"For the first time in 16 years of work with the Chipewyans we feel we are having an impact on the tribe as a whole," wrote Bud.<sup>24</sup> The program eventually aired on five stations.

Years after the Chipewyan radio ministry concluded, Bud would still be meeting people who had

been influenced by the broadcast. Bud tells of meeting an inmate while preaching in a correctional centre in Prince Albert in the early 1980's. After the service the fellow came up to him, introduced himself and said that he was from northern Saskatchewan. He said, "I've always wanted to meet you. Every Sunday morning when we'd be out camping, Dad would haul us all in and make us sit for church. You're the guy we had to listen to."

## **BROADCAST AREAS**

By 1965 the Cree Broadcast had expanded its coverage to five stations. Mission-wide by 1968 there were broadcasts on eight stations (including the Cree, Ojibway and Chipewyan broadcasts).

Besides these commercial stations, several field missionaries began producing radio programs which were aired locally over low power FM stations. Ted Haas was one missionary involved in this type of outreach, producing a program in the "Delta-English" dialect for the Inuvik (NWT) station. Workers at Moosonee (Ont.), Buffalo Narrows and La Loche (Sask.), and Norway House (Man.) are among those who have had local radio ministries.

For NCEM the number of broadcasts on commercial stations peaked in 1978 when 16 programs were being aired weekly in three languages. They included stations broadcasting from the communities of Dryden, Blind River, Kenora, Timmins (Ont.); Dauphin, Flin Flon, Thompson (Man.); Meadow Lake, Prince Albert (Sask.); and Ft. McMurray and Peace River (Alta.).

Judging from the reports, meeting the financial costs of the radio ministry was a continual challenge. It was recognized from the start that gifts from the listeners wouldn't likely be sufficient to pay the broadcast costs. In fact, it seems it wasn't even expected that the listeners would contribute. Cree Broadcast coordinator, John Unger, wrote in 1960: "It would be a waste of expensive radio time, were we to mention the need to the listening audience. They are just not financially able to support."<sup>25</sup>

With appeals appearing in the Northern Lights magazine, many missionary-minded Christian friends did support the Cree radio ministry. But designated gifts were never quite enough to pay the bills for air time. A couple of stations did provide free service but, even so, in 1965 the broadcast costs reached \$545 per month. In 1974, with more stations added and air time costs rising, the monthly bill was just under \$1000.

Funding for the Chipewyan Broadcast was not so much a challenge for the Mission, partly because the costs were not quite as high, and also because it was decided that the program would not air until a sufficient number of churches had committed themselves to supporting the broadcast regularly. But whether it was the Cree, Ojibway or Chipewyan broadcast that was in need, it was often the missionaries themselves who pledged their own money to keep the programs on the air.

## **SIGNAL FADES**

It wasn't because radio was ineffective or too costly -- NCEM's radio outreach was spreading



the Gospel and penetrating many barriers ... barriers of literacy, race, religion, language and geography. But in the late 1970's most NCEMers involved with radio programming had increasing responsibilities on the field and in administration. The Mission looked to the Lord for additional radio programming personnel, but no one was available.

And so after two years of evaluation it was decided in 1980 to take the Cree program off the air. The Chipewyan program had already concluded in 1978. Stan Williams' Ojibway radio ministry in Ontario would continue.

## **TELEVISION**

It was never NCEM's intention that a television ministry "replace" its radio outreach. The Mission's evaluation had revealed, however, that with the launch of satellite broadcasting in the North, people in Native communities were watching their TVs more and listening to their radios less. That realization effected a burden on the hearts of NCEM leaders ... a burden for the spiritual needs of the growing Native television audience.

It was true that some of these people could already tune in to a number of Christian TV programs. But something more was needed -- the Gospel needed to be proclaimed in a culturally sensitive way to Native viewers.

Just as they had done with radio, NCEMers realized that modern technology could make possible Gospel outreach as never before. Television, which had already gained disrepute for its evil influence, could be used for good. It was an implement put at the Mission's disposal by a sovereign God for the accomplishment of His purposes. And even greater than radio was TV's potential for nation-wide broadcasting by satellite.

### **A VISION FOR TELEVISION**

Dreaming about a Native television outreach was one thing. Actually beginning one was another. It would take people, equipment and money. By faith NCEM's leaders prayed and pursued the vision.

In 1977 Derrick and Jean Hiscox were sitting in the dining hall at Prairie Bible Institute, having brought their son to high school. A number of NCEM missionaries were on campus that day, too, as an inter-mission "IMCO" conference was just concluding. Across the room Jean recognized Bud and Marge Elford, whom she hadn't seen since Bible school days in London, Ontario, in the early 1950's.

Jean walked over and reintroduced herself. A minute later Derrick joined them, and in the ensuing conversation the Hiscoxes told the Elfords how they had returned from service with New Tribes Mission in Brazil and were now involved in a pastorate and television ministry to Portuguese people in southern Ontario. Bud was a field director at the time, and one of NCEM's

leaders burdened for a TV ministry. He asked Derrick and Jean if they knew anyone who might be interested in helping to get a Native television ministry started.

Derrick and Jean gave Bud some names. But in the following months it was their own names that came to mind most often. It seemed that the Lord was prompting them to consider their own involvement in a Native TV outreach. In seeking God's will they attended an NCEM staff gathering at Lac La Biche the following year. There Derrick and Jean met missionaries who were praying for a TV ministry, and there they talked with Mission leaders about it.

Back in Ontario, Derrick and Jean kept praying about their possible involvement. There were many unknowns ... so many details that would have to be taken care of in starting a TV ministry from scratch. They still weren't sure what God would have them do, but they did have an underlying confidence in God's guiding hand. They had seen how the Lord effectively used their Portuguese TV outreach in Ontario in spite of their minimal training and experience in such a specialized ministry.

In 1979 Derrick and Jean officially joined NCEM. But even then the launching of a Native television program was still considered only a possibility. All they and Mission leaders really had at that point was a vision. There was still a lot of ground work to do just to find out if the idea was feasible. One of Derrick and Jean's first initiatives was talking to missionaries, Native believers and nonbelievers, and TV stations about it.

## **REALISTIC CONCERNS**

The Hiscoxes received a lot of encouragement from a variety of people, but there were a number of realistic concerns, too. Some people thought that it would be too big an undertaking -- after all, where would the Native and non-Native production staff come from? Others wondered if the Mission could produce a program that would meet industry standards. Some respondents thought that it might be too difficult to find enough Native believers who were willing and not "too shy" to give their testimonies and share their songs on camera. Perhaps the most often-heard concern was the high financial cost.

But encouraging words greatly outnumbered the others. One missionary shared how he had been praying and seeking God as to how the "masses" of Native Canadians could be reached. To him this was a direct answer to prayer. And not insignificant, either, were positive comments from TV station personnel. A growing number of northern villages already had their own TV stations and were looking for programs reflecting Native culture. Cable stations in cities, too, were interested in something that was produced for a Native audience.

Of upmost concern to Derrick and Jean these months, though, was the necessary definite commitment from at least a few Native believers to join with them full-time. The Hiscoxes knew they couldn't do it alone, and so far no one had pledged to help. Derrick and Jean were still residing in Ontario at the time, with Derrick making TV ministry-related trips out west by car. In October 1979 Derrick left home on yet another trip and remembers saying to Jean, "This is the last time I'll make this trip. We'll stay here in our ministry in Ontario unless God opens the door

and leads some Native people to join us.”

Derrick was, of course, praying and sharing about the need wherever he could. But he had also felt led of the Lord to wait for Native Christians to take the initiative to approach him and say, “God has spoken to me. I want to do this.” And on that trip that’s exactly what happened! Three people individually told Derrick that they’d like to help with the TV ministry. When Derrick phoned Jean with that news ... (well, let’s just say there was some excitement on those telephone lines!).

In May of 1980 three answers to prayer: Fred Evans, Donna Anderson and Nancy Buck travelled to Ontario where a “pilot program” was produced with rented video equipment. The plan was to present the program to Native viewers, mission leaders and television stations for review. After that, equipment would be purchased, a studio set up, and the actual production of programs for airing could begin.

## **THE PURPOSE**

In 1979 a three-fold purpose for the proposed TV ministry had been stated in a memo: (1) “...To take the Gospel message into areas where a missionary may not have opportunity to visit regularly”; (2) “To reinforce the Word which has been communicated already through preaching and witnessing”; and (3) “To provide [an] opportunity for Native Christians to share their faith.”

The first point was important. In spite of missionary outreach over the past decades, there were still many Native communities that had been bypassed. And not just remote places either. Sometimes referred to by missionaries as “hidden” people, TV could reach Native people in the cities too.

First Nations people were a distinct group with distinct cultures. Native Gospel TV could reach right into their homes. At the time there were hardly any TV programs, even secular, that were directed specifically to this audience. It would be a powerful force in bringing the Gospel message to Native Canadians.

But this optimistic talk of TV’s potential for evangelism never meant that NCEM could relax its need for field missionaries or for establishing local churches -- TV wasn’t a gimmick that would guarantee the successful completion of the missionary task. As the second purpose (above) indicated, TV ministry was recognized as just a tool for the missionary.

## **THE FORMAT**

Originally a few different formats for the proposed half-hour weekly program were considered. It was thought that perhaps the programs would vary each week with Bible teaching, cultural arts and crafts features, music and interviews. After production began, though, it was the interview-testimony format, interspersed with music, that caught on and was used on the majority of the programs.

Bible teaching by Native pastors would be included regularly, but for the most part the program would consist of Native believers sharing what Christ has done for them. But whatever the format and whoever the program guest, it would be Native people communicating with Native people, demonstrating the power of the Gospel by their changed lives.

Unlike the Mission's radio programs, which were produced in Native languages, only English would be used on the TV program. That was simply because the program would be broadcasted across widespread areas. Its target audience was all of Canada's Native peoples, the 50-or-so tribes and the Metis.

It was during the pilot program taping sessions in Ontario that the newly formed team batted around ideas for a program name. "Tribal Trails" was one that everybody liked. Fred Evans sat down with his guitar and within a day had written and sung the words that became the introductory theme song for the program.

## **PRODUCING THE FIRST PROGRAMS**

In 1981 Derrick and Jean and their teenage children moved to Prince Albert. They began setting up a studio in the basement of the Mission's office building. Nancy Buck finished Bible school that spring and, along with Donna Anderson, the first NCEM-TV staff got down to the work of producing a weekly program. Fred Evans, however, didn't feel led to leave his evangelistic ministry based in Manitoba with Continental Mission, but would help with production on occasion. Donna would host the program and interview guests while Nancy, along with Derrick, would be involved with the technical aspects of taping and editing. Jean would assist with the planning of programs and be responsible for the ministry's office tasks.

There was office and studio equipment to buy, scripts to write ... there was travelling, interviewing, taping, and editing ... there was work, work and more work. Jean remembers Art Tarry, then Assistant NCEM Director, sticking his head around the corner late one day and remarking, "Oh, you're still looking at [video] footage? How are you ever going to produce a weekly program?"

Derrick estimates that, on average, it has taken at least 150 "person-hours" to produce each half-hour Tribal Trails program. Forty new programs were required per year. How would the small staff meet the demanding schedule?

As they saw the ministry get up and running, it was obvious to the Hiscoxes that God was in it. He would supply every need. Besides the great amount of work required, technically it was a highly demanding task. "None of us were that gifted, really," says Jean, "but we just made ourselves available ... the impossibilities of it made us trust in God. And there was just no time to worry about how we would get the programs done on time." The Lord provided in many ways -- things such as free technical advice from friends in the video industry, and encouraging words from field missionaries.

Within the space of three years God brought eight more workers to the television department.

And God provided Native participants for the program as well. The first major “taping trip” to Ontario and Manitoba in the fall of 1981 proved that God would supply guests for the program -- Native Christians who very willingly shared their testimonies and songs. A trip to western Canada the following year was made possible by the cooperation of a number of other evangelical missions working with Native people. That ongoing cooperation has proven vital in following years in providing Tribal Trails guests and in follow-up.

## **ON THE AIR**

February 1982 on Cable 6 in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, saw the first public broadcast of Tribal Trails. About a dozen other communities would begin broadcasting the program on their local cable stations at no charge. But it was the commercial stations that would reach a larger audience, including rural Indian reserves.

In April 1982, CHFD in Thunder Bay (Ont.) was first, followed by CKBI in Prince Albert (Sask.). By 1983 the commercial stations in Dawson Creek, Prince George, Terrace (B.C.), and Yorkton (Sask.) had been added. North Pole (Alaska) and Lloydminster (Sask./Alta.) would join the list, but the number of local commercial stations wouldn’t grow again until 1995 when a major station in Winnipeg (Man.) was added. Efforts to get onto CBC North were futile.

“We’re pretty excited around NCEM ... these days,” read the opening line of an article in the April 1986 issue of Northern Lights. The excitement was because a goal -- stated five years earlier -- of broadcasting a Native Gospel TV program nation-wide by satellite had been met. On February 16, 1986, Tribal Trails was released for the first time on ITV. Besides covering a 70-mile radius of the city of Edmonton, ITV, by use of the Anik D Satellite would reach over 330 communities in every province and territory in Canada. (The number of community cable stations locked in to ITV would climb to over 1300 in the 1990’s.) Certainly there was reason for praise. The resulting increased response from viewers proved that the increased cost of broadcasting was well worth it.

## **VIEWER RESPONSE**

There had been some early encouragements that led Tribal Trails staff to believe that a Native broadcast would receive special interest. Derrick and Jean tell of their first trip to northeastern Manitoba where they videotaped the testimonies of several young Native Christians in Island Lake. Their next stop was Red Sucker Lake and as they met there with local pastor Allan B. Harper, they told him of the “raw footage” video taping they had just completed. Allan went down to the local TV station, went “on live” and announced, “We’re going to cut the movies out because we’ve got some videos of our own people we want to see.” Soon the whole village was watching Tribal Trails host Donna Anderson and her guests. Mission pilot Gary Brown confessed later that he had sneaked around the village during the broadcast and done some “window-peeking.” He noted that everyone -- 100 percent -- were watching, even though they had opportunity to switch to another channel!

How many have been watching Tribal Trails each week? That would be difficult for NCEM to

determine accurately, of course. By the mid 1990's, out of a potential audience of between four and five million, TV Department administrator, Ed Stobbe, estimated about 150,000 viewers each week, with the majority of them being non-Christian. Two Saskatchewan TV stations have indicated that Tribal Trails is their most watched religious program on Sunday mornings.

But more important than an accurate count of the number of people watching, however, is the effectiveness of Tribal Trails in touching lives. Right from the start letters began coming back from viewers. Both Native and non-Native Christians expressed their appreciation for the program. Some inquirers were seeking spiritual help, and replies to viewers' letters have been followed up personally, either by letter or by a visit where possible. Tribal Trails staff began the practice of praying together regularly for the needs of the viewers.

A significant increase in the number of respondents came in 1991. That year the ITV broadcast began displaying a phone number offering spiritual counsel. In 1993 all the programs (regardless of the broadcast location) began displaying the number. Though the viewers have had to pay long distance charges to Prince Albert, phone calls have come from every corner of the country. Those with needs have been counselled and prayed with over the phone. Many have been led to the Saviour.

Some viewers, who would be unlikely to write a letter, call on impulse. One Tribal Trails phone counsellor tells of a caller who phoned twice the same day. The first time she was reluctant to open up and share what was really on her heart. She didn't want to reveal her name, either, and hung up. Within the next half-hour, though, she had watched the rest of the program and found that she could identify with what the Tribal Trails guest was saying. She phoned back, this time giving her name and asking for help.

Calls could come at any time of the day or night from those who had jotted down the Tribal Trails phone number. Initially staff were on phone call duty at the Mission's TV studio office on Saturday and Sunday mornings during broadcast times. But with time zone differences and additional broadcasts, in 1991 "call-forwarding" made it possible for phone counsellors to receive the calls at home. A second line was added, and in 1992 a cell phone began to be used. Now the staff wouldn't miss any calls, whatever the time or day of the week. Ed Stobbe tells of answering calls even while grocery shopping. It was just a matter of finding an aisle quiet enough for him to counsel and pray with an inquirer.

## **BENEFITS**

Though it has operated as a separate department within NCEM, the TV ministry has worked closely with the Mission's field workers. The ministry could only reach its highest effectiveness if personal follow-up was used. Just as an army may implement an "air attack" before proceeding with a "ground attack," so has Tribal Trails operated in a spiritual sense. The program has gone ahead and has opened many doors for personal ministry in Native homes and communities.

While people may naturally be suspicious of a stranger in their community or at their door, the

missionary who identifies himself with Tribal Trails often finds that he and his message have already been introduced to the people. For example, when David and Paula Loops were seeking permission from the local Council to live at Wollaston Lake, Saskatchewan, it wasn't until they mentioned "Tribal Trails" that they heard, "There's no more questions; you're welcome here." On an outreach trip to Davis Inlet, Labrador, in early 1996, Carl Sonnichsen reported that it was difficult finding "open doors." But when the local residents heard the words "Tribal Trails" they said, "Come on in." And among Christians, the TV ministry has helped NCEMers cross denominational barriers.

It was recognized even before the TV ministry began that, besides being evangelistic, a Native Gospel program would "reinforce the Word" and be an effective discipleship tool. How true that was became evident early. One of the first responses by letter in 1982 came from someone who said that she'd been a Christian for years but didn't feel that she knew how to witness. When she saw Native people witnessing on the Tribal Trails program she gained enough confidence to try herself. That same day her relatives heard about her faith in Christ.

That the program has been an "encourager" to Native Christians has even been stated as its greatest strength. Native believers who tune in find that they are not alone in their faith -- that there are an increasing number of other Christians like themselves. That can be a tremendous encouragement especially to those who live in isolated communities where there is little or no Christian fellowship available.

The distribution of videotapes has also been a useful aspect of the TV ministry. Missionaries and Native believers have used taped Tribal Trails programs to minister to believers and unbelievers in homes, schools and other institutions. James and Ann Justin, for example, watched a Tribal Trails videotape made available by an NAIM missionary at Kyuquot, off the west coast of Vancouver Island. The tape influenced them to attend Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute for three years.

NCEM's TV department has also produced Bible teaching videos with Native pastors, a children's "story-time" series, and a number of testimony videos in Native languages. "PR" videos have been produced as well, and have helped to raise prayer and financial support, and recruit missionary workers.

## **APPEALING WITH NO APPEALS**

Tribal Trails has provided an avenue for Native Christians to witness to their own people. But it hasn't stopped there. Each week many non-Natives tune in also. The program seems to have a kind of cross-cultural appeal.

Perhaps it is because Tribal Trails is down-to-earth. There's nothing fancy about it. Testimonies and music are often videotaped in the guest's own home ... plastic on the windows and all. The program features everyday people, not just professional communicators, as most Gospel programs do. Viewers recognize Tribal Trails guests as "real people" who "tell it like it is." These are people who don't just mention the victories in their lives; they tell how God brought

them back when they were down and out.

Another attraction may be that the program has never made appeals for funds. It's been a missionary effort, with no expectation that the viewers themselves were to carry the whole cost. The staff believed that if God wanted the broadcast to continue and expand, then He would supply. Thanks to the gifts of God's people, a new 60 x 40-foot two-floor office and studio building was built at NCEM's Headquarters site in 1983. The Mission's "Minute-Man" supporters have been a great help over the years on occasions when there were urgent needs for equipment to be added or replaced.

Tribal Trails staff were, in fact, so adamant about not mentioning funds on the program that for several years they even avoided saying thank you to supporters on the air. But they began to see the need to show some flexibility one day when a viewer called to say, "I know that you don't have any needs for funds because you don't ask for them ... but I thought I should call to see if there's anything that I could help with."

Financial cost was the most often expressed concern when the ministry was still only a vision in the minds of NCEM's leaders. And almost 20 years later it is still a concern. Paying the high costs of broadcasting is still a faith-stretching venture. Back in the early 1980's General Director, Bud Elford, pointed out that when the Mission was pursuing this new TV ministry the leaders didn't ask only, "How much will it cost?" but more importantly, "Is it God's will?" That conviction still holds.

Ever since Christ gave His followers the mandate: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel," barriers have been raised to the worldwide proclamation of the Good News. Outreach efforts to the Native peoples of Canada have certainly not been exempt from such obstructions. Large distances over formidable territory, scattered populations, racial barriers, and a lack of missionary workers have all made NCEM's task difficult.

How thrilling it is to realize the effectiveness of television in helping to overcome these barriers!

## **NCEMers: THEN & NOW**

Yes, developing technology would change how NCEM carried out its mandate of bringing the Gospel to Native Canadians. But what about the missionaries themselves? Would these new ways of doing missionary work change who they are?

At the time of its beginnings, NCEM's aim was the establishing of indigenous churches. In 1996 its focus still hasn't changed -- a large portion of the Mission's full-time workers are still involved in church-planting as "field" missionaries. But the past years have also seen a significant increase in those who serve in other roles, many who would be described as "support" workers.



## **REAL MISSIONARIES?**

World-wide, for many years the idea was that missionary work was carried on through only a few types of activities: teaching, preaching, and medical work. In fact, as recently as 30 or 40 years ago, if a Christian did not feel gifted in any of these areas, he or she was not likely to “feel called” to missionary service.

The intervening years saw aviation, literature and radio workers added. Soon Christians began to see that God could use more kinds of people in many more categories of ministry than they had previously considered to be truly “missionary.” Now administrators, carpenters, technicians, computer programmers, and a variety of other workers are busily serving Christ in missions world-wide ... and in NCEM.

That’s not to deny that there hasn’t been some uneasiness in these roles. Some support workers may themselves feel uncomfortable with the label “missionary,” for they don’t feel gifted for cross-cultural personal ministry. Some may have limited contact with Native people.

So, are these support workers real missionaries? The answer to that question depends, of course, on one’s definition of “missionary.” The word isn’t in the Bible, but literally it means “sent one.” NCEMer Owen Salway, himself a “support” worker for many years in the printing department, shed some light on the answer in one of his Northern Lights editorials.

He told the story of a reporter who questioned three men who were working in a stone quarry. The reporter asked all three this same question: “What are you doing?”

“I am making a dollar an hour,” was the first man’s reply.

The second man replied, “I am cutting stone.”

The third man said, “I am building a church.”

As Owen’s story serves to illustrate, perhaps the label “missionary” isn’t what’s really important. What’s more significant is the worker’s goal -- for the NCEMer, the fulfilling of the Great Commission among Native Canadians.

And to reach that goal NCEM still recognizes that nothing can equal the effectiveness of the physical presence of the missionary among the people. Literature, television and other media now have an increased role. And many administrative details must be taken care of to keep workers serving on mission stations. But to effectively reach Canada’s First People, nothing can replace the understanding and caring heart that is needed ... and total dependence on God through prayer.

## **CANADA’S FIRST PEOPLE: THEN & NOW**

Change ... perhaps few others have been forced to deal with it as Canada's First People have. The changes that came to European cultures over several centuries hit the Native people in just a few short years.

By 1946, when the Mission officially began, life for most of Canada's Native people had, in fact, already been affected dramatically. Perhaps only the NCEMers who served among the Arctic Inuit in the 1940's observed a lifestyle that had still not been influenced much by the dominant society to the south.

While NCEM's ministry would grow to include Native communities in other regions, originally its outreach was to "...that portion of Canada lying to the north of the present agricultural belt."<sup>26</sup> Before European contact most of the tribes in these areas lived as nomads, following the buffalo or caribou. When fur traders came the Native people became increasingly dependent on barter with them, and communities soon sprang up around trading posts. It was to these settlements that NCEM's first missionaries went.

What was life like in these places? These reports from early Mission literature give us an idea:

A 1951 NCEM publication read: "The Indian home is generally a one-room log cabin, usually low and dark, chinked with mud or moss, with a floor of rough boards of hewn poles. In most villages we find a few more pretentious homes built of hewn logs, two story, sometimes with a lean-to, and neatly whitewashed. In the summer they dearly like to move out into their tents and do their cooking over an open campfire."<sup>27</sup>

The same brochure described the peoples' livelihood this way: "Hunting and trapping are the main occupations of the Indians. In the 'far north' trapping is the main means of livelihood for the Natives, and everywhere are the Hudson's Bay Company posts and free traders."<sup>28</sup>

## **COMMERCIAL IMPETUS**

More changes were on the way. Missionary reports began telling of commercial fishing operations being extended further and further into the North. Harvested fish were soon being flown out by plane, or hauled by caterpillar tractor several hundred miles over frozen "winter roads" to the rail-heads.

It was becoming less difficult for northern Native people to earn cash. They weren't getting rich, for sure, but there were now increased opportunities to make money. After a visit with one villager, missionary Stan Collie wrote this in his report:

"My house is not good; in Heaven I think I will have a good house," Truly, the little cardboard-lined shack, with the rough floor, air-tight heater and scanty furnishings, was not too good; but the dear old Indian Christian was happy in the Lord.

"My heart is not strong," he continued, "I think maybe if I was strong and make money, I would

not live close to God. I think maybe [it is] better this way.”<sup>29</sup>

Missionaries were soon seeing these expanding employment opportunities affect their ministries. While seasonal trapping had always left the villages quite empty at times, commercial fishing added to the scenario. A missionary report from Buffalo Narrows in the early 1950's read this way:

“The new fish plant is completed and is now in operation. As a result almost everyone is either out fishing or working in the plant. In view that the season is short, they are working 24 hours a day and seven days a week. The attendance therefore at our services has dropped.”<sup>30</sup>

In similar vein, Bob and Donna Hoeppner wrote this during their ministry at Deschambault Lake, Saskatchewan: “...Most of our people are out on their trap lines for spring trapping. Soon after their return, the fishing season begins. Thus they are employed in efforts to earn a living; sad to say, many of them have no concern for their spiritual condition.”<sup>31</sup>

There was also an impetus of mining and prospecting during these years and several sizable towns mushroomed in the wilderness. And while these advances may have brought a higher standard of living to some of the northern Native people, the changes would certainly not be all for the good. One missionary report put it this way: “As far as the Indians are concerned ... contact with the white man has usually been detrimental to their moral welfare.”<sup>32</sup>

## **LOSS OF LIVELIHOOD**

While the encroaching mining and logging industries brought employment to some, the following decades would see many northern Native communities hit hard by economic depression. Dwindling fish stocks and economic and political factors in the fur business brought these industries down to very low levels. Government welfare programs would assist those who had lost their income, but it would be at the cost of the peoples' independence and self-respect.

There have, of course, been some who have continued to profit from their knowledge of the land and their outdoor skills. Some trappers work seasonally as guides for hunters and fishermen, or for scientists. Others work in mining, logging, on fire patrols, road or building construction. But, typically, unemployment on reserves and in northern Native communities has reached over 50 percent, and even much higher in some areas.

## **LESS ISOLATED**

Besides employment factors, changes in travel and communication have also had a dramatic effect on these Native communities. During NCEM's first years, its mission stations were mostly located in remote areas. Early workers talked of visiting places where the Indians were not used to seeing white people. However, roads, airports and electronic communication would soon bring northern Native people much “closer” to the rest of Canada.

Likely television has had the greatest influence. Until the launch of the Anik A satellite in 1972,

communication in the North was uncertain at best. Radio and telephone services operated by shortwave and through mobile systems, which were both expensive and unreliable.

It was, in fact, the need to improve communications with and within the North that prompted Canada's initial experiments in space technology. While the vast reaches between northern settlements made the use of microwave towers impractical, distance presented no problem for a satellite signal beamed from high above the earth. Soon the dish-shaped antennae became a familiar sight in communities across the North ... as was CBC television programming.

Missionary Chuck Bloomquist wrote about the effects: "Change is coming rapidly to many of the villages in the Western Arctic. Since television arrived just a year ago in Ft. Franklin, there have been several noticeable changes. People don't visit with one another like they used to. Getting together in the evenings to tell stories has been such a strong part of the culture, but is now being eroded by television. Also the young people and children are not seen on the streets as much as before. Instead they are in their homes learning the value system presented on CBC television."<sup>33</sup>

Then in August 1982, Anik D was launched and northerners could tune in to a variety of programming, including a number of American movie channels.

## **YOUNG AND GROWING**

A unique aspect of NCEM's outreach, compared to many overseas missions, is that it is striving to reach a relatively small population that is spread over one of the world's largest countries. A 1951 Mission publication listed the number of registered Indians and Inuit in Canada at 130,000. Today that number is closer to 500,000. However, the Mission has always included in its outreach all those of Native ancestry, not just those with "status." The total number can't be determined definitely, but has been estimated between one and two million.

What is known is that Aboriginal people are a young and rapidly growing segment of Canada's population. Many of the Native communities where NCEM has stationed missionaries have grown noticeably. The village of La Loche, Saskatchewan, for example, now has about 4000 residents, around three times as many as when NCEM first placed workers there. One early missionary commented in retrospect, "It's different now. In the old days everybody knew the missionary and what he taught, and talked with him." Of course not all Native communities have grown as much, but in many of them it's more of a big town atmosphere now.

It's also different in the sense that Native people are becoming much more "visible." Besides an increase in exposure by the secular media, they are being noticed more because of urbanization. By the mid-1990's half of the Native people lived in Canada's cities.

## **STRUGGLING**

Sadly, whether living in the city or on reserves, Native people are often troubled people. Though the signing of treaties promised them certain benefits in return for land, these agreements seem

to have fostered dependency. Many of their social ills can be connected to the paternalistic system under which they have now lived for generations. "Dependence leads to a lack of motivation, which leads to a lack of self-respect, and that affects self-image and pretty soon you don't have too much to live for," notes one Native church leader.<sup>34</sup>

And while Native people have, in more recent years, made gains in seeking control of their own affairs, economically and socially they are still at the bottom of almost any statistical report. Fewer Natives than non-Natives acquire an education and fewer join the labour force. By percentage, Natives of Canada are the most imprisoned people in the world, comprising 85 percent of some provincial prisons (though they make up only about three percent of the total population).<sup>36</sup> They have been described as "grieving" people, with a painfully high rate of preventable deaths.

## **DISTINCT**

They have often been treated as second-class citizens. But perhaps even more difficult for them is that they have been so misunderstood. Though there are many outward similarities in lifestyles between Native and non-Native, inside their values and choices are still prompted by their uniqueness as Native people. As one missionary writer put it, "Native people have too often been thought of as just 'well-tanned Canadians.'" <sup>37</sup>

In fact, their world view and values are more similar to some foreign tribal cultures than to those of mainstream Canadians. They have different ways of looking at things. But Native people shouldn't be thought of as just another ethnic minority, either ... for they are not. Their history -- which may not be well known to the average Canadian -- is important to them, and sets them apart. Except for African-Americans, North American Native people are the only ethnic minority who haven't chosen to come here to find a better way of life.

Who are the Native Canadians of today? Like all other societies around the world they too are changing. Will they become assimilated? ... a part of the North American "melting pot"? For most, assimilation is not their goal. One Native person put it this way: "I don't know what we're made of, but we just don't melt!"

Back in 1955, when others were perhaps thinking that Native people would soon be absorbed into mainstream society, NCEM co-founder Stan Collie wrote, "...I see not only vast expanses of wilderness, but scores and scores of settlements ... Indians are not dying out; they are increasing in numbers. They have not been assimilated during the past generations; nor will they be in this one, or the next."<sup>35</sup>

Canada's First People remain distinct in the 1990's. And Canada's First People still need the Gospel.

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**NOTES: 1--Jim Truxton of the MAF as quoted in Northern Lights issue #304; 2--Northern Lights issue #84; 3--NLs #304; 4--NLs #350; 5--NLs #385; 6--NLs #358; 7--Labourers Together issue #89; 8--NLs #176; 9--NLs**

#171; 10--NLs #112; 11--NLs #93; 12--NLs #185; 13--NLs #369; 14--NLs #160; 15--NLs #32; 16--NLs #28; 17--NLs #159; 18--NLs #344; 19--NLs #344; 20--NLs #167; 21--NLs #204; 22--NLs #204; 23--NLs #255; 24--NLs #255; 25--NLs #167; 26--1952 NCEM brochure; 27--1951 NCEM brochure; 28--Ibid.; 29--NLs #166; 30--NLs #64; 31--NLs #180; 32--1951 brochure; 33--NLs; 34--Kene Jackson in Faith Today, Sept.-Oct. 1995; 35--NLs #111; 36--Mission Frontiers Bulletin (U.S. Center for World Mission), May-June 1994; 37--Gary Brumbelow, Ibid.

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*The original printing of Light on the Horizon included photos with captions, and text boxes. Here is text from some of them:*

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### **What Makes a Good Pilot?**

Anne Heal tells of a time when their family boarded a Mission plane and, just prior to lifting off, they realized that their young daughter had dropped her doll into the lake. The pilot stopped the plane so they could retrieve it. "Now 'that's' a good pilot," says Anne.

Ed Heal remembers pilot Marshall Calverly telling of flying Art and Dorothy Wellwood's goats to La Loche. He had the back of his neck "nibbled on" while trying to concentrate on his flying – and what he thought sounded like mechanical problems turned out to be just a goat banging his horns on the cabin wall.

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NCEM has owned a few twin-engine aircraft. Though safer (in case of an engine failure) and roomier, they are also "thirstier." Small single-engine planes have proven themselves more practical for most of NCEM's flying needs.

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Floats, skis, or wheels: pilots Ron Knightly and Jack Norcross with one of NCEM's Cessna 185's in the 1970's. The construction of landing strips allowed for air travel previously impossible during ice freeze-up and break-up.

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NCEM's aviation department kept busy flying Native students and workers to and from the Island Lake Bible School in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960's.

Fatality free: a number of mishaps, but no loss of life in NCEM's 50 years of flying.

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Dogsleds soon gave way to power toboggans: Stan Collie with his dogteam. Bernard Fredlund using his snowmobile to haul a load of wood home in the early 1950s. The machines were capable of pulling heavy loads – commercial price was \$1300, but NCEM manufactured a few of its own for \$700 each.

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"Cat trains" were once a common sight in the North. Now trucks and cars have access to most isolated northern villages for a few weeks each winter on roads built over frozen lakes and muskeg.

Gary Winger in Puvirnituk, Quebec, where a snowmobile “isn’t” a recreational vehicle, but a necessity.

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### **Roy’s Unique Transportation**

He may have been the only one in the North doing it, but Roy Markel had good reasons for using his dogs and his bicycle (at the same time!) for transportation in his ministry on the Waterhen Reserve in northern Saskatchewan.

Roy had a car, but found that it caused too much of a “commotion” when he approached the Reserve homes. Most of the terrain was too sandy or hilly to easily pedal a bicycle, and the distances to travel were too great. So he hitched up his dogs to his bike.

Roy reported that his unique form of transportation reached top speed when his lead dog caught sight of another canine in his path. (But his sleigh dogs were getting the summer exercise they needed.)

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Less-than-ideal driving conditions after a rain in northern Alberta: Carroll Hill and his stuck truck. “It took us 29 hours to go 23 miles to Salt Prairie where the gravel started.”

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The August 1946 edition of Northern Lights – the first issue to be printed on the newly acquired press. The 12-page digest-size magazine was painstakingly prepared with individual pieces of metal type set “one-letter-at-a-time.”

Owen Salway at the Linotype machine. The “letter-press” method of printing (raised metal type and “cuts” for photos) at the Mission’s Meadow Lake printshop was replaced by “offset” printing when the department moved to NCEM’s new Headquarters location in Prince Albert.

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### **Owen Salway: “Mr. Northern Lights”**

In 1950 a young man arrived in Buffalo Narrows to join the staff of NCEM. Soon after he was asked to assist in publishing the Mission’s official magazine Northern Lights. For the next 40 years Owen would be associated, in one way or another, with virtually every issue of this paper. At various times he served as typesetter, pressmen, write and editor.

Apart from his work with Northern Lights, Owen became an author in his own right. He wrote numerous stories and articles for publication in Christian magazines and secular newspapers. He wrote several books: his best known – Bushman and the Spirits, the life story of Barney Lacendre – became a Canadian religious best-seller.

To those who knew him, Owen’s life and ministry had even greater impact because he served the Lord faithfully in spite of physical limitations and pain. During most of his ministry years he suffered from muscular dystrophy, and in later years from cancer. It was a triumph of God’s grace that he remained cheerful – in fact, his entertaining wit and sense of humour are qualities most often remembered by his acquaintances.

Owen went to be with the Lord in November of 1990, at the age of 68.

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### **TYPOS! ... nobody's perfect**

The Printshop has provided an economical quality printing service for missionary prayer letters. Sometimes, though, the wrong keys were struck on the typesetting machine.

The excerpt from a field missionary's letter: "Correction: on my latest prayer letter – my week at Miramichi Bible Camp was beautiful and "busy" not "lousy" as was printed ... though we did have a lot of blackflies."

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In 1979 Kit Elford took on the operation of the Printshop alone. The following years saw several staff join and several pieces of equipment added to meet increasing printing demands. In 1982 full-color printing began.

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In 1956 NCEM began producing the bimonthly magazine "Cree Christian," later renamed "Cree Witness." It contained testimonies, sermons and stories by Native readers and for Native readers in the Cree and English languages.

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### **Barney Lacendre ... a concern to please the Lord**

"We had not been filming Silent Thunder very long when we realized that we were going to have a problem with some of the scenes involving Barney Lacendre," wrote Bernard Palmer.

For one thing, it was going to be difficult for the 75 year-old Christian Indian, who had the lead, to operate the 40 hp outboard motor at high speed. He was familiar only with smaller motors. The script also called for Barney to pull a 100-pound boy out of the lake and into the boat.

But by using a "stand-in" actor for one scene, and with a bit of camera fakery, the problems seemed solved. "The elderly Christian didn't say anything to Ken Anderson, or me, or anyone else involved in the film about the fakery that was used," says Bernard. "When the filming was over, however, and he was back in Meadow Lake, he got to weighing the matter. Finally he went to another Christian friend whose judgment he trusted.

" 'What I'm wondering,' he said, 'is whether those things we did were honest. I didn't run the boat in the fast scenes in the movie, and I didn't lift Noel out of the water. And when they showed us catching a fish, someone had actually caught it earlier and put it on Noel's hook. Now this is what I'm wondering. Is what we did Christian, or isn't it?'

"His Christian friend assured him that the movie was only telling a story and that the making of films is filled with fakery. 'I don't have any problem with that at all, Barney,' he assured him."

To all who knew him, that's the way Barney was ... always with a concern to please the Lord.



A long-time friend of the Mission, Barney also became known as the subject of the book *The Bushman and the Spirits*. Barney came to know the Lord in 1960 through the witness of NCEM missionary, Marshall Calverley.

A radically changed life and an outspoken Christian testimony characterized his life. The Cree-speaking trapper visited many Native communities, telling the story of his conversion from a life of drunkenness and witchcraft. Barney passed away in 1989 at the age of 88.

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People “were” listening. One missionary called NCEM’s newly-begun radio ministry “the beginning of a new era in reaching non-English-speaking Indians for Christ.”

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### **Tribal Trails: Touching Lives ... from letters received:**

– “I try and watch your program every Sunday. I am really impressed with the singing and testimonies. I don’t know any Christian Indians in Labrador, and I think that is why I never want to miss your program” (Anchor Point, Labrador)

– “I am writing for a copy of ‘Out of the Devil’s Snare’ (booklet offered on the program). My husband is an unbeliever and he really likes your show. I feel he will come to know God through your show. Do you have any more literature? I’m a new Christian ... two months old.” (Nova Scotia)

– “My wife, two boys and I have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord in our hearts and we enjoy this Christian life. I enjoy hearing of more Indian people accepting the Lord as their Saviour and hearing their testimony.” (Waskaganish, Quebec)

– “I enjoy your television programs. I like listening to the songs, Scripture, guests that talk about their lives and the problems of alcohol and drugs and how they overcame them through finding Jesus Christ. I would like literature on drugs, alcohol and any Christian literature. I want very much to get to know the Lord and receive Him in my heart. Thank you.” (Nipigon, Ontario)

– “I watch the beautiful program you share every Sunday morning. I really enjoy the program very much and would like to order some tapes.” (Gillam, Manitoba)

– “I try to watch your program every Sunday and enjoy it very much. I am serving a one-year sentence and would appreciate any help and prayers. Keep up the good work.” (Edmonton, Alberta)

– “I watch your program every week. It means a lot to me. I want to turn to Jesus, but my drinking doesn’t help any. Could you send me a free Bible that you offered.” (Terrace, British Columbia)

– “I hear your program nearly every Sunday from Dawson Creek, CJDC-TV. We are poor, so I’m not able to send any money. I’m a Christian. My husband is not, but enjoys your program.” (Chetwynd, British Columbia)

– “I have watched your program off and on for the last couple of years. I am glad to see so many people’s lives changed through Jesus. It is amazing! My own life has been transformed from alcoholism and sinful ways. There are trials and tribulations, but He will see me through them. Praise be to the Lord.” (Whitehorse, Yukon Territory)

– “Thank you for your programs on Sunday mornings. Your program started me thinking about my salvation about five years ago. Praise the Lord, three years ago I was saved by His precious Son, Jesus.”  
(Aklavik, Northwest Territories)

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## CHAPTER THREE

# FRONTIER MISSIONS: YES, IN CANADA

Following World War II a new thrust in missions was seeing hundreds of North Americans leaving for service in Africa, Indonesia, South America, Europe, Asia and other corners of the globe. Throughout the 1940's some Canadian Christians were also beginning to be made aware of a spiritually needy “nation” right within their own country’s borders. Through NCEM’s mailings and through deputational tours by men such as Isaac Reine, Stan Collie and Art Tarry, a number of evangelicals were beginning to be convinced that the Native people of Canada also constituted a needy mission field.

But this convincing wasn’t without its obstacles. Because this outreach took place in their own “Christian” country, some Canadians had a hard time seeing the need. And maybe, because many of the Indian people lived not too far away, it was assumed that they would somehow be evangelized by rural churches and missions. The misconceptions perpetrated by the terms “home missions” and “foreign missions” didn’t help the situation either.

Just like most other Canadians of the era, early NCEM missionaries knew little about Native people (prior to going to the field). What they found surprised them. Charter member, Art Tarry, speaks candidly of his initial reactions upon reaching his mission field in northwestern Saskatchewan:

“One of the first things that I found out ... was that the north country was surely a foreign mission field,” he says. Along with the language barrier, the people’s animistic beliefs, especially, made an impression on Art. “I’d [heard of] this in other fields, but here we were right in the midst of it ... I didn’t expect that,” said Art.

What also struck Art so strongly was the spiritual blindness of the Native people. Perhaps because they had had a form of “Christian” religion for years, Art had assumed that they would be somewhat prepared for the Gospel. His assumption was far from reality.

“Though perhaps they had some kind of religious background, the simple message of salvation was strange to them ... It was foreign to them,” explains Art. “Their eyes were blinded to the truth. They had no knowledge of the Bible whatever [and] the Bible wasn’t written in their own language. They couldn’t read English [and] they couldn’t read their own language (Chipewyan) because it wasn’t reduced to writing.”

The first NCEMers went to the field not knowing what to expect. Those who followed had the benefit of language training and some cultural orientation. Whatever the case, after just a short

time on the field, all of these missionaries knew that they were serving in cultures very different from their own.

## **THE FIELD IS THE WORLD**

The “home-foreign” differentiation somehow seems out of place in the 1990's. Our world has become more of a global village, and Canada has welcomed thousands of immigrants from many countries and cultures. Many of the same people groups who missionaries went overseas to reach have now arrived on our doorsteps.

In evangelical circles the terms “foreign missions” and “home missions” have begun to be replaced by terms such as “global” or “world missions.” Geographical and political lines aren’t stressed so much; the focus is on distinct “people groups.” The whole world needs Christ. And witnessing North American Christians have come to realize that -- with some racial barriers being more obvious than others -- evangelism must often be cross-cultural, even “at home.”

## **NATIVE LANGUAGES: CRUCIAL COMMUNICATION**

*Although he does not know his age or remember his birthday, he qualifies now for the old age pension. His name on the fur-trader’s books appears as John Little. Among his friends and neighbours, however, he is known as John Kinosew (John Fish).*

*He is a very kindly old man, always ready with a friendly smile and a hearty handshake. One wonders how he can be so happy and of such a sunny disposition, considering that out of a family of fourteen he had only one child living.*

*Some years ago he said to the missionary, “I have many questions to ask you about the Bible, but you would not understand me -- so it’s no use.” The missionary was new on the field then, just commencing to get a grasp of the Cree language, and these words cut deeply.*

*However, as time went by, hours of patient language study began to have results and the day came when the way of salvation was explained in his native tongue to old John Kinosew, and a profession of faith in Christ was made!*

The preceding account, reprinted from a 1957 NCEM publication, illustrates a vision of the Mission since its founding -- to have the Gospel communicated in the Native languages. The vision includes seeing the written Scriptures made available in Native languages for the purposes of evangelism, teaching and discipleship. The same vision encompasses the use of other media outlets to proclaim the Gospel in the dialect most familiar to the reader/listener.

In NCEM’s 50 years of ministry, innumerable hours and months have been spent in pursuit of the above goals. God has blessed these efforts, yet linguistics work seems to have met with extremely high resistance. Translators talk of their work as slow and difficult. Field missionaries describe their efforts to become fluent in speaking Native languages as frustrating. Yet the vision

continues.

What fires these missionary language-learners and translators to continually expend their energy to communicate in Native dialects? What motivates them to spend years translating the Bible into the vernacular of even the smallest of earth's tribes?

It is the Gospel. Though most Native Canadians are now bilingual, and although some live in urban settings where their Native languages are not spoken as much, these missionaries don't minimize the great benefits of communicating in the "heart language" of the people. As well, even when missionaries have gained only limited fluency in a Native language, they have already experienced other significant benefits through the learning process.

But first, what's it like learning a Native language in Canada? These firsthand glimpses from the lives of some NCEM missionaries offer insight:

### **A MONSTER ON OUR HANDS**

Bud and Marge Elford moved to Buffalo Narrows in 1952 and spent the winter studying the Dene (Chipewyan) language. That year, while talking with some other missionaries who had already begun to learn the same language, Bud remembers one of them saying, "You know, Bud, there aren't any verbs in this language." But after studying Chipewyan for six months Bud concluded that "it's all verbs"! And he remembers sitting at nearby Michel Village that spring and not understanding a word he heard.

As they would find out later, Chipewyan wasn't all verbs, but just about. (Athabaskan Indian languages are about 75% verbs -- in quite complex forms.) What is interesting is that these initial analyses of Chipewyan came from missionaries with linguistics training!

Missionary Murray Richardson, who also tackled the "Chip" language, wrote this about it:

*In the summer of 1953, Chipewyan appeared to be a confused mass of sounds and syllables as four of us, Bud and Marge Elford and ourselves (Murray and Evelyn Richardson), with [consultation from] Wycliffe Bible Translators, made an initial attack on the structure of the language. By the time summer was over the chaos had been reduced to some semblance of order and we had 50 lessons prepared for ourselves and other missionaries to memorize.*

*As we continued our efforts through the years to master the complexities of the language, we found we had a monster on our hands -- one that was secretive, temperamental and frustrating. Meanings were deeply buried, solutions to problems proved to be only partial, and repeated attempts to crack the total system brought meagre results. (written in 1968)<sup>2</sup>*

There was very little in the way of help for the first NCEM missionaries learning Athabaskan languages. Early Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries had learned to speak some of the Athabaskan languages and had translated large portions of Scripture. But most had used syllabics, a system which worked well for the Cree language but not for these. NCEMers began

analyzing sounds. They used the English alphabet and, because of the “tones, nasals, clicks” and other non-English sounds, added characters and accents to it.

Years later Murray Richardson reported that, no, they didn’t overcome the monster, but they were “able to come to terms with it.” Enough so that they were able to assist other missionaries in learning the language, translate portions of Scripture, and proclaim the Gospel by radio and tape recordings.

## MIXING THE WRONG INGREDIENTS

Learning a language is a bit like a chemistry lab ... “Mix the wrong ingredients and it could be explosive,” comments missionary Quindel King, who has studied the Chilcotin language of central British Columbia.

Quindel tells of one new missionary who was playing basketball with some of the Indian fellows and tried using the Chilcotin language to tell his competitor “nadiintii” (“you are strong”). But what he actually said was “tadiindii” (“you shut up”). The Indian fellow turned away mumbling to himself, “I don’t get mad, I don’t get mad.” (Fortunately, the potentially explosive situation was diffused!)

Quindel has illustrated some differences between English and Chilcotin -- differences that have the potential for major miscommunication:

*...There are words which sound similar but are very different in meaning. For example: “sedee” -- my mouth; “senen” -- my backbone; “sedee” -- my belt; “senen” -- my country. To the untrained ear there is little, if any, difference in sound.*

*...There are also many guttural and nasal sounds in [Athabaskan] languages, which are described to the student by means of a diagram and phrases such as: “Voiceless velar labialized glottalized stop.” Often a slight tonal variation (a rise or drop in vocal pitch) can change the meaning of a word entirely.*

*...[Then there] is the problem of transferring ideas, thoughts or actions from one grammatical structure to another. English [has] different sentence order and structure than Chilcotin, so words, phrases and clauses have to be altered or re-worded to fit Chilcotin sentence patterns.*

*...[For example] the response to a negative question, such as: “You didn’t go, did you?”: Their reply would be either, “Yes, I did not go,” or “No, I did go,” ... which has often caused much confusion for the English-thinker! In English we would say, “I did not go to town because I was sick.” Literally in Chilcotin the order is, “I was sick that because of I not town there not I went.”<sup>3</sup>*

“All of these, and many more linguistic idiosyncrasies often leave the missionary tongue-tied,” says Quindel.

## A THOUSAND AND ONE OBSTACLES

Larry and Peggy Linton moved to Rupert House, Quebec, in 1961 and prior to that had studied Cree at NCEM's Language School in Meadow Lake. But it was Plains Cree they had studied, a different dialect than the Moose Cree they were now exposed to. A previous short-term assignment had been to a village where a third dialect, Woodland Cree, was spoken. Aware of the differences, they still hoped that the Cree they'd learned would be understood in Rupert House. It probably was understood, but when they tried to use it, the Native people would always answer in English!

They persisted at learning Moose Cree. When visiting in homes Larry and Peggy had determined that they would not speak any English between themselves, even if one or both of them did not understand what had been said. "We did a lot of talking in English in between houses," admits Larry. "We had to ask each other about the words we'd missed!"

But the Lintons and other missionaries have found that the complexities of the languages themselves aren't the only causes of frustration. When Larry and Peggy were learning the language in the villages, they faced many other obstacles. Larry says, "There were one thousand and one other things to do besides study language. We had to live off the land, which all takes time."

## A RIGHT TO QUIT?

All these difficulties could make the missionary want to quit language-learning. Deena (Turner) Roberts shared this experience with Northern Lights readers in 1974:

*I had been conversing with some Slavey Indian people who had been helpful to us in learning their language. Up to this point, the Indian lady I was talking to had been speaking in English, as she helped with words and phrases I was studying.*

*Suddenly she began to speak only in Slavey. Though we had been studying the Slavey language for a few weeks, the words were all new to me as my vocabulary was so limited. She continued speaking to me, repeating her sentences and adding new ones, trying to make me understand. I just couldn't, and the harder I tried the more difficult it became.*

*Soon a fellow language student came along and the Indian lady began talking to her. I wished that she was speaking to me instead because she was again using terms familiar to me. She referred to me and said to my partner, "This girl is bad. She won't talk to me."*

*The eyes of the bystanders seemed to stare right through me. What were they thinking of me now? Had I lost their approval? A few moments later we made our way home through the snow. Inside I was crushed and tears told the story of how I felt.*

*Things had been going so well. We had been learning new words daily and the people seemed to accept us. They even seemed glad that we wanted to learn their language. Didn't the Lord know that more than anything else I wanted to learn this language so that I could share the joy of*

*knowing Jesus with the people? But everything in me said, "Quit, you'll never make it anyway."*

*That night I faced myself honestly. The question came to me, which I suppose comes to all of us at one time or another: "Have we any right to quit when the going gets rough?" What if Jesus had quit when He was faced with the cross? If Jesus Christ meant all that I said He did to me, then who was I to let human pride stand in the way of really going on by faith, believing God to accomplish all that He desired to do in my life?4*

## **LANGUAGE-LEARNING PROGRAMS**

Various approaches to help missionaries learn Native languages have been used within NCEM. Initially, and up until 1952, missionary candidates were required to complete the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) course, a Wycliffe program held each year at Caronport, Saskatchewan.

The Mission's first language school of its own began in October of 1948, when four missionaries met in Art and Martha Tarry's home in Buffalo Narrows each afternoon for two hours of instruction from Mary (MacAuley) Leask, a Christian Cree girl. Besides Cree, the need for a school to teach the Chipewyan language had already been expressed by this time. In fact, learning Native languages wasn't just an aspiration of the Mission. An NCEM publication dated December 1948 read: "The policy of the Mission is that new missionaries learn the language so that the Gospel will be given in the Native tongue."5

Short-term language schools (perhaps better termed "sessions") continued in Buffalo Narrows for a couple of years. When the Mission's Headquarters moved to Meadow Lake in 1951, a longer-term Language School was established which held 6-month sessions annually. These would primarily benefit missionaries assigned to serving among Cree dialect-speaking people. A couple of sessions for those learning the Chipewyan language were also held in Meadow Lake in the 1950's, but Cold Lake (Alberta) would be the location for sessions in the 1960's.

Over the years the Lord provided NCEM with a number of men and women with special linguistic gifts and who gave leadership in helping their fellow missionaries learn the languages. Mary (Edwards) Souter and Mary (Smith) Wiens were among the earlier ones in the Cree language schools, followed by John Unger. Murray Richardson gave leadership for those learning Chipewyan and other Athabaskan languages.

Besides the Language School at Meadow Lake and short-term sessions elsewhere, other language-learning methods were implemented over the years, including correspondence courses (with accompanying audio tapes). With missionaries learning a variety of languages in scattered areas, efforts to assist their ongoing training were initially a bit disjointed. 1961 saw the development of a "Language Department." According to co-administrator, Murray Richardson, the Mission was "uniting our language workers so that we could make a more systematic approach ... The value of cooperative work has become more apparent, both in speeding the work and expanding into new areas."6



From the latter 1960's and throughout the 1970's more of the language learning was taking place right in the Native communities and less in classrooms. From 1981 to 1990 Roan and Pat Elford gave leadership to the Mission's Language Acquisition Program (LAP), designed to assist missionaries in learning the language as an integral part of life on their stations.

Since 1991 language training for NCEMers has included a short linguistics course as part of the Mission's candidate training program (COPE). Informal short-term language-learning sessions have continued on a regional basis into the 1990's. Most recently, it has primarily been those serving among the Dene and Inuit people who have focused on structured language-learning and translation work.

## **TRANSLATING GOD'S WORD**

The Cree, the largest of the tribes with which NCEM has worked, have had the Scriptures in their own language since the mid-1800's, thanks to the work of early Methodist missionary James Evans. (Revisions and translations in Cree dialects have been made since.) Other tribes, however, were not so fortunate. The Carrier, Chilcotin, Chipewyan, Dogrib and the Slavey are among those who never had even portions of the Bible in usable form when NCEM began its outreach to them. (Besides the involvement of NCEMers, Wycliffe Bible Translators, the Canadian Bible Society, and other organizations would become involved in translation with these and other tribes in Canada.)

Bible translation in these Athabascan languages was certainly not just a matter of sitting down and paraphrasing the English version into the Native tongue. Sound systems and alphabets had yet to be created, and literacy programs needed to be developed to teach Native people to read and write their own language.

The challenge was faced and, for both the Chipewyan and Chilcotin languages, the Book of Mark was first on the translators' agenda because of its easier narrative with few metaphors and genealogies.

One of the problems soon discovered was that the languages did not include all the words necessary for Bible translation. That meant that words had to be created. At first the missionaries were not sure if that was the right thing to do, but they soon found comfort in realizing that many of the words and expressions used in English Bibles (and consequently in everyday life) were, in fact, made up by Bible translators several hundred years ago.

Here are examples of just a few of the problems the translators came across in "finding the right word." Bud Elford wrote:

*...One continual problem was determining the number of people talking, being addressed, or participating on any given occasion. This is very important to the Chipewyan, who is most specific in regards to number. Another problem was the preciseness required by the Chipewyans where English at times is vague. For example, in the story of the demoniac of Gadara, it was imperative that we establish just when the man was speaking and when the demons were*

*speaking. This is because “Chips” talk of spirits in different terms than they talk of humans.*

*...The Chipewyan word for “lamb” translates “the young one of an evil little caribou.” One can hardly imagine using such an expression of God’s offspring and link it to substitutionary dying. We borrowed a Slavey word.*

*...The Chip word for “honey” is “bee’s excrement.” After some time my informant (who had objected to the word) said, “Well, bees eat it too.” So we settled for “bee’s food.” To get around the problems of “baptism” we simply transliterated the Greek word “baptism” and said, “He gave him baptism” or “He had baptism done to Him.” It works fine and is a great topic for teaching.*

*...When “camel” came out “a horse with a beaver house on his back” ... we used “camel.” We called a “Pharisee” a “Pharisee” because they were a religious group.*

*...When translating Acts 16, I had trouble with “the Lord opened her heart.” The Chip verb must indicate, by the stem it employs, the material the door is made of. This became a problem because we didn’t want to indicate “flesh” since God obviously wasn’t giving Lydia open heart surgery. Neither was the door made of stone, wood or canvas. In the end we settled for the normal term used for a wooden door on a house, concluding we could teach that it means that God gave her help to believe.<sup>7</sup>*

Quindel King adds these illustrations from his translation of the Book of Mark into the Chilcotin language:

*...Consider having to determine who was the eldest: Andrew or Peter, James or John, Mary or Martha? In English it is not necessary to know, but since Chilcotin has different words for older brother and young brother, and older sister and young sister, a decision has to be made and used consistently.*

*...Chilcotin verb structure is very complicated and is very precise in expressing the action indicated by the verb. One area of particular interest is the iterative aspect of verbs. While Jesus was ministering, He did a lot of travelling, so we must determine where Jesus went and be able to indicate with iterative verb forms when He made a repeat visit to a certain town, lake shore or even a home! This must be done throughout the entire book so that there will no confusion on the part of the hearers or the readers.*

*...The use of special verb stems is also highlighted in Mark 11:8 where we read about the people “cutting” branches to spread on the road. Our Native translator asked if they used a saw, knife or an axe. Why? Because cutting with each of these instruments (and scissors as well) requires different verb stems. We concluded that they used knife-like instruments!<sup>8</sup>*

These and other cultural factors have made Scripture translation an interesting, but often perplexing task. But missionaries found that even though words sometimes had to be created or borrowed, all the components of every expression needed for translating Bible concepts were in

existence in these Native languages. The challenge was that they had never been put together in a way proper for such usage.

### **“AFTER SUPPER” INFORMANTS**

Another problem every linguist faces is finding a suitable informant. The task of translation cannot be done independently; it requires the expertise and availability of Native people who can help write a translation that is smooth and natural to the speakers of their language.

The ideal informant is a bilingual believer. But early NCEM translators had to rely on informants who had only a limited grasp of English and little or no spiritual enlightenment. And later on, even when more qualified Native translators came available, often they have not had enough time to give. As could be expected, they have educational and career pursuits, and community commitments.

Finances have also been a factor. Companies and secular organizations pay top dollars to Native people to translate from English or French into their languages. Understandably, those most capable of helping with Bible translation are usually employed already. Usually missionaries have had little or no funding available to pay their informants. Subsequently they have sometimes had to resort to the “after supper” approach ... in which it could conceivably take 40 years to complete a New Testament!<sup>9</sup>

### **A SPIRITUAL BATTLE**

Translation aside, finding an Native informant could be difficult even for basic conversational language-learning. This has been especially true for those serving in communities where neither the Gospel nor the missionaries themselves have been particularly welcomed. The missionary linguist soon realizes that he is in a spiritual battle.

He becomes well aware that Satan is opposing his efforts to communicate and to translate God’s Word. Time set aside for linguistics work is cancelled or interrupted for various reasons. A child is ill and has to be taken to the hospital; a community meeting is scheduled for the same time; unexpected company arrives ... and the list could go on.

Because of this battle, missionaries have taken two spiritual actions. Besides continually asking God to reveal words and expressions for accurate communication, they have often had to pray against the powers of darkness that would hinder God’s Word. By faith they have had to stand against the weariness that dogs everyone who presses on. By faith they have had to overcome other personal hindrances they have faced.

### **TRANSLATION COMPLETE!**

Then comes the day when the translation of a Scripture portion has been completed and published. It’s a happy time with a sense of fulfilment and gratitude to God for what He has done. Quindel and Marilyn King told of the celebration that marked the release of the Chilcotin

Book of Mark. The fact that the project spanned many years -- over 20 -- added to the excitement.

On March 21st, 1993, over 60 people gathered on the Redstone Indian Reserve, west of Williams Lake, B.C. The local chief, a professing Christian, was among a number of Chilcotins there who shared how reading God's Word in his tribal language had already benefited him. Also attending the celebration were Wycliffe missionaries, Randy and Mary Radney, who worked with the Kings and oversaw the field-checking and publishing after Quindel and Marilyn had moved to another area of ministry. Local Chilcotins, Dan Case, William Myers, and Elsie Fredrickson, had assisted as language co-translators.

Back in 1972 the Gospel of John had been released in the Slavey language. Reflecting on the occasion, missionary Phil Howard clearly remembers its publication as "a milestone." The project took many years to complete. "But it's hard to say exactly how long because none of it was work that was done steadily," says Phil. "When you lived in an isolated community you had to spend an awful lot of time just living ... cutting firewood, hauling water. Sometimes I wondered if I'd ever get anything done. It took me five years to develop the alphabet, but a lot of those five years I spent doing other things."

Some interesting things happened when the Book of John was finally available. "For example," says Phil, "the Catholic priest in Fort Simpson, who was younger, and therefore somewhat more open-minded, asked me to come and introduce the Gospel to the people of his church and to actually do some preaching from it."

Of course the significance of the release of any translation depends on how many are actually able to read it. Among the Chilcotins, Quindel says only 800 to 900 (of 3000) are able to read their own language to any degree. Of the Slavey, Phil says that there weren't a lot of people in the early 1970's who could read it, but that there are a lot more now. To deal with these situations, these translations (and the Chipewyan Book of Mark as well) were put onto audio tape. And literacy classes began to be held.

But with an increasing number of Native people being bilingual, how motivated are they to learn to read their own language? It depends, say the missionaries. In some locations, there's not much effort being made, but more in others. Those who have been to school and learned the "anglicized" alphabet will find learning easier. Missionaries note that many northern schools are increasingly teaching students to read and write their Native languages. For example, in one northern Saskatchewan community, children are not taught in English at all until the third grade. A few NCEMers have worked directly with government teacher education programs. Most notable is Phil Howard who, following full-time missionary service, began literacy work with the Northwest Territories government in 1978.

## **WORTH THE EFFORT?**

Many examples could be given of the benefits of knowing the Native language, even when working among bilingual people. "That I would take the time to learn their language is a

compliment to their culture,” says Bud Elford. Bud tells the story of the time he was driving down the highway near Cold Lake, Alberta, talking in “Chip” with a couple fellows he had picked up. He stopped to pick up a third Native fellow, someone he had never met before.

The fellow jumped into the back seat and said (in Chipewyan) to the man sitting upfront beside Bud, “What kind of a stupid white man would pick up dumb Indians like you?” The man sitting beside Bud replied, “Be careful what you say! He’s one of us.”

Bud notes that the fellow could have said, “He understands us,” or something like that, but he said, “He’s one of us.”

No doubt, learning the Native people’s language has contributed greatly to the acceptance of the missionary. But this acceptance doesn’t happen only when the missionary has finally become fluent. Bud tells about the trip that he and Carroll Hill took to some Montagnais villages in eastern Canada. They tried using some French and English, and then Carroll started talking in Cree in a coffee shop. Bud used some Ojibway words as well and, even though these weren’t dialects spoken in that area, the very fact that they were speaking an Indian language opened a door of ministry. Pretty soon they had a Bible study going.

A local pastor later commented on Bud and Carroll’s Bible study and asked, “How’d you do that? We’ve been trying for years to do that.” Bud and Carroll weren’t surprised. They both knew that speaking the Native languages had opened many otherwise closed doors for the Mission over the years.

## **SHOULD WE CRITICIZE?**

It wouldn’t be honest to imply that most of NCEM’s field missionaries have gained fluency in Native languages, for that is not the case. Some of the difficulties in learning a Native language have already been given, and there are other factors too.

Should we criticize? Needless to say, human pride keeps many -- even missionaries -- from letting themselves “look like fools” while learning a language. And while there may have been a lack of persistence by some, for the most part missionaries have not lacked desire. Yet a flood of other ministry opportunities in which they could “get by in English” have vied for their time and energy. Administrative and other responsibilities have interrupted many a worker’s language-learning efforts.

Add to this the changing social patterns of Native Canadians. In some urban settings there are numerous Native tribes represented, so English (or French) becomes the common language spoken. The missionary finds it nearly impossible to “immerse” himself in the Native language. And there is the fact that some Canadian Indian languages are among the most complex in the world (and not all missionaries will have a natural ability in linguistics). The influence of mass media, especially television, has meant that English is being used more and more by Native people, even in their homes. In some areas use of the Native languages has all but died out.

## JUST A “NOTHING” WORD

But learning even a little of a Native language can be crucial. So says missionary Tim Gradin who tells of an experience that illustrates his conviction. It took place soon after the Gradins moved to the Dene community of La Loche, Saskatchewan in the early 1980's.

One Sunday in February Tim and Ginny and their three children were out for a walk on the lake in front of the community. As they moved along, pulling their youngest daughter on a sled, they noticed a snowmobile coming up towards them pulling a toboggan with two men on behind. Suddenly the snowmobile stopped about 30 feet directly in front of them. Tim noticed the driver and one of the men get off and try to restart the engine.

Meanwhile the third guy started walking toward the Gradins with a beer bottle in his hand. He came up close to Tim and said in a not-too-friendly manner, “You’d better get out of town because the Metis are taking over!”

Tim’s immediate concern, of course, was the protection of his family from potential harm from this angry young man, but he didn’t really know what to do.

As the fellow repeated his threats, Tim didn’t say anything but kept looking at the snowmobile, hoping that they would soon get it going again. It sounded to Tim like it was out of gas so he turned to the other men and yelled, “Check your gas. It sounds like it’s out of gas.” They didn’t seem to think at first that that was the problem. But when they finally opened up the hood they found the tank empty.

Then the guy with the beer bottle turned to Tim and said, “Have you got a [gas] can?” Tim replied, “Do di” (which in Dene means “nothing”) and then added (in English), “I sold it when I left Stony Rapids.”

All of sudden the man’s beer bottle went into his jacket. He asked, “You speak Dene?”

Tim replied, “Yes, a little bit.”

The fellow continued, “Oh, you said you lived in Stony Rapids. Did you know Philip Mecredi? That’s a friend of mine.”

Tim responded, “I’ll be going there in two weeks.”

“Oh, would you said ‘Hi’ for me?” asked the fellow.

Tim said that he would be glad to.

Tim is now fairly comfortable using the Dene language. Looking back, though, he is still amazed at how just one word suddenly turned everything around. Initially the fellow seemed strongly opposed to Tim as a non-Native outsider. But the one word “do di” changed it all, and the two

became good friends. “And it was just a ‘nothing’ word!” says Tim.

## **NOW JESUS SPEAKS MY LANGUAGE!**

It’s hard to picture a missionary in the 1990’s serving without media “tools” -- ministry-aids such as literature and audio-visuals particularly suited for Bible teaching in the Native culture. But that’s how it was for the earliest NCEMers. The Crees had the Bible and a hymn book. For those ministering to Athabaskan tribes, even these were nonexistent.

Not too many years later, however, things were different. Soon there were records (produced by Gospel Recordings), audio tapes (of sermons, testimonies, Bible stories and songs), songbooks, booklets of Old and New Testament stories, and evangelistic tracts -- all useful tools, particularly helpful to the missionary who hadn’t yet got a grip on the Native language.

In the 1980’s a certain ministry-aid became available that proved exceptional. In fact, it has been acclaimed by some to be the greatest tool for evangelism that God has given the Church in the last 100 years. It is the JESUS movie, in film and video.

The two-hour movie was originally produced by Warner Brothers in 1979 and is a vivid and faithful recreation of the life of Christ based on the Gospel of Luke. In following years it soon became the world’s most translated film. Campus Crusade’s JESUS Film Project reported (in Oct. ’95): 341 language translations (166 in process); 732 million viewers of the film in 217 countries; 7,420 film prints and over 1.3 million videos in circulation.

## **INTO CANADA’S NATIVE LANGUAGES**

In 1982 at an NCEM staff conference a Campus Crusade worker spoke of the possibilities of JESUS being translated for Native viewers. Many thought the idea was great, but other priorities for NCEM at the time prohibited it from becoming a soon reality.

A few years later, though, a Christian businessman donated 50 JESUS videos, and NCEMers again began to think about ways it could be more effectively used among Native people. As a result, in the fall of 1988 a small group of missionaries met with JESUS Project people. With the financial backing of the same businessman, they began making definite plans.

In 1989 Carroll Hill began coordination of the Cree production. The film was completed and released in October 1991 and, with continuing support available, work on the Dene (Chipewyan) version immediately got under way. It was released in the spring of 1993. The fall of 1995 saw the release of the Inuktitut version, while work on the North and South Slavey, Dogrib and Chilcotin versions had begun. After these four, six more Canadian Native languages have been slated.

## **“DUBBING” THE FILM**

Production for each version began with translation of the script. The challenge was much greater

than doing a “free” translation, though, because to achieve “lip-sync,” syllables must be counted. If possible, every lip movement of the actor equals one syllable in the Native language. That’s why, out of necessity, it is a “thought-for-thought” translation.

Then a one-voice “video-fit” recording was made and carefully field tested for cultural appropriateness, and grammatical and theological accuracy. The voice recording took place next with up to 35 Native voices. Technical assistance has been provided by JESUS Project people, usually working in a makeshift studios.

Voice recording was followed by a second field-test check. Then, in Orlando, Florida, audio adjusting and the mixing in of original music and sound effects took place. But final production of the film/video didn’t happen until a copy was sent back for a third and final check. (Changes after this would have been very expensive.)

## **RECORDING CHALLENGES**

With a sufficient number of cooperating Christian Natives from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, recording of the Cree version went smoothly. However, it didn’t look like recording of the Dene film would be as uncomplicated. For one thing, many of the Dene speakers couldn’t read their language easily. And, with only two weeks allotted for voice recording, Tim Gradin, coordinator for the Dene project, was concerned that it wouldn’t be enough time. When he had asked JESUS Project staff how long it should take using voice actors who can’t read their own language, the answer he had received was, “We don’t know. We’ve never done it.”

But besides the reading problem, the missionary team faced another major difficulty. There just weren’t enough Dene Christians to help. With long standing animosity toward evangelical efforts, the missionaries weren’t surprised to hear rumours of Dene people saying, “If the missionaries want to make a film, let them do it. We’re not going to help them.”

But the Lord undertook in a marvellous way. A Dene radio broadcaster got excited about the project and started telling people -- on the air and off -- that this film would be good for them. It would be something the older people could understand, and it would help preserve the language for the younger generation. By the time the film came out, Dene people were excited about it. The broadcaster, though an unbeliever, played the voice of Jesus.

Dene people who had never spoken into a microphone before performed very well while recording. Those who couldn’t read their language memorized their lines in minutes ... and they enjoyed it!

The recording session wasn’t without tense moments, though. One day a couple of prison inmates were given permission to come and assist. The plan was for one of the missionaries to drive them back to the correctional centre by no later than 8 p.m. But just before they were to return, one decided not to get into the van! Feeling somewhat responsible, an embarrassed missionary phoned the jail to report the escape. Adding irony to the situation was that the inmate had played the part of one of the two thieves on the cross ... the one who didn’t repent.



The Dene recording was completed in 16 days with 35 voice actors, and just hours before the technician was scheduled to fly back to Florida.

### **“Ph.D.” IN FILM MAKING**

NCEMer Phil DuFrene was involved in encouraging the project from the start. In fact, he did such a good job working with the 30 Cree voice actors that the JESUS Project people asked him to join them full-time.

Since transferring to Campus Crusade, Phil has been involved with the recording of both the Dene and Inuktitut films, and seven others in various parts of the world. When comparing them all, Phil observes the North and Central American Native languages to be very complex: “...very long languages, and the translation is routinely difficult,” he notes.

Yet the Canadian language films hold a special place in Phil’s heart. That’s partly because he and his wife, Debbie, had previously served as missionaries in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, but also because he sees the films as “very strategic” in reaching minority groups with the Gospel.

### **BRINGING JESUS TO THE PEOPLE**

There are an estimated 11,000 Dene (Chipewyan) speakers and 12,000 Inuktitut speakers living in widespread locations. The number of Crees is significantly higher. How would JESUS get to the people?

Several methods have been implemented. Each film release has begun with premiere presentations followed by public showings in Native communities. Armed with 16mm films and movie projectors, missionaries have travelled by car, by air ... and even by boat. One summer Arlyn VanEnns took the film on a 500-mile round trip by water to Cree villages in northern Alberta. (Somehow it seems fitting for Jesus to travel by that mode of transportation.) But compared to public film showings, the video format has proved itself more effective on NCEM’s stations. It enables people to see and hear the Gospel presented in dramatic sight and sound in their own homes, repeated as many times as desired, and at relatively little cost. And it reaches people who would never attend a public showing of a “Christian” film.

Ways the JESUS video can be used seem almost limitless. Videos are lent out or sold. They are rented off the shelves of stores. They have been used along with Bible studies in homes, schools and jails. And a special effort by an NCEM team has resulted in the largest and most extensive direct means of Gospel outreach to the Dene (Chipewyan) tribe ever. Their plan included personally offering the video free of charge to every Dene home.

### **AFTER SEEING JESUS**

Naturally the voice actors would be excited to see the completed film for the first time. But how would other viewers respond? Would they be interested just because of the uniqueness of a

movie in their Native language? Would those with a hardness to the Gospel stay away?

These responses came at the conclusion of a showing of the Cree film: “It was very well done, and in a language I know well”; “I was very touched [by] this film”; “It will help Native people understand”; “I would watch it over again”; and “I wish more people were here to see the film.”

Completed response forms used during public showings have indicated some first-time decisions for Christ and commitments. One of the above quotes came from the mayor of a northern community. After indicating what the film meant to him personally, he purchased a video so that he could show it on his community’s local television station.

For Tim Gradin, one of the most striking responses to the Dene JESUS film was in Fond-du-Lac, Saskatchewan, where there has never been a resident evangelical missionary. He reported:

“Having visiting this community many times previously, I learned that as recently as 25 to 30 years ago, the religious leaders of the community would tell the people that [evangelical] missionaries were ‘devils’ or ‘worshipped the devil.’ Anyone who would be brave enough to allow a missionary to stay with him in his home would face rejection to the extent that he would possibly be banned from the community.

“With this in mind, it was truly amazing to see the response of the Fond-du-Lac people when they had the opportunity to see the JESUS film. The film was scheduled to be shown twice in the community hall, but so many people came that we decided to arrange two other showings. Approximately 450 came to see the film (out of the 700 who live there). [Some] came to every showing.

“When the film [showing] was completed, many of the people just sat still. So after the last showing, [Native missionary] Gilbert Bekkatla asked if they had any questions [and] he gave his testimony ... Instead of rejection of the missionary and his message, there was a deep sense of appreciation for being able to see and hear the story of JESUS in their language.”<sup>10</sup>

Besides public film showings, the Dene missionary team wanted to see the video go to every home. But they acknowledged that the idea presented a bit of a dilemma -- “door-to-door” outreach had not been effective in Dene communities in the past. Yet the team felt led of the Lord to go ahead anyway. The response was “very positive,” said Roger and Liz Torhjem, missionaries at La Loche, who distributed videos in six Dene communities. Of all the homes contacted, over three-quarters requested the video! Missionaries reported similar acceptance rates in other Dene communities as well.

## **NOW THEY UNDERSTAND**

Missionary Gilbert Bekkatla provides a special perspective on the JESUS film project, himself being Dene. He was personally involved in most aspects of the translation and recording, and subsequently travelled many miles showing the film and distributing videos in over 30 communities. When Gilbert talked about it, it wasn’t hard to tell that his dedication to the project

was due to a strong desire to see his own Dene people come to Christ. He shared this about their response to the movie:

“I have never seen anything that has caused as much spiritual awakening among the Dene people. During the showings in community halls, city auditoriums and correction camps, people sat on the edge of their chairs and some pointed at the projection screen. Young and old cried, and I also cried watching them. Some people would not look at the scene of Jesus being whipped and nailed to the cross.

“People commented that they had never understood about Jesus and his life, but now they understood who Jesus really was and what He taught.”<sup>11</sup>

## **AROUND THE WORLD ... AND HERE**

The results of the JESUS film around the world are remarkable. Campus Crusade reported (in Oct. '95) 42 million people indicating decisions for Christ as a result of the film. And that figure did not include responses from the 317 million people who had seen the film by means of television and theatre showings.

What about among Native Canadians? Veteran missionary, Bud Elford, responds: “We didn’t have the numbers turning to Christ, even among the Crees, but I think for the first time the Gospel registered on the Dene as a group.” For many years Bud preached in the Dene language on the radio. He says that when they’ve responded to his messages on radio or on tape they’ve said things like, “That’s good,” or “That’s no good.” But Bud notes that with the JESUS film, “They said nothing ... you see, there was conviction.”

“I read what happened overseas,” adds Gilbert Bekkatla, “but it’s not like that among the Dene people ... only a few people have made a commitment so far. But it has opened the door for us.”

## **JESUS’ WORDS**

With several more languages to be recorded, there still is much for NCEMers to do in the JESUS project. Recording for the remaining translations would not be quite as complicated, though, as they are for smaller linguistic groups and are planned for narration style, rather than lip-sync.

How will the Lord use the JESUS film among Native Canadians? Certainly the overall impact will depend on follow-up efforts. There has especially been a strong desire to see the movie speak to the hearts of unbelieving voice actors. Involved with the Inuktitut film, missionary Gary Winger mentions a key Inuit voice actor’s name and says, “I really believe that the Lord will use His Word in that guy’s life ... to speak Jesus’ words for 45 hours and not be affected by what He spoke ... I’m convinced that the words will stick with him.”

# **ARCTIC FRONTIER: REACHING THE INUIT**

If the word “frontier” causes one to think of places remote and harsh, then it’s probably a good word to describe Canada’s Arctic. To NCEM’s earliest Arctic workers in the 1940’s, and to those who have been part of the Mission’s later thrust, the isolation and extreme climate have no doubt been significant factors in the challenge.

It is not an easy place to live. In fact, most visitors to the Arctic find themselves asking, “Why would anyone want to live here?” If that question comes to the present-day visitor, who has the benefit of many modern conveniences during his stay, how much more likely would NCEM’s first workers have wondered the same?

But those who have personally experienced the cruelty of the barren lands will also tell you of its enticement and beauty. And to the Inuit it is home. Acts 17:26 says of the earth’s peoples: “...and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.” Along with this appointment, God has put a contentment within their hearts for their land. Missionaries have said that, with few exceptions, an Inuit person would never think of living anywhere but on his or her land. They say that after an Inuit has spent time “out,” it is his or her biggest joy to step off the plane and be home once again.

Life in the Arctic today is very different than at the time of NCEM’s first outreach there. The \*Inuit were then nomadic, living in igloos and tents. They were completely dependent on the sea and on migrating caribou for their basic needs. Reports from NCEM’s early missionaries tell of serious food shortages, sickness and starvation. Other than seal oil there was no fuel by which to keep warm or to cook food. (\*Then referred to as “Eskimo”; only those in Canada’s western Arctic and Alaska now refer to themselves as Eskimo.)

Change would soon be coming. The nomadic Inuit, who had already been assembling seasonally at trading posts would, by the 1950’s, be living in coastal settlements with government-built schools and nursing stations. Igloos gave way to pre-fabricated wood-frame houses. In the 1990’s, the traditional activities of fishing and hunting still occupy Inuit seasonally, but other employment is more common.

It is still a harsh and unforgiving land. Most non-Natives do not stay long. The next few pages, however, introduce those who have spent years there. They have lived and served in the Arctic because of God’s call to make disciples of Jesus Christ. They were, and are, trusting God for fruit in a barren land.

## **NCEM’s FIRST ARCTIC MISSIONARIES**

NCEM’s initial outreach to the Inuit began about the same time as the founding of the Mission, and would involve two married couples.

In the fall of 1946 newly appointed missionaries Gleason and Kathryn Ledyard arrived at Eskimo Point (now Arviat), Northwest Territories. They had spent the summer of 1945 with the Colliers in Buffalo Narrows, Saskatchewan, and had been introduced to the needs of the North as

Gleason and Stan had spent several weeks travelling to far-flung locations.

Bringing their own airplane with them, Gleason travelled by air and by dogteam, visiting the scattered Eskimo camps, teaching the Bible and translating Scripture. In 1950 they moved their home base 12 miles north to Maguse River which they found much more suitable. Maguse was the traditional summer camping grounds for many Inuit and, with a small lake there, it was a good place for Gleason to land his plane. (Landing on Hudson Bay, by contrast, required Gleason to deal with the tide, which sometimes left his plane a mile from water.)

Their life and ministry held many challenges. For one thing, it was very difficult living in the Arctic on the small amount of financial support that was coming their way. Yet the Lord supplied just enough for them on which to get by, and at times provided miraculously. Gleason told of getting his plane filled with fuel regularly at the RCAF base at Churchill, but wondering why he never received a bill. When he inquired about it he was told that all his purchase forms had been thrown out because of the small amounts of fuel he was taking. “We spill that much,” explained a military man at the base.

Opposition reared its head at times. One year the Ledyards took an Inuit girl into their home, keeping her away from an abusive situation and an arranged marriage to an old man. As a result, the missionaries’ lives were threatened and they were ostracized. “Nobody came around for a whole year,” says Gleason. The Ledyards knew this was a common cultural practice, yet their consciences would not let them just sit and watch it happen.

Their ministry provided many blessings too. They began a school for Inuit children who were otherwise receiving no formal education. Gleason would fly out to the camps and pick up the children for four to five weeks of school at a time. Each session saw about 20 or more kids gladly coming and learning arithmetic, reading, writing, geography and, of course, the Bible. Many of them found salvation.

The Ledyards fed and housed the students with no financial help from outside. They ate lots of frozen caribou, rice and their favourite -- Kathryn’s home-made baked bread. “In fact, some almost always got sick when they first got there because they ate too much!” recalls Gleason. The Ledyards say that they cannot remember one problem with discipline during those school days.

The Ledyard’s work later included the translation of the New Testament into the Inuktitut language and they saw a number of adults give their lives to the Lord. Anoe, one of the men who was saved, became an evangelist to his own people.

## **THE FREDLUNDS JOIN THE LEDYARDS**

In 1948 the Ledyards were joined in ministry by Bernard Fredlund. Still single at the time, his first posting was Padlei, Northwest Territories, where he built himself an 8 by 12-foot house made of “poles, peat, and paper” on the edge of the barrens. In 1950, while out on a furlough, he married Martha Janzen who joined him at his station situated inland and northwest of Eskimo

Point. To a people steeped in spiritual and physical poverty, God gave the Fredlunds many opportunities to minister.

Bernard tells of one incident where God allowed them to make definite impact for Him. A girl in the community was having many nosebleeds which the people thought were being caused by a curse. And they believed that she should not be allowed to eat liver. Bernard, who had been given the “medicine kit” for the village by the Hudson’s Bay man, knew that this girl’s problem was quite likely the result of a lack of iron.

But because the mail only came to Padlei twice a year, there would be no supply of iron pills for some time. When he told the girl’s mother to feed her lots of caribou liver (which the mother did), the Inuit told Bernard that now he would also die from the same curse.

Not too surprising to Bernard, the girl was soon well. And trusting God, no harm came to him. Bernard believes the Lord used this situation to speak to these people who seemed to live in fear.

Just “surviving” in this harsh land was a concern to these early Arctic missionaries. Like many other early NCEMers, hunting, fishing, and trapping were necessary to supplement their food supply. The Fredlunds bought their groceries and oil supply a year at a time. One year they ordered their supplies but didn’t have enough money to foot the bill, so Bernard went down to Churchill to work to pay for them. While he was there someone else bought the supplies! That was one occasion when Bernard and Martha thought it time to go south and raise some support.

NCEM’s leaders soon realized that the Inuit work presented a unique challenge. It differed in many ways to missionary outreach in Indian communities. Also, the Mission had its headquarters far away in northwestern Saskatchewan and did not have the financial resources to adequately serve the Inuit field workers. Communication was restricted, and travel was expensive.

With these factors acknowledged by both Mission leadership and the missionaries, official relations were severed. The Ledyards became independent missionaries in 1950, and the Fredlunds joined the Continental Interior Mission in 1954.

From 1956 to 1958 the Fredlunds served at Chesterfield Inlet. In 1959 the government established the settlement of Whale Cove, and in July of 1960 the Fredlunds moved to serve there for many years. Upon retiring from ministry, Bernard and Martha’s love for the Arctic allowed them to move only as far south as Churchill, Manitoba.

With the government moving the Inuit into settlements where schools and nursing stations had been built, in 1961 the Ledyards felt that their work was finished. Moving to the west coast they founded Christian Literature International. Besides publishing the Inuktitut New Testament translation, Gleason produced the New Life Bible, a translation for people with English as a second language. Special editions of the New Life Bible for Native Canadians have proven very useful in NCEM’s missionary outreach.

## **MAGUSE AGAIN**

On a few occasions since leaving the Arctic the Ledyards have had opportunity to return to Eskimo Point. The children who attended their school are now in their fifties and sixties and they still talk about the good times they had as students. Gleason notes that, for the most part, these are the ones who serve as community and church leaders “and have the best jobs.”

Not so encouraging to Gleason is the state of the younger generation. When he visited the Arctic in the summer of 1994 he especially noticed the despair among many of the teenagers -- kids with nothing to do and no ambition in life. He says he observed very few going out on the land. They seemed to just be sitting around watching TV or getting involved in illicit sex and drugs.

“But mention ‘camp’ and ‘Maguse’ and you have their attention!” he says. Maguse is still referred to by local people as “a happy place” -- a site with special ties to their history. Nobody has been camping there since 1961, but with Gleason’s encouragement a family Bible camp was held there in August 1994. There are hopes that it will continue as an annual event. The camp should soon become more accessible as construction of a road from Eskimo Point to Maguse has begun.

“When you stand at Eskimo Point you can count 13 little cabins out on points on the Bay,” says Gleason. “They hate living in Eskimo Point all the time. They want to get out and be an Eskimo again. They want to live in a little cabin and cook with a primus stove. They want to shoot geese, and to fish and hunt like they should.”

Realizing with some sadness that it’s impossible for things to be again as they were, Gleason is nevertheless thrilled to know that Maguse is once more a place where people find Christ.

## **SECOND ARCTIC THRUST**

Leading the way in NCEM’s second thrust to the Arctic was Noriko Suzuki. Born and raised in Yokosuka, Japan, Noriko says she felt God begin calling her to Canadian Native ministries while she was attending Prairie Bible Institute at Three Hills, Alberta. She says she remembers former NCEM General Director, Phil Howard, speaking in a chapel session and telling of how white missionaries were having a hard time reaching Indians. There were a number of Chinese students at PBI that year and she says she clearly remembers Phil saying, “But you students from the Orient ... you kind of look like them.”

Noriko returned to Japan following graduation and began full-time church work. But God’s urging to Native work in Canada was still on her mind. In the mid-1970's her church, Japan Evangelical Alliance Church (associated with TEAM) started sending missionaries overseas, mostly to southeast Asia. Noriko then spoke to her home church about her burden for northern Canada. After taking her case and discussing it, they agreed to send her there as a missionary. As far as mission organizations in Canada, Noriko knew only of NCEM. She officially joined in March of 1976 and came to Canada in April 1977.

Following candidate training, and after a short time in the Cree community of Waskaganish (Rupert House), Noriko's first station assignment was Fort George, Quebec (now Chisasibi) on the James Bay coast. Along with Native missionaries, Gilbert and Mary Trapper from Moose Factory, Ontario, she began ministry there among the Cree in 1978.

It was a hard start. There was opposition to the Gospel at Fort George even before they started doing anything, says Noriko. Community leaders restricted their outreach and, because the villagers were leery of the missionaries, home visitation was difficult. They held a Sunday School each week, but only the neighbour's kids attended.

But while at Fort George, Noriko met a Christian Inuit couple from Puvirnituk, Quebec, who had come down to be close to a hospital while awaiting the arrival of their baby. Looking for Christian fellowship, they heard about Noriko and came over for a visit.

Noriko heard how the husband had got saved while out in Val D'or taking some aviation training. Responding to a Christian television program, he was counselled by Lorne Heron, a Baptist pastor who led him to the Lord. Lorne kept in touch with him and on occasion visited him in Puvirnituk. As a result, others in Puvirnituk came to the Lord and were baptized.

### **NORTH ENOUGH FOR ME!**

It was during one of their mutually enjoyable visits that the Inuit couple asked Noriko to come and visit Puvirnituk (better known as "POV"). They told her that POV was "way up North." "I thought Fort George was north enough for me!" says Noriko. "I didn't have any intentions of going there (to POV)."

That was September 1979. Six months later there was a phone call from the couple trying to persuade Noriko to come to POV as soon as possible. They wanted her to stay for a few weeks and teach the Bible and they said that their Christian group would pay her way. Interestingly, Noriko's plans to spend time in a Cree hunting camp had fallen through the day before. She took this as the Lord's leading and made plans to fly to Puvirnituk in April.

"I wasn't sure if I was still on the same planet -- even the ski-doo motors sounded different!" says Noriko of her impressions when stepping off the plane in POV. She looked around for trees but couldn't see any. "The place even smelled different," she says. The smell of hides she was familiar with was gone and there was a "fishy smell." Noriko also recalls the cold weather that greeted her on her arrival. There would still be two more months of winter before the "spring" thaw.

The reception from local people was just as strange ... quite different from when she arrived at her first stations. She remembers the Cree people's curiosity which prompted some of them to come out to get their first look at her, but most had peeked from background locations. This was different. "They all came to me with big smiles," she recalls. Some of them, of course, had heard a bit about Noriko, and perhaps others thought she was an Inuk from another settlement. To Noriko's amazement, "Everybody shook my hand!"



The Christian group had arranged everything for Noriko's visit -- a place to stay, and plans for Bible studies which she would lead. So almost every single night during her two and-a-half week visit there, there was a meeting. The group consisted of about 15 born again believers, mostly married couples in their thirties. Noriko relished the opportunity to help fill their obvious appetite for the Word.

After struggling with resistance to the Gospel in Fort George, Noriko was understandably overjoyed by this open door for ministry. Yet she held back from any promises to continue it in the future. In her mind, this was a man's job. At the end of her visit Noriko said her good-byes with no realization that in the not-too-distant future she would be back.

Noriko's first term of service in Canada was almost over, and it was time for her to go home for furlough. She knew it was not to be a rest, though, as she was scheduled to report in over 150 Japanese churches. It was going to be especially trying because there was not much good news to share as far as results in her ministry in Fort George.

But Noriko determined to be honest, and in all the churches she told the people, "We couldn't do anything." She told how both the Gospel message and the missionaries themselves were rejected by the people. In fact, the people in Fort George never did call her by her name. They just called her (the Cree equivalent of) "strange woman preacher."

It was while Noriko was back in Japan that the entire village of Fort George was being moved to a new location because of the James Bay Hydro Project. Though NCEM had asked that the property lease in Fort George be transferred to the new location, a reply was received rejecting the relocation claim.

Cliff McComb, then NCEM Eastern-Field Director, wrote to Noriko in Japan, telling her of the decision. Despite the opposition she had faced in Fort George, it wasn't news that Noriko took easily. "I was hoping we could stay," she says. "After two years the people were starting to open up." Noriko would find out later that the Fort George Council had not consulted village residents at all in the decision.

## **NO MEN TO SEND**

Meanwhile, in response to Noriko's report from her visit to POV, NCEM directors were looking into the possibility of sending workers to Arctic Quebec. Because it seemed that NCEM had no men to send at the time, and because she had seen the Inuit people's hunger for the Word, Noriko made it known that she would be willing to serve there.

In the spring of 1981, Mission field directors, Carroll Hill and Cliff McComb travelled up through Arctic Quebec. Their plans had included a stop in POV to arrange for living accommodations for Noriko, but the men never got there. Due to bad weather they were stranded in Salluit for a week. (Their extra time there, however, did help open doors for missionaries to be stationed in Salluit later on.)

Arrangements were made by mail and phone and, in October 1981, Noriko and her partner, Ruth Armstrong, moved to POV. Officially, the ladies were there as “language-learners” -- the local government was leery of someone coming in to start a new church. The local Christians, of course, knew that in addition to language-learning, Noriko and Ruth were there to teach the Bible.

There was no cover-up. Others in the community would hear of their true purpose for being there if they were inquisitive enough to ask.

Ruth had received cross-cultural training through NCEM’s summer missions program, NMTC, but says she certainly claimed no expertise. She was ready to learn all she could of the people, and she was especially eager to begin learning the Inuktitut language. Her optimism was dampened a bit, though, when on the first day she listened to someone speaking the language on the phone and wondered to herself, “I have to learn this?!”

Their linguistic training began immediately. They learned the pronunciation and meaning of a few words and started using them at the store and with people they met. The local believers helped them get started in their work. Two weeks after arriving the ladies got their own little house.

For Noriko it was one more new culture to which she would be exposed. Besides her own Japanese background, she had since been exposed to mainstream Canadian culture. Then she had lived among the coastal Cree with their own ways. Japanese and Inuit may look the same, says Noriko, but except for eating raw meat, there are few similarities. The Inuit way of thinking was different than any she had been exposed to.

“The Inuit people accepted me very quickly, so I spent much time doing daily things with them,” says Noriko. And looking like an Inuit helped her to learn the language. “They talked to me immediately [in Inuktitut] instead of switching to English,” she says. But in teaching the Bible, Noriko says she had found it comparatively easier teaching Cree people. She admits that even after several years with the Inuit she still “just didn’t know where their thinking is.”

Noriko and Ruth soon settled into life and ministry in POV. The building they moved into wasn’t originally intended to be a home, but they made do. They’d heard that the one-room structure had previously been used as a “gambling house” (and that the Christian man who owned it was apparently very proud of himself for closing it down!). He lived next door and provided the power supply with an extension cord.

The ladies made a wall divider by hanging a curtain, and a bathroom area was sectioned off with another curtain in one corner. There was no running water and not even a sink, just an oil stove and a small electric range. The house had few windows and there were no beds, just mattresses that were put away each morning. Noriko recalls that on their first day in the house somebody brought over a bed for them to use ... and then the next day came back to retrieve it because they realized they needed it themselves!

The less-than-ideal living accommodations were simply accepted by the ladies. The rest of the houses in POV were newer and nicer, but no one seemed to worry about Noriko and Ruth having to live where they did. On occasion, though, people would ask, “Why don’t you have this?” or “Why don’t you have that?” Some Inuit would remind them that just 20 years before they were living in igloos. The remark heard most often was, “You’ve fixed this place really good!”

All the while using language-learning as a platform for ministry, Noriko and Ruth carried on the work in POV for several years. Most of their Bible teaching opportunities took place with individuals or with couples, and Noriko had the privilege of baptizing a few believers. After leaving POV, Noriko moved on to the Inuit-Cree community of Great Whale River (Kuujjuaraapik), and then in the fall of 1992 began a leave of absence from NCEM to care for her aging parents in Japan.

In August of 1986 Ruth moved to Prince Albert to serve with NCEM’s television ministry. But in the following years she has maintained close contact with the work and has continued to visit POV at least yearly.

## **OTHER FACES AND PLACES**

POV was the starting point, but other Inuit communities would soon see NCEM missionaries coming to minister. In February of 1983 Grace Heal moved to Wakeham Bay (Kangiqsujaq). For the first six months Anne Williams was her ministry partner, then student intern Terry Johnson joined her for a one-year period.

Grace says she arrived in Wakeham Bay with “dishes, lots of warm clothes and blankets ... and that’s all.” Even though she grew up on mission stations in northern Saskatchewan and had cross-cultural training, she says, “I still felt like I was in a different country.”

One of Grace’s first observations was that all the local people in the community of about 350 were dressed in their distinctive home-made winter clothing. Making Grace feel even more out of place was that English was hardly heard. She had never met an Inuit before and didn’t know anybody there. No housing had been arranged, but Noriko had visited there and had given Grace the names of some English-speaking contacts.

There had been previous evangelistic outreach in Wakeham Bay, and Grace had arrived on the scene because there had been a request for Bible teaching from a local group of believers. The community was, in fact, quite familiar with once-a-year evangelistic meetings conducted by outsiders, but they weren’t used to seeing Christian workers staying for longer periods of time. Grace says that the people were excited about the NCEMers staying and learning the language. There were pretty impatient about it, though, she says. “They wanted us to learn the language fast because it was hard for them to follow in English.”

These believers were organizing as a church during Grace’s time in Wakeham Bay. And while the members probably would have been happy for the missionaries to take on more leadership, Grace says they declined because they were women and they were outsiders. “We wanted to

work under their leadership,” she says.

Grace would stay in Wakeham Bay for a year and-a-half before moving on to ministry in POV, and later to Great Whale River, where she served along with Noriko Suzuki and Susan Kramer.

Since the early 1980's, Great Whale River has seen a number of NCEM workers. The unique community of 1200 is comprised of an even split of Inuit and Cree, and NCEM's outreach has been to both groups. So far most of the organized outreach, such as group Bible studies, have been with Inuit, but a lot of personal ministry has taken place among the Cree as well. The Mission house is located on the “Inuit side.”

Other workers in NCEM's Eastern-Arctic-Field have included David and Paula Loops, and Tom and Donna Cnossen, who have filled in on stations for several months before moving on to Central-Field ministries. Allan and Esther Giesbrecht, and David and Joanna Bouck, at Salluit (Sugluk), and Phil and Grace Welch, at Great Whale River, are others who have been part of the Inuit ministry team.

## **THE INUIT FIELD NOW**

If frontier is a place “where no man has gone” then frontier may be the most appropriate word ... because for several years only single ladies were part of NCEM's outreach in the eastern Arctic. But these women would have told you all along that men and/or married couples are what's really needed.

Noriko Suzuki notes that in some Native societies it is quite acceptable for a woman to lead in community affairs and at home. “But,” she says, “it's not good ... it just lets men sit back from jobs they should be doing.” Noriko tells of a conversation she had once while on deputation. A man approached her after her talk and told her that she was acting “just like a doe.” He described to Noriko how, when deer enter a new field, the buck sends the doe first. If it's safe, the buck will follow. Noriko says she thought that the analogy fit quite well!

Gary Winger was the first man to take up the challenge in NCEM's second thrust into the Arctic. He and his wife, Ardys, began their ministry with the Mission in 1983, serving first in Buffalo Narrows, Saskatchewan. But in the summer of 1986 the Wingers began praying about possible involvement in Inuit work.

Perhaps their burden for the Inuit really began years before, even before Bible school, when they lived in the James Bay area while Gary was employed as a pilot. When NCEM leaders had asked Gary to consider the move, Ardys says she somehow knew that her “adventurous pilot-husband would say ‘yes’ ... he was just ‘crazy’ enough!”

The Wingers moved to Puvirnituq in August of 1987 and, to date, continue to serve from that location. They will be the first to admit that it hasn't been an easy place to live. One of the biggest challenges, they say, is going for months at a time without fellowship with fellow workers, “...just sharing with someone who understands your struggles.”

Housing in the Arctic presents a challenge too. It has cost up to \$20,000 just to ship building materials to some of these locations. And travelling in and out of the Eastern-Arctic-Field is very expensive.

There are spiritual challenges as well. Ruth Armstrong says that things have changed since Noriko's first visit there in 1980. And there have been many social changes in the Inuit communities in the past decade that must be grappled with. POV's population has increased from about 800 to 1200. A new hospital and an expanded airport make it a busier place. There has been an increase in the non-Native population, too, but most don't stay for very long. In 1981 there was still no TV at all in POV; now satellite dishes receive multiple stations, many carrying pornographic programming. Social problems such as alcoholism, physical and sexual abuse and suicide have been on the rise.

Yet modern Inuit remain very religious people, say the missionaries. Though the traditional religion is shamanism, it is no longer practised as openly. "Churchiosity" is more common and is, in fact, a dominant influence in all of their community activities. "The whole village comes to church -- it's a social thing," says one NCEMer.

Mainline denominations established missions in Inuit communities many years ago, and now most villages have two "brands" of Christianity. While critics may question the present need for evangelical missionaries in these places, the missionaries point out aberrant teachings among both of the existing churches. There are still many needs. The peoples' faces show a happy smile, but inside the hurts are deep.

So far NCEM has focused its outreach in Arctic Quebec not on church-planting, but simply on Bible instruction. Bible studies, along with time spent with individuals in language-learning, have given opportunity for evangelism, teaching and discipleship. A few believers have been baptized.

"There is still a need for missionaries," says Gary Winger, Field Director. "We need those who can come, not just for a short period of time, but for an extended period ... to share the love of Jesus Christ with the Inuit people." And the need is beginning to be met. As this book goes to press, Samuel and Grace Saeki and their children are preparing for ministry in Arctic Quebec. They are from Japan -- and it's not hard to guess who was instrumental in their gaining a burden for the Inuit.

## **MARITIME MISSIONS: FRONTIER FIELD FAR SOUTH OF 60**

During NCEM's first years all its fields were generally referred to as "northern." In reality, though, only the stations at Eskimo Point and Padlei were located "north of 60" (60 degrees latitude being the southern border of the Northwest and Yukon Territories). Those two stations were under NCEM's direction only until the early 1950's, however, and it wasn't until 1960 that

the Mission again established stations in the Territories. That year Phil and Margaret Howard, who had been serving as independent missionaries at Hay River, joined NCEM and through a mutual arrangement the Mission extended its work into the Northwest Territories.

There were other areas, too, far from the Mission's original fields in northwest Saskatchewan, to which NCEM would expand its outreach. Home to the Micmac, Malecite and Montagnais Indians, there was Canada's Atlantic region. It's not likely that NCEM's founders had these Eastern tribes in mind when they originally verbalized their goal of reaching Canada's Indian people with the Gospel. Considered neither a remote nor rugged field, and situated close to numerous evangelical churches, these people were, in fact, being bypassed by evangelistic outreach.

## **19th CENTURY SILAS RAND**

It wasn't that these Maritime tribes had never had the Gospel. In the mid-1800's Baptist missionary Silas Rand served among them. Until recently, though, all of what was known about him and his work was recorded in one small volume, *Rand and the Micmacs*, a personal tribute by Jeremiah Clark (only three copies exist today). When researching Rand's ministry in the late 1970's, Canadian Christian author Maxine Hancock wrote this:

*"What I found in this little book made me even more amazed that a man of this stature could be so utterly forgotten ... Rand was in many respects a man ahead of his time. The main effort of Protestant missions at the time seemed to be to make the Indian as much like the white man as possible. Rand's approach was utterly different. He respected the Indians and their culture [and] worked upstream against the culture of his day. The Christians of his time complained that he was wasting his time with a dying language, and supported his work rather half-heartedly. Discouraged with the lack of denominational support for his missionary work, Rand formed an independent mission to support his work among the Micmacs."*<sup>12</sup>

In 1846 Rand, at age 36, had committed himself to sharing the Gospel with the Maritime Indians, and he did so until his death in 1890. He was a linguist who wrote and spoke several languages. His journals include entries in Latin and French, with pages of Micmac, Malecite and Greek interspersed. They tell of his discouragements as well as his joys, and of his deepening walk of faith. At age 76, Rand looked back over 40 years of work and wrote:

*"The whole New Testament, with several books of the Old in Micmac, and the Gospel of John in Malecite ... have been published. Scores of the Indians have learned to read them, hundreds have heard them read ... Furthermore, numbers have given evidence of having received the truth of the Gospel ... and by their consistent lives and triumphant deaths have given proof of the reality of the grace they professed to have received."*<sup>13</sup>

Silas Rand may be unsung in the annals of Canadian history. It seems that a lack of continuing missionary effort following his death resulted in diminishing evangelical response among these tribes. But his life has not gone unnoticed by a certain few. Among them are those who, like him, have taken up the challenge of full-time ministry in reaching these same people for Christ.

## THE WELLWOODS

The first in NCEM to take up the challenge were Art and Dorothy Wellwood who began ministry in the Maritimes in 1957. They had been serving at La Loche, Saskatchewan since 1948, but it wasn't a Mission Board decision that transferred them to the Maritimes. With both being originally from Nova Scotia, perhaps what influenced the Wellwoods most was simply seeing the many unreached Indian reserves each time they came home on furlough. Since the conclusion of Silas Rand's ministry in the late 1800's no evangelical work had been carried on among these people.

Dorothy wrote this about their new Maritime ministry in her book *When the Sun Rises*:

Art and Dorothy made a survey trip of the Maritimes to start their work. They found the Micmacs and Malecites suspicious, and a knock would result in the door opening only a crack. They had been strictly forbidden to have anything to do with any religion but their own. At last Dorothy exclaimed, "Art, how are you ever going to get into these homes?"

Characteristically, Art was not perturbed. He firmly trusted the Lord to open those doors, and He did. Prayer would open the "door of utterance to speak the mysteries of Christ" (Col. 4:3).

Usually Art had to travel alone because of Dorothy's responsibility for her very aged parents and six growing boys and girls. Indeed, he was "in journeyings oft," as his parish consisted of 35 reserves and between 10,000 and 12,000 Indians spread over three provinces, part of Maine and 50 miles up into Quebec. His goal had to be to reach all those of the Lord's leading.

Seasonally, thousands of Indians migrated to the blueberry fields of Maine. Where they went, the missionary went too. His house-mobile, literally a little brown and white house on wheels, was a great asset. It provided living quarters and a private place for consultations with interested Indian friends. [Visiting Native evangelist] Tommy Francis dubbed it "Art's Wigwam Wagon." Art made contacts by working side by side with Indians on the blueberry fields, and following potato harvest in Aroostock County, and thus many doors were opened to him back home.

Wellwood was a man of the Word, and as he read and prayed with the people, they would say, "I never held a Bible in my hands. I have never seen the inside of a Bible!" He placed several hundred Bibles in waiting hands held out for them. The heart cry of the Indians was, "Can you tell me anything that will give me peace?" He could, and did introduce them to the Prince of Peace.

When the writer talked with an Indian lady from Prince Edward Island [in 1984], she said, "Oh, yes." She remembered Art Wellwood. "He came to my house, and he gave us Bibles."

"How was it that you became a Christian?" we asked. "The Bible," was her only response. "How many Christians on your reserve now?" "Five," she replied, holding up the fingers of one hand.

One of [Art's] favourite sayings was: "It's our business to sow the seed; it's God's business to

give the increase!”<sup>14</sup>

In 1974 the Wellwoods transferred to ministry with NCEM in Carmacks, Yukon. While there Art passed away in 1979; Dorothy remained three more years until her loss of hearing necessitated a return to home in Micmac country. She passed away in 1994 at the age of 83.

## **A TEAM FORMED**

Just before the Wellwoods left the Maritime field, first-term missionaries Phil and Grace Welch began a ministry in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. They were joined by Dean and Joan Annis in New Brunswick, who had transferred from a station in the Northwest Territories. In 1974 Carroll and Cathy Hill joined the team and were also based in New Brunswick.

Interestingly, similar to the Wellwoods, a good number of these missionaries were also originally from the Maritimes. Though most of them had seen firsthand the spiritual needs in other parts of Canada, they each had a definite calling from God to return to serve among great needs closer to home.

The Hills’ arrival on the field was followed by that of Bob and Darleen Steward, who transferred from ministry in Oxford House, Manitoba. Other missionaries joined throughout the 1980's and 90's, though some for short-term service only. In 1996 the team consisted of 13 full-time workers.

## **MARITIME APPROACH**

The Wellwoods knew that they had been spreading themselves too thin visiting 30-some reserves. But those joining the Maritime team did benefit from the many names and details provided by Art and Dorothy. And there were a few Native believers, the result of the Wellwoods’ ministry, who were a great encouragement to these new missionaries.

It was a frontier ministry for these NCEMers, primarily personal evangelism with the hope of starting churches on these reserves. Some missionaries in the 1970's started out working on as many as five reserves -- the relative ease of accessibility, as compared to NCEM fields in northwest Canada, made it possible. However, ministry for most was soon narrowed down to two or three reserves each. Unlike some NCEM fields, there was no possibility of the missionaries living right on a reserve.

Personal evangelism meant going out knocking on doors. But what has opened the field more than any other approach so far has been ministry to children, teenagers and their families by way of Bible camp.

Bible camp got its start with Carroll and Cathy Hill’s “trailer ministry.” The practice was to park their trailer on a reserve for a week in summer (with permission from Band authorities, of course). Their ministry was run like a day camp, with three Bible sessions each day, and swimming and sports in between. Sometimes up to 60 or 70 children would participate, and



teens would come by in the evenings.

The trailer ministry proved very effective in reaching kids. In fact, say the Hills, when the parents saw that they were so interested in their children, they would come by and say, “We thought we should come and find out what you’re all about.” As a result some of these homes opened up to hearing the Gospel.

But the ministry was very demanding physically, and requests to have it on even more reserves were coming in. The Hills decided that a Bible camp could better serve the same purpose. It would just be a matter of transporting the kids.

As a result, a private camp was rented for a couple years and then in 1976 the Miramichi Bible Camp was built as a joint venture with the Canadian Sunday School Mission. Missionaries found opportunity to make the camp known to reserve chiefs from the whole Maritime region. Though the camp was located in New Brunswick, children from Nova Scotia attended as well.

In 1988 the Miramichi Camp was turned over to CSSM when NCEM purchased land on Grand Lake and began building the Arrowhead Native Bible Center. Along with summer camps, winterized facilities at ANBC have enabled weekend programs to take place year-round.

Other outreach for the Maritime missionaries has included numerous trips to communities with little or no Gospel witness. Reserves in Quebec, Prince Edward Island, and up the Labrador coast have been visited. A station in Newfoundland was opened as a result of visits to an Indian reserve there.

## **SIMILARLY UNIQUE**

A perhaps common notion among non-Natives is that Canadian Indian people are generally all alike. But even though the Micmac and Malecite are linguistic “cousins” to the Cree and Ojibway, NCEMers who had previously served in western areas before moving to the Maritimes quickly became aware of the differences.

Besides the obvious “material” cultural differences -- such as lobster traps instead of beaver traps, and communities situated on main highways instead of back in the bush -- the missionaries found significant societal differences. For one thing, the Micmacs are “more upfront,” say the missionaries, “...you know where you stand with them.” Some western tribes are known to be much less confrontational.

Other observations show the eastern tribes to be more assimilated into mainstream Canadian culture, with many having lost their Native language. Also, missionaries have observed a matriarchal society on the Maritime field. And unlike most other NCEM fields, men seem to be converted more readily than women. Missionaries know of Native Christian men held back in their spiritual walk because of their wife’s resistance and threats.

Interestingly, though geographically far removed, similarities with other Canadian tribes do

exist. Just like out west, missionaries note that eastern Native people usually take time to talk, even when busy with seasonal tasks. Though they are more urbanized, the fast pace of city life hasn't affected them in this regard.

A more notable similarity is the strong resistance to change one's religious affiliation. Eastern-Field Director, Bob Steward, says, "The Catholic Church, the first to proselytize, successfully convinced Natives that salvation was obtainable only through it." And though traditional Indian religion has made inroads, these people still consider themselves Christians, even though they know nothing of the Bible.

## **THE FIRST ARE LAST**

There have been encouragements along the way since NCEM's Maritime ministry began, but mostly it has been hard slugging. It seems that Satan has been working hard too. Missionaries report that on some reserves there were more adults interested in the Gospel 20 years ago than there are now. On Eel Ground Reserve, for example, there were up to nine men attending a regular Bible study. Since then Indian religion (often an imported brand, and not indigenous to the area at all) and organized sports are among the things that have captured peoples' interest and time.

There is ample opportunity to do Gospel outreach. The number of missionary workers is quite small and the number of Native believers, compared to other parts of the country, are few. While on some other NCEM fields there are a number of Native Christians being trained for church leadership, generally that's still not the case in the East.

Ironic is that the Native residents of the region first visited by people carrying Bibles seem to be the most spiritually neglected now. NCEM's small team of workers there is burdened to see the situation change. They know it will take dedication such as that of Silas Rand, and it will require increased help from concerned Christians.

## **URBAN FRONTIER: A SPRAWLING MISSION FIELD**

They don't chop wood, don't go out on the trapline, don't fly an airplane, and don't talk on a two-way radio. They don't drive a truck or a snowmobile and don't shop by mail. They don't drink powdered milk, don't carry water, don't paddle a canoe, and don't run a motorboat. They don't drive on lonely roads and don't listen to CBC North radio.

Who are they? They're urban missionaries ... but what is NCEM doing in the city?

The Mission's outreach began in Canada's more remote Native villages and reserves. That was simply because that is where the majority of unevangelized Native people were living. The migration of Native people to the cities in the past decades, however, significantly changed their demographics. High unemployment on the reserves, educational opportunities further south, and

sometimes simply an underlying hope for something better have prompted many to move.

The Mission initially made no response to this population shift. It was hoped that evangelical churches “in the South” would reach these urban Indians -- NCEM would continue to concentrate on outlying areas. But by the 1980's it was recognized that something more needed to be done. Though evangelical churches existed in close proximity to growing urban Native communities, most were finding it difficult to have an effective outreach to their new neighbours.

By this time other evangelical missions had already begun concentrating more of their efforts in the cities. Urban Indians didn't go unnoticed by some NCEMers, though, and several felt the Lord's leading to serve in this new and uncharted mission field. By 1990 there was full-time Native ministry being carried on by NCEM in ten urban locations.

## **CITY LIMITS**

How would ministry in the city differ from village work? And how would moving change the Native people? In general terms, urban Natives have been described as fitting into three categories: there are “street people” (who, in reality, make up a much smaller proportion than is commonly thought); secondly, there are a small number of Native people who have assimilated completely into mainstream culture; and thirdly, there are the majority who have been described as “selecting.” To varying degrees their lives are a blend of interaction with Native family and friends, along with employment and other involvement in non-Native circles. They may be settled in the city or they may be transient, moving back and forth between city and reserve.

In response, this variance among urban Natives has required diversity in ministry approach. Vicky Lukasewich and Doris Erickson's outreach in Chilliwack, B.C., for example, takes place on an urban reserve, reaching people where they have lived for many years. Al and Marilyn Bailey's ministry in Fort St. John, B.C., includes a “soup kitchen” and touches those needing stability in their lives. Walter and Cindy Selke's ministry in Regina focuses on church-planting, and reaches many who have moved to the city to make it their new home. Some of NCEM's ministry in Winnipeg has been to those who have temporarily come to the city for medical care or for education. Other urban workers, such as Peter and Louise VonZuben in Yellowknife, NWT, and Ken and Debbie Matthews in Val D'Or, Quebec, have made contact with both temporary residents and those more settled in the city.

In NCEM's 50-year history, its urban experience is comparatively short. It seems there is more to be said about what can be done, than about what has been done. Opportunities for urban Native ministry are diverse and are many. There is an need for street workers, youth workers, hospital chaplains, and in church-planting. There is much opportunity for discipling ministries, too, with most Native churches being open to non-Natives working alongside.

Those who have taken up urban work have found that it presents unique challenges. While the “bright lights” of the city can distract Native people from the things of God, many experience loneliness and emptiness and are open to the Gospel.

Urban missions doesn't require living in physically remote locations or dealing with difficult language barriers. But it's still not easy. The numbers themselves can seem overwhelming, especially for a Mission that has worked in Native communities with populations counted in hundreds, not in tens-of-thousands. But as one international missionary leader said, "You reach the cities the same way you eat an elephant ... one bite at a time!"

## **DILEMMA OR OPPORTUNITY?**

Village or city ... NCEM's primary thrust has not changed. The Mission is committed to reaching Native people who will not otherwise be reached. NCEM can't abandon the villages, but neither can it ignore the vast and increasing numbers in the cities. The dilemma comes because of a shortage of workers. Northern stations are still in need of missionaries, yet there has been an even slower response to the recruitment of new urban workers.

But with sufficient workers NCEM has found that there is twice the opportunity! When situated in both city and village the impact of the Gospel seems to be multiplied, especially when missionaries team up to reach Native people who have moved from one to the other.

## **"FRONTIERS" IN CANADA?**

Repeatedly used in this chapter has been the word "frontier." Some, no doubt, would question the choice of that term to describe NCEM's missionary outreach, even in its first years. After all, Christian missions had been established in these communities since the 19th century. Unfortunately, most of the previous proselytizers who bore the name "Christian" did not teach Scripture truthfully or in its entirety. They did not teach a personal salvation based on faith in Christ alone.

There had been evangelical outreach among Canada's Native people long before NCEM's beginnings, though. In fact in some areas the work had thrived. In other regions the Word had been preached and modelled, yet there had been little or no response. And by the 1930's it seems even many of those areas which had seen a true turning to Christ had lapsed into formalism and dead religion.

And so for 50 years NCEM has been sending workers into these places. Are they really frontier fields? If "frontier" means unreached -- with no existing fellowship groups or churches and few born again believers -- then they truly are frontiers.

That is not to say that NCEM has not recognized God's sovereign hand in preparing each location -- and each person -- in receiving the Gospel. Whether it was through 19th century missionaries Silas Rand in the Maritimes or James Evans in Manitoba, or pastor Lorne Heron in northern Quebec in the 1970's ... neither NCEM, nor anyone else, can take credit for what God has done.

In many areas Canada's Native people remain a frontier mission field. And reaching them will require more of a frontier effort than most evangelicals may think. NCEM was raised up by God

to reach Canada's First People. It has meant breaking new ground. It has meant stepping out for God where no one else was stepping out. It has meant frontier missions ... yes, in Canada!

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**NOTES:** 1--Northern Lights magazine, issue #132; 2--NLs #253; 3--NLs #303 and #393; 4--NLs #323; 5--NLs #31; 6--NLs #172; 7--NLs #306; 8--NLs #393; 9--Word Alive magazine, WBT 1994; 10--NCEM report to Campus Crusade compiled by David Loops and Tim Gradin, 1994; 11--Ibid.; 12--NLs #356; 13--Rand and the Micmacs by Jeremiah S. Clark; 14--When the Sun Rises--The Micmac Story by Dorothy Wellwood.

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*The original printing of Light on the Horizon included photos with captions, and text boxes. Here is text from some of them:*

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### **Intricately Systematic...**

"One of the rarest mysteries on God's earth is how so intricately systematic and expressive a language as the Micmac came about, without ever being written and worked out ... The language of the Indians is very remarkable. One would think it must be exceedingly barren, limited in inflection, and crude; but just the reverse is the fact -- it is copious, flexible and expressive. Its declensions of nouns and conjugations of verbs are as regular as the Greek ... and twenty times as copious."

--Silas Rand, 19th century missionary

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### **The Battle for Words**

At one time we were trying to get a word for "trust." Tom (my language informant) phoned to Charlie Dzitsakazs saying, "If I wanted you to lend me something and wanted to say, 'You can be sure of me to pay it back,' how would I say it?"

Charlie misunderstood. He said, "But, Tom, I don't have anything to lend you."

Another time we [phoned and] asked John Duck for the word for "right hand." He said that he couldn't tell us unless we could see him!

So the battle for words goes on.

--Bud Elford

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### **Of the 50 tribes...**

There are about 50 aboriginal tribes in Canada. The majority of NCEM's workers have served among the Cree, the largest of the tribes (which includes several linguistic dialects). Other Algonquian tribes that NCEMers have ministered to include the: Abenaki, Saulteaux, Ojibway, Micmac, Malecite, and Montagnais.

Athabaskan (Dene) tribes include the: Beaver, Carrier, Chilcotin, Chipewyan, Dogrib, Hare, Han, Kaska, Kutchin, Slavey, Tagish, Tahltan, Tutchone.

NCEMers have also served among the Salish (of western B.C.) and the Inuit.

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## **NCEM's TRANSLATORS**

Translation, of course, is never done independently. The following is a list of NCEMers who have worked alongside Native translators to produce the following:

Dene (Chipewyan): Book of Mark, Book of Acts (unpublished), JESUS Film, Chipecwan Hymns, Scripture Passages, Old Testament Stories, Evangelistic Tracts, Chipewyan-English Dictionary (presently under revision), Chipewyan Grammar Textbook, Dene 102 Course, Chipewyan Primer (presently being revised). Involved: Gilbert Bekkatla, Bud & Marge Elford, Roan Elford, Tim Gradin, Jake Klippenstein, David Loops, Bobby Moberly, Murray Richardson.

Dogrib: JESUS Film. Involved: Jim Stauffer.

Dogrib

Cree: Cree Grammar, Cree Hymns, B.E.E. texts Christian Foundations, The Shepherd and His Work, various Bible school course texts, Cree Witness Magazine. Involved: Mary (Edwards) Souter, Mary (Smith) Wiens, John Unger, Bill Jackson, Lorena (Goosen) Wahl, Joe & Helen Pope. Moose Cree Hymns, Eastern Cree Hymns, tracts, Scripture Portions. Involved: Helen Leschied.

Chilcotin: Book of Mark, New Testament portions on tape. Involved: Quindel King.

Slavey: Book of Luke (unpublished), Book of John (1972), JESUS Film, Slavey Verb Dictionary (presently under revision). Involved: Phil Howard.

North Slavey: Noun Dictionary. Involved: Chuck Bloomquist.

Inuktitut: JESUS Film, Inuktitut Language-Learning Text (with tapes). Involved: Noriko Suzuki, Ruth Armstrong.

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## **LANGUAGE**

“The Gospel was given to us in the language we know best. Shouldn’t these people have the same opportunity?”

--Sarah Olmstead (NCEM charter member)

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## **JESUS FILM**

“When both were seated about four feet from the TV, we started the movie again. At this point Dave and I

began our silent prayer time, which would last for the duration of the movie. For the full two hours, without a single interruption, the couple sat glued to the screen.

“During the last 15 minutes, tears began to fill their eyes. Only God knew what was happening in those two hearts. Later, as David and I left the house, he turned to me and said, ‘It’s times like this that make being a missionary worth it all.’ I agreed.”

--Glen Wiebe (from Northern Lights)

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## **LANGUAGE**

Murray Richardson studying the Dene (Chipewyan) language, thought by some to be one of the world’s most difficult to learn. He assisted other missionaries in learning it.

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## **LANGUAGE**

Murray Richardson assists Doug & Esther Day in their study of the Dene language. Various methods of language-learning has been used including formal schools, correspondence and tutoring.

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## **INUIT**

NCEM’s first missionaries to the Arctic in the 1940’s observed a lifestyle not too different from pre-European contact.

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## **INUIT**

Japanese NCEMer, Noriko Suzuki (left), feels right-at-home eating raw meat on the floor with Inuit.

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## **Faithful Anoe**

(from Northern Lights reports written by the Ledyards)

Anoe\*, the Native worker, was really saved the other day. He had thought all along that he could get to heaven on his good works ... I asked him to write a sermon some day and he has come in with three already. They are Scriptural and very pointed to unsaved people. (Oct. ‘49)

We certainly have been pleased and blessed with Anoe. He has been preaching in the afternoon services for some time now ... We have been hearing that the Natives go to him and ask questions concerning spiritual things ... I don’t believe I have ever heard such a holy hush come over the group of people as when he prays. (Jan. ‘50).

On our arrival at Churchill, Anoe and Tagaktok greeted us, expecting us to return with them via dogteam ... We believe the Lord was with Anoe and blessed him in his ministry while we were away. We have

heard nothing but good reports of his work from the Eskimos and the white people of Eskimo Point. We thank God for what He has done for Anoe. (May '50)

\*Anoe continued on as a faithful servant of his Saviour and went to be with the Lord in 1989.

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### **Lost in the Arctic**

The chimera of excitement ran high as his Inuit acquaintance asked the new missionary to go out for the day by dogteam onto the Arctic tundra. Soon the sealskin ropes were tightening as the dogs began to pull the sled away from the village. The dogs seemingly enjoyed the outing as the miles drifted by and caribou were chased in gleeful pursuit. Several hours later the men stopped to fish. In short order a windbreak of snow blocks was erected, a fishing hole chopped and tea brewed.

As the fishing began and the tea was sipped, a head of caribou curiously ambled toward the pair. As they neared, the dogs, whose nature overcame their seeming discipline, proceeded with great hurry and flurry to give chase to the caribou -- leaving two men very stranded and far from home.

The hours quickly passed in trailing the errant dogs and sled, hoping possibly to find the lead line tangled around some rocks on the treeless terrain. When darkness overcame the day and hope of recovering the dogs was gone, the two turned toward the village--already tired, thirsty, hungry and cold.

The miles slowly unfolded with wearisome monotony in an unending sequence of tripping over unseen snowdrifts, dreading the hills which seemed interminable, and constantly thinking that home was still far away. Soon the breaks for rest became more frequent. During these breaks, which lasted only a minute, it was easy to fall asleep and wish for a deceptively dangerous nap. But with mutual encouragement the slow trip was continued.

In such circumstances the luxuries of light conversation and happier moments turn to more serious themes. The clever inner evasions which normally keep us from seeing or revealing our real selves can become transparent and fall when life's difficult times occur. In such moments, if we listen, God's voice speaks clearly.

It was during such a time on this trip that, by the use of a comparison, a seed from the Gospel was planted. For just as the Inuit man and the missionary had spent so much time and effort looking for mere dogs lost in the tundra, so God had sent His only Son, at great cost, to find people hopelessly lost in their sins.

Finally, in the small hours of the morning, weary beyond exhaustion, the men arrived back at the village. And the dogs? They were later found. The Inuit man, however, is still lost. "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10).

--written by David Loops (1987)

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### **MARITIME**

Carroll and Cathy Hill's "trailer ministry" in the Maritimes reached children, teens, and their families, and was the forerunner of a Bible camp ministry in NCEM's Eastern-Field.



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## **MARITIME**

With Silas Rand's death in the late 1800's came the death of a missionary vision. Until 1957 -- when Art and Dorothy Wellwood began their Maritime ministry -- no evangelical work had been carried on among these people.

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## **URBAN**

"Like many other cities across Canada, we see an inflow of Native people. It is estimated that by the year 2000 almost 50 percent of the city of Regina will consist of people of aboriginal background -- Metis, status and non-status Indians. At present there are over 45,000 in Regina."

--Walter Selke (Northern Lights 1995)

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## **URBAN**

While the "bright lights" of the city can distract Native people from the things of God, many experience loneliness and emptiness and are open to the Gospel.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

# **LABOURERS TOGETHER: A MISSIONARY TEAM**

It was 1939, and there was one lone man -- Stan Collie. He described his first trips into northwestern Saskatchewan as “spying out the land” -- looking for a place where he could begin the work he felt God calling him to do.

By 1940 there would be a family on this new mission field. Stan’s wife, Evelyn, and their five children, the eldest only seven years of age, had arrived with him at Buffalo Narrows.

It took the independent spirit of Stan Collie to do what he was doing, but he was not a loner. He had seen a vast area untouched with the Gospel and he was beginning to realize that it was just the fringe. He knew it was far too much for one man.

A student of Scripture, Stan knew that the first missionary bands in the New Testament had demonstrated powerful effectiveness as small, tightly-knit, task-oriented groups. He was also aware of the impact that interdenominational missions had been making since the 1800's in other corners of the globe. So he began praying for team members to join him.

In May 1944 he travelled to a gathering in Meadow Lake where he met with representatives of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Western Children’s Mission, the Canadian Sunday School Mission, and several local brethren to discuss the future of this new missionary outreach to the “Indians of the North.” It was agreed that it would be best for the newly established work to associate with CSSM.

### **ONE LONE MAN: THEN A TEAM**

With that decision more workers began arriving on the northern Saskatchewan field: Art and Martha Tarry, who joined the Collies at Buffalo Narrows; Eleanor Kennedy and Sarah Olmstead, who would serve at La Loche; and Elvin Zimmerman and Nils Folkvord to serve at Lac La Ronge. Through the CSSM a few summer workers were also directed north.

While the assistance of the CSSM was vital during the first two years that these workers served in northern Saskatchewan, it soon became apparent that it was a cumbersome arrangement. CSSM was headquartered far to the south and, out of necessity, decisions were made with limited knowledge of the needs or opportunities “up north.”

CSSM’s work was set up on sharply divided provincial lines and this, too, failed to fit the needs of the North. These workers were already looking with anxious hearts to Alberta, Manitoba and

Ontario. Another not insignificant factor was that CSSM had difficulty supplying funds for these new northern missionaries.

## **ON THEIR OWN**

After much prayer in the unity of the Spirit, and with CSSM's blessing, it was decided best to sever official connections. Stan Collie admits that it was done with "fear and trembling," but he also tells about God's confident leading:

*"It was not a 'burning bush' -- just a small campfire over which our smoke-blackened tea pail was hanging as we took a break for a sandwich and a spot of tea. We did not have a flock -- but a dog team; not a rod -- but two axes and a Swede saw. But I believe the great 'I AM' was with us as He was with Moses, directing our thoughts and giving us our marching orders.*

*"Art Tarry and I were cutting firewood in a stand of fire-killed poplar and jack pine along the shore of the lake. We had received a glimpse of a vast mission field -- a tribe, a nation, blinded by the prince of this world. The adversary had them shackled by fear, superstition and idolatry.*

*"Most of them had heard of Jesus, but He was 'another Jesus,' a baby in His mother's arms, or a dead Jesus with mutilated body, still hanging on the cross. We knew that we had been chosen and called to bring them the message of deliverance through faith in the living Christ. But how were we to go about it? As Moses or Gideon said in their day, we could only say, 'Who are we to do this great work?'*

*"So around the campfires, and around our kitchen tables in the evenings, we were making plans for the future. There was no other evangelical mission in Canada taking the Gospel of Christ to the Natives (specifically), or we probably would have tried to affiliate. To form a nonprofit mission it would be necessary to incorporate. 'Where do we start?' we wondered. As the Lord of the burning bush said to Moses, 'Go, I am sending you. I will be with you,' so we just went ahead.*

*"We wrote to several foreign missions, asking for copies of their constitutions. We pored over them, selecting what seemed to fit our need. A good lawyer friend helped us immensely in preparing our case and steering it through Parliament by a private member's bill. And in 1946 the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission was born."*<sup>1</sup>

Nine charter members signed their names on June 7, 1946, in the presence of a number of supportive friends who had met for the occasion in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. It was to this small missionary band that many would join in the following years.

"Independent" and "self-reliant" ... perhaps NCEM's field missionaries -- then and now -- have been thought of that way. With many of the Native people living in small and widely scattered villages and settlements, geography has demanded that much of the missionaries' work be done "on their own," living far from coworkers and supervisors. And though God has never been interested in the building of missionary empires, He has promised to bless when His people

serve together in unity. But how could NCEM missionaries function as a unified team?

The challenges in seeking that blessing have been many. The benefits have been even more numerous. This chapter presents them as a team -- labourers together.

## **A UNITED PURPOSE**

Whether for the Lord, against Him, or ignorant of Him, there is always a reason when people get together. Worldwide, Christians can be observed banding together, for the Lord has called them into one Body, the Church. This oneness is most often expressed in local gatherings. And while the local church “group” will place its attention primarily on the needs of its own people, the missionary “group” has its focus predominantly on a task.

That is not to say that a local church has no task, or that a mission has no relationships! To the first NCEM missionaries, however, their banding together was unquestionably and solely for the sake of their stated assignment: “NCEM is an interdenominational, evangelical mission which exists to reach Indian people of Canada for Jesus Christ.”

Very little evangelical missionary work was being done among Native people in Canada in the 1940's -- and virtually nothing in the north-central and north-western regions of the country. In fact, there were probably very few of Canada's Native people in any region who gave evidence of the grace of God in their lives at that time.

The original document drawn up in 1946 defined “the northern villages” as the felt responsibility of the Mission. The founders of NCEM had a crystal clear understanding of the reason for the Mission's existence. Although the obstacles that would be encountered in pursuing this task may not have been fully understood, the goal itself certainly was.

## **A VISION**

The founders' understanding of the task came through a vision -- the strong impression that comes to God's people during times of waiting upon Him. Their conscious minds became convinced that somehow they were responsible to do whatever was necessary. And the job was not a small one.

Past NCEM General Director, Bud Elford, writes about it: “It was an impossible dream, a ridiculous mandate. Consider for a moment: a few not highly educated people, poorly supported, little known, with no influential backing, actually drawing up a mandate and making plans to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every northern Indian village in Canada. It was either the height of presumption or else a vision from God. Everything that faced that tiny group was impossible.”<sup>2</sup>

Visions come from God, but the fulfilment of any vision depends on the faithfulness of men depending on God. Visions can be halted, especially when there is a lack of faith. But visions can also be perpetuated, inspiring God's servants one after another. Since 1946 this particular

vision has been transferred to many others, to men and women who actually believe that God intends that every Native community be reached for Him. Since 1946 many missionaries have committed their lives to its fulfilment.

Today the vision is much clearer. Other missions have sprung up with similar goals; and the task has been more accurately surveyed. The “North” is a term that no longer describes the limits of NCEM’s mandate; other unreached places are included. The Mission’s work now includes a few of Canada’s urban centres, to where many Native people have migrated. Though the name “Indian” was used in the original mandate, the Mission’s outreach extends to others of Native ancestry including the Inuit and Metis.

## **INTERDENOMINATIONAL**

It would seem that today’s individualistic North American society is not very fertile soil for growing strong teams. Yet in NCEM God continues to bring together people who are willing to cross denominational lines for the sake of accomplishing God-given goals.

Baptist, Mennonite, Evangelical Free, Alliance, Associated Gospel, independent and other denominational backgrounds ... it wouldn’t be hard for NCEMers to find things about which they differ from their coworkers. Yet they have sought to maximize their agreements and minimize their differences.

As an interdenominational mission, NCEM maintains autonomy from church affiliation. But autonomy for the sake of “independence” has never been pursued. Just as the Apostle Paul and the early missionary bands were clearly autonomous, yet with intimate links with their sending churches, so NCEM seeks close but non-constitutional relationships with home churches.

## **EVANGELICAL**

NCEM is also firmly evangelical, as expressed by its name. Though interdenominational, not for a moment does it yield on cardinal doctrines such as the inspiration of the Scriptures, the new birth, and holy living.

Interestingly, though “evangelical” may have unclear meaning to many Canadians (and to some the word may even be unpronounceable), the word has taken on distinct meaning in many of the communities in which NCEM works. It may not always be used in a complimentary way, but at least “evangelical” distinguishes from those who blur the need for a spiritual rebirth and the need for strict adherence to Scripture in faith and practice.

“Evangelical” also conveys a priority on the spiritual welfare of people. There are other types of service that could be pursued, and it certainly isn’t that NCEMers avoid all social aspects of ministry. Missionaries are often helping to meet physical and social needs they see in their communities, usually on an individual or family level. NCEM believes, however, that helping people gain a right relationship with God should take precedence. The Good News rightly taught and received results in social benefits that far exceed any solely secular approach to the

problems.

Critics would say that people who live under oppression will not respond to the Gospel message, nor even listen. Historically, worldwide, this simply is not true. Others say that the mission program must minister to the whole person in every aspect of his or her life. NCEM believes, however, that the task of reforming social and economic conditions has not been given to the Church. Its role is to declare the power that is in Christ -- a power that will bring manifold change.

## **COOPERATIVES**

As early as the 1950's, NCEM workers had attended meetings with other missionary societies for fellowship and discussion of the Indian work in general. One informal meeting in 1958 included representatives from NCEM, Continental Interior Mission, Mennonite Pioneer Mission, Northern Lights Gospel Mission, and the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

During the 1960's the leaders of several missions, particularly those working among Indian people in Canada's western region, felt the need for closer fellowship, more cooperation, and more effective sharing of ideas among workers. The result of this concern was the initiation of an annual conference, usually held somewhere in British Columbia and known as the Evangelical Indian Workers' Fellowship (EIWF).

These early conferences had produced gratifying results in terms of encouragement to workers and cooperative activities on the field level. Mission leaders had been deeply stirred by the need of reaching Native people more rapidly and effectively and saw inter-mission cooperation as a means to that goal.

As a result, in the early 1970's, NCEM leaders attended several consultation meetings with leaders of the Native Evangelical Fellowship (NEFC), the North American Indian Mission (now NAIM Ministries), the Continental Interior Mission (now Continental Mission), Arctic Missions (now InterAct Ministries), and the United Indian Mission (UIM International). As then NCEM General Director, Phil Howard, put it, the goal was not merger nor amalgamation, but "first, to work together towards more vigorous total evangelization of the Indian people; and secondly, contributory to this, to develop cooperative and coordinated programs which will eliminate overlap and duplication, resulting in better stewardship of the personnel and finances with which the Lord has entrusted us through His people."<sup>3</sup>

## **I.M.C.O.**

These meetings were the beginnings of Inter-Mission Cooperative Outreach (IMCO). Besides the above mentioned missions, others have held membership, including: Impact North Ministries (formerly Northern Lights Gospel Mission), Indian Life Ministries (Inter-tribal Communications), Northern Youth Ministries, and SEND International. Presently 10 missions form IMCO.

One practical arrangement that IMCO has made possible is what is termed a “comity” of missions. This plan assigns specific regions to agencies and seeks to eliminate double occupancy of a region (except in large cities). Early IMCO meetings, for example, made it possible for NCEM to turn over two of its British Columbia stations to missionaries of UIM, thus freeing NCEM workers to go to other parts of Canada. In actuality, comity had already been taking place on Canadian fields even prior to IMCO’s conception.

A joint training program for missionary candidates was also an outcome of IMCO. Beginning in 1970, NCEM candidates attended the two to three-month Missionary Development Program (MDP) until NCEM began its own program called “C.O.P.E.” (Candidate Orientation Program and Evaluation) in 1991.

In 1973 plans were made for the first IMCO conference, which would be attended by workers from all member missions. Four-day IMCO conferences have taken place since then approximately every four or five years.

### **I.F.M.A.**

In September of 1970, at the annual meeting of the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IFMA), NCEM was accepted into membership. IFMA membership has been of invaluable benefit to the Mission in the intervening years.

It has, first of all, provided a structure for accountability for integrity. The foundation of IFMA member missions is primarily theological and doctrinal. As IFMA’s informational brochure puts it: “All of the money and all of the passion devoted to worthy causes goes for naught if the message of the Gospel is not preached in purity and power.”

Besides integrity of message, since 1917 Christians and the churches they represent have trusted IFMA member missions for their integrity in finances, in relationships, and in moral standards. IFMA also assists by providing a forum by which mission leaders can stay abreast of national and governmental issues, and theological and missiological trends. Over 150 missions have been members of IFMA in its almost-80-year history.

### **SO THE WORLD WILL BELIEVE**

Liberal theologians a few years ago coined the expression: “Doctrine divides; service unites.” NCEM would challenge that, for it is rigidity on deep theological convictions that has produced a built-in mutual trust among missionaries and among missions.

The purpose for unity, as expressed in John chapter 17, is so that the world will believe the Gospel message. As worthwhile as cooperation is, however, NCEM continues to carefully guard against collaboration at the expense of biblical truth and practice.

## COMMUNICATION: CONNECTING THE TEAM

“Community” and “family” are words with a nostalgic ring. For most of us these words represent warm feelings. But regardless of how pleasant they sound, they don’t come without effort. The building of a strong family or a strong team requires effective communication.

Perhaps nothing illustrates the value of teamwork more fittingly than the Canada goose seen flying in formation in the spring and fall seasons. Scientists estimate that these geese can fly up to 70 percent farther because of the updraught produced by flying as a group. But the updraught is not the only advantage. Scientists also say that the continual honking of the geese serves as mutual encouragement.

Imagine a mission with its members living on stations spread over thousands of miles. Think back to the 1940's when most of these northern communities did not even receive frequent mail service, let alone have telephone connections. That will give a picture of the challenge that faced NCEM in trying to build and steer a unified and communicating team.

### “LABOURERS TOGETHER”: THE NEWSLETTER

Besides personal visits from directors or fellow workers -- which did not occur very often -- the postal letter was the most commonly used communication channel among missionaries in the early years. In addition to personal letters between Mission directors and field workers, the need for a published monthly newsletter from Head Office was soon realized.

Issue number one, published in December of 1947, began this way: “Yes, here it is, that long thought of and talked of Workers’ Bulletin. At a meeting of the Board of Directors last fall it was moved and seconded that a Workers’ Bulletin be sent to each of the workers of NCEM....” Suggestions for the newsletter’s name were requested and voted on by the missionaries. “Labourers Together” came out on top.

The purpose of Labourers Together has been multi-faceted, as shown by these excerpts from early issues:

*Prayer Requests... “The language study is a definite matter for prayer. Both at Ile-a-la-Crosse and Buffalo Narrows the informants that had promised to come for awhile are staying away in spite of the wages offered them. We MUST get the language and God can undertake for us. Let us join together on this.”<sup>4</sup>*

*Financial Policy... “...personal gifts, even if they come through the Mission, should be accounted for on that month’s report card.”<sup>5</sup>*

*Greetings... (from office staff) “At this Christmas season we think of each one of you personally ... We do appreciate your willingness to leave loved ones to present the Gospel against bitter opposition.”<sup>6</sup>*



*Board Minutes... “The Board of Directors had their Fall Board Meeting at Meadow Lake and were back in Buffalo Narrows in less than a week. This, we think was well done as four and-a-half days were spent ... travelling. We are very thankful for all the business which was accomplished”<sup>7</sup> ... “We [as a Board] knew the Lord was with us directing every decision. Here are a few of the things decided....”<sup>8</sup>*

*Reminders to Report... “Eskimo Point, where are you? We feel that Mr. and Mrs. Ledyard up there are quite isolated this winter. We have not received a letter since they went up there. A wire from them assured us that they were well. God bless you up there. We are praying for you.”<sup>9</sup>*

*For Sale... “Newsprint: We have on hand a good supply of newsprint paper which we can sell at 25 cents per hundred sheets, postage paid.”<sup>10</sup>*

*For Trade... “We have been wondering if any of the missionaries have flannel-graph material which has been used in your field and could be made use of in some other point. Each field could lend the other this material and it could be passed on.”<sup>11</sup>*

Other regular features in Labourers Together have included: devotionals submitted by workers, birth announcements, reports of illness, answers to prayer, requests for Northern Lights (magazine) articles for publication, weddings (and romances) announced, new workers introduced, workers leaving, details of upcoming staff conferences, reports from past conferences, and the odd joke to keep the workers smiling...

...and a fair amount of trivia... “Look Out There. The Directors of NCEM are making sure they see everything! Five out of the seven wear glasses. Just recently Mr. Collie and Mr. Tarry found it necessary to get a pair. Is it because they have poor eyes, or is it that some missionary is getting too mischievous???”<sup>12</sup>

## **MISSION CODE**

Labourers Together has always been an “in-house” publication, its contents written specifically for NCEM members. As the Mission grew organizationally, a lot of abbreviations began to appear in the Newsletter ... HQs, NLs, NMTC, KBI, CF, WF, EAF, EF, ANBC, TBBC, NCMP, BEE, SLC, and COPE ... NEFC, IMCO, CHIEF, IFMA, MDP and others. Any non-NCEMer coming upon a copy would likely give up reading pretty quickly anyway, thinking it written in code ... LTs code, that is.

Labourers Together newsletters have been issued 570 times over the past 50 years. They tell the developing story of the NCEM team. From issue #1 to issue #570 the differences in the Newsletter’s appearance and printing quality are transcended by a common theme. That theme has been the continual challenge to workers to be faithful “labourers together with God” (I Corinthians 3:9).

## **WORKERS' CONFERENCE: FAMILY DEVOTIONS**

While communication by mail took place throughout the year, besides the rare visits made possible by boat and air travel, it was only at the annual workers' conferences that many of the earlier missionaries could enjoy face-to-face fellowship with each other.

Needless to say, for many it wasn't easy getting there. To get to conference one year, missionary John Giesbrecht travelled over 50 miles east by canoe from Cumberland House, Saskatchewan, then caught the train at The Pas, Manitoba, and travelled west to Meadow Lake. A 1962 report tells of another missionary spending two months allowance to get to conference. (All this was before 1967 when attendance at the annual conference became compulsory for Mission members.) These workers obviously wanted to be there!

The first NCEM "Workers' Conference" was held in June of 1948 at the facilities of the Meadow Lake Bible Institute. In 1949 the Conference was held at Dundurn, Saskatchewan, and in 1951 it was held at Dalmeny, Saskatchewan. In the following years the conferences were held annually at Meadow Lake. A large tent set up on the Mission's property accommodated the serving of meals and some of the meetings. Missionaries were billeted in the homes of Christian families in the area.

### **FAMILY & FRIENDS**

While Mission business meetings were carried on during the day, each evening many Christian friends from the Meadow Lake area and elsewhere joined in for the report and preaching services. For many years the missionaries were largely outnumbered by conference guests; a town hall was rented to accommodate the evening meetings. A peak in conference attendance came in 1961 when two well-known men, Theodore Epp (of the "Back to the Bible" radio broadcast) and author Bernard Palmer were guest speakers. The following is an account of that conference:

*"It was encouraging to have 50 of our missionaries here for the conference, plus nine new candidates who were able to be on hand for public acceptance into the Mission. The attendance reached an all-time high, and it was necessary to use the Curling Rink instead of the Meadow Lake Hall.*

*"The attendance of between 500 and 600 was a joy to see ... Needless to say, the cooks were busy and some 3000 meals were served. Mr. McIvor of Loon Lake lent us a large tent for a dining hall and about 120 to 150 could be served at one sitting.*

*"The highlight of the conference was the Sunday afternoon service in which nine Indian converts took part and during which Dr. Epp [preached] ... The greatest joy was perhaps in the realization that God has raised up a work which has resulted in the salvation of scores of Indian people across the North and will under His direction be used to win many more."13*

Facilities for these gatherings were noticeably inadequate. And, as far as being a rest for weary missionaries, the conferences didn't offer much of that. For one thing, the cooking usually had to be shared by missionary women (missionary men were delegated to tasks for which they were more qualified, usually dish washing). But by 1965 there was some relief. A pre-conference letter to the missionaries that year said: "You will be pleased to know that you will not have to cook your own meals! Mr. and Mrs. Albert Carter of Big River have volunteered to cook for us."<sup>14</sup>

## **FOCUS SHIFTS**

In 1963 a quonset building especially for conference gatherings became a reality, replacing the large tent. However, it was just a couple years later that the Mission's headquarters moved to Prince Albert, and conferences would no longer be held in Meadow Lake. With this location change, the focus of the conferences also shifted. While the attendance and financial gifts of the supporting Christian public had been greatly appreciated, in the following years the conferences became primarily geared to benefit the missionary workers themselves.

Friends and relatives of missionaries have always been welcome to join in the plenary sessions but, for the most part, it is only Mission members and their families who now attend NCEM conferences. Reports, ministry workshops and challenges from God's Word, food and fellowship fill the schedule. "General" Conferences began being held every two years, and regional conferences held on alternating years. Various locations have been used, but since the early 1980's the general conferences have been held at Caronport, Saskatchewan.

For missionaries, conference offers an opportunity to get acquainted with new Mission members, and to share in fellowship with long-time coworkers. Special sessions for missionaries' children and teens also help make conference a meaningful time for "MKs." There have even been a few MK "incidents" over the years, especially for those from "the bush," and not used to being around manicured lawns and parks. One year the following notice had to be sent prior to conference time: "Parents, please instruct your children that shrubs, trees and flowers at Briercrest Bible College (Caronport) are not wild for the picking, tramping or climbing by anyone."<sup>15</sup>

Little problems like that aside, one seasoned NCEMer notes that many of the missionary kids who were brought to conference have gone on into ministry. And some of the MKs who never attended conference never gained a missionary burden.

## **TEAM HUDDLE**

No doubt communication between NCEM missionaries takes place much more often in the 1990's than it did in the 1940's. By the early 1980's all but a couple of the missionaries had telephones, and some workers used short-wave radios, saving on the costs of phoning. Long distance telephoning has become more affordable in recent years and is now a common means of communication. Other avenues such as fax and computer e.mail are gaining usage.

But especially for field workers serving on distant stations, there's nothing like conference. While the gatherings are planned to help revitalize the workers spiritually, and better equip them for the challenges they face on the field, they also provide enjoyable social interaction and activities. Pleasant memories are created and taken back to sometimes lonely fields.

Besides the conferences held each August, "mini-conferences" were begun in the early 1980's and take place in late winter or spring on each of the Mission's four fields. These gatherings also contribute to team solidarity.

The conferences of the 1990's may not closely resemble the Mission's earliest gatherings. Nobody canoes to conference any more, and financial assistance is now given to workers who must travel over 3000 kilometres (return). But still central to these conferences is their role in helping NCEMers serve as a spiritually committed and united team. One of the Mission's general directors used to call them "family devotions."

## **ORGANIZATION & ADMINISTRATION: ACCOUNTABILITY & ENCOURAGEMENT**

"It's great. We don't have to waste our time in committee and board meetings." Those were the words of a fellow extolling the virtues of being an "independent" missionary. He probably wasn't as independent as he claimed to be, but he was hitting a sensitive note. In his audience were NCEM "team" missionaries.

While this chapter -- in fact this whole book -- illustrates the effectiveness of missionary teamwork, admittedly not everything about it may sound appealing. There are job descriptions, policies and practices, guidelines, responsibilities and reports. There are conference expenses. There are organizational headaches. There are coworkers who sometimes seem hard to get along with.

And there is the need to submit to leadership. When the Bible speaks of God leading His people, though, it is clear that He does so by using human beings. Scripture ordains godly human leadership and Scripture records its results. Over the years God has led NCEM through growth, expansion, difficulty and blessing. The men chosen to lead have been servants, not aspiring to the title or office given them, but to the work of leading the Mission.

### **EARLY ADMINISTRATION**

Initially NCEM was led by a five-man "Board of Directors" which met at least three times a year. It was at these meetings that all decisions were made concerning the work of the Mission -- things such as: election of officers, acceptance of new workers, placement of workers, and numerous accompanying financial and legal matters.

An October 1947 Board meeting in Meadow Lake listed the following as Board members:

missionaries Stan Collie (Chairman), Art Tarry (Secretary-Treasurer), and John Penner (Vice-Chairman). William Nish (an Alliance pastor in Meadow Lake) and Hubert Smith (a missionary with the Shantymen's Association) also served on the Board. At that same 1947 meeting a motion was carried to expand the Board to seven members. Sinclair Whittaker (President of Briercrest Bible Institute), and Gleason Ledyard (NCEM missionary at Eskimo Point, NWT) were welcomed as new Board members.

Before long it was realized that some of the decisions concerning the work would have to be made in between the scheduled Board meetings and in June 1948 an "Executive Board" of three men was appointed "to carry on the immediate needs."

The legal intricacies of setting up a mission were new to NCEM's leaders. Of great assistance, until his death in 1952, was Mr. O.D. Hill, a Christian lawyer from Regina. His expertise and experience was invaluable in assisting NCEM in becoming incorporated in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and in securing properties for several mission stations. Much of the area into which NCEM would expand was very familiar to Mr. Hill. In fact, Odhill, a community in northwestern Manitoba, is named in his honour for his contribution to the building of the "Churchill Line" railroad.

The Mission's office was initially located in Buffalo Narrows, through which all financial transaction and official communication was channelled. With the assistance of a few lay board members (i.e., non-NCEM missionaries), NCEM's administration carried on for quite a number of years by members who were also doing full-time "missionary work" on their respective stations. Only the Secretary-Treasurer was able to make administration somewhat of a priority in his schedule. And the distances between him and the other Board members sometimes made decision-making cumbersome.

## **FIELD COUNCILS**

NCEM's initial administrative arrangement was carried on until 1965 when a number of changes began being instituted. The main change was the establishing of two "field councils" within the Board of Directors to facilitate closer touch with the missionaries and their field concerns. "Eastern" and "Western" Field Councils were instituted, with two members from each council attending the Board meetings, by this time held in Prince Albert. However, while the field missionaries' needs were being more closely monitored this way, the Field Council set-up was not without its drawbacks. It seemed that lines of authority were not defined clearly, and sometimes Field Council decisions were overruled by the Board.

Even in the mid-1970's no one in NCEM could be considered a "full-time" administrator except for the Secretary-Treasurer. And though the need for a change in this regard was realized earlier, it seemed none of the Mission's Board members wanted to give up their personal field ministries. However, it was becoming increasingly apparent that it was impossible for them to do justice to two such diverse and demanding responsibilities.

The 1970's brought continuing expansion of NCEM's work, including additional stations in the

Yukon and in the Maritime provinces. The accompanying ministries of radio, literature and Bible education, necessitated even further changes to allow efficiency of operation. It was becoming very difficult for the Board to keep pace with the ever-changing demands of the Mission's outreach.

## **REORGANIZATION IMPLEMENTED**

In 1975 John Thiessen became the Mission's first General Director without the additional responsibility of overseeing a station, field or department. And in 1978 a revised administrative structure was implemented. There were changes in field oversight, in the organization of various specialized ministries, and in top management relationships. All in all it was quite a comprehensive overhaul. For the first time the three Executive offices and those for field direction were made full-time positions.

An accompanying change in administrative practice since then has been the inclusion of lay members on the Mission's Governing Board. While lay members (i.e., non-missionaries) were part of the Board through the 1950's, none were included during the Field Council arrangement years. In 1978 Dave Froese, a Saskatchewan banker and farm financial consultant, joined the Board as a lay member, followed by Saskatoon medical practitioner, Dr. Art Hindmarsh, in 1979. Another long-serving member was Eugene Loewen, a Saskatchewan businessman who served on the Governing Board from 1980 to 1995.

Additional lay members joined the Board throughout the 1980's and, in compliance with IFMA standards, formed the majority of voting members. Presently the Governing Board is made up of missionary members (each in a position of directorship through ratification by members) and at least eight lay board members. As of 1995 only lay members (i.e, non-paid members of the Mission) have an official vote in Board decisions.

## **FELLOWSHIP! ENCOURAGEMENT!**

If the preceding organizational and administrative rambling hasn't provided inspirational reading, take note ... there is more to missionary teamwork than this!

There is also fellowship and encouragement. Many a missionary on a lonely station has been lifted "out of the dumps" by a visit from his or her field director. Many a field worker has experienced the joy and relief that comes after praying together with a seasoned missionary, someone who seemed to know exactly what the worker was going through.

Unfortunately, in the Mission's earliest years, this kind of encouragement was difficult to come by. With no aircraft of its own available, travelling was impractical, and finances weren't often available for chartered flights. The Mission's organizational set-up didn't allow for much of this kind of encouragement to take place either.

But with visits being few and far between, it meant that they were appreciated that much more. Missionaries Roy and Marjorie Markel recalled a visit from Board member Hubert Smith during

their first year on the field. Hubert, himself a missionary with the Shantymen, approached the Markel home one day unannounced, pulling his toboggan. Just a visit ... but the fact that they talked of it 35 years later proves its impact. The Markels described that event as one of the most enjoyable times in their missionary career.

When Mission leaders could visit the field workers, they made the best of it. A 1953 report reads: "Home again. It was April 16th that the twin-motored Cessna, CSG, roared over the little town of Meadow Lake. The Board members were home again! We were away almost six weeks, and it was a privilege to meet each one of you and to have the privilege of ministering to your dear people."<sup>16</sup> The report noted that all but two of NCEM's stations were visited on that particular tour.

Even short visits from Mission leaders were appreciated. An earlier report tells of a visit from one of the Board: "Montreal Lake: Mr. Collie passed through by bus on his return from Manitoba, March 7, and enjoyed 20 minutes of fellowship and a hind-quarter of rabbit with [missionaries] Anne [Koop], Mary [Kehler], and Angela."<sup>17</sup>

A 1966 Western-Field Council report stated that, "...it was agreed that every field in this region be visited at least once a year."<sup>18</sup> As noted earlier in this chapter, there were no full-time field directors until the late 1970's. Another 1966 report tells of a field director resigning from the field council because he felt he was not able to give enough time to the care of the various field workers. He said he was "too busy" in his own ministry.<sup>19</sup>

The administrative overhaul in the late 70's improved the situation greatly, but today's field directors still find themselves stretched to visit the many and widely scattered stations. Besides offering encouragement, there is the sharing of advice and direction, and working through ministry problems on the stations. Sometimes the field director's role is humbly helping the younger missionaries "...not make the same mistake I made."

Much more of the direction for field missionaries is now given over the phone. Yet nothing is quite as good as a personal visit. Marge Knightly points out another aspect to this important ministry:

"Having spent 14 years myself in isolated villages, I feel that I know a little bit about how some of the missionary wives feel ... the loneliness that they sometimes experience. I also remember years ago ... how disappointed I was if [the director] didn't bring his wife along. So whenever possible, I like to go along ... so that I can be an encouragement to the ladies."

## **SERVING THE "MISSION" OR THE "LORD"?**

NCEM is a team. But everyone knows that teams are made up of individuals. As a missionary-sending agency, NCEM's leadership must look to God for direction. But God also directs the workers individually. Many will have a burden for a particular people or a particular ministry. Just how have the two fit together?

Concerning the placement of workers, the Mission's Principles and Practices booklet reads: "A missionary is expected to serve in the area designated for him. Such designation will always be in consideration of the individual's personal leading. The missionary should realize that he is part of a team and that the team's needs and his own ought to be held in a realistic, spiritual balance."

Former General Director, Bud Elford comments, "The experts tell us that administratively that's bad (i.e., to let the worker's personal leading direct his placement), but we've always functioned that way." In most cases a new missionary applying with a desire to serve in a particular field location has been permitted to go there, providing no one else is doing similar ministry there. Of course, to deny that there are times of uncertainty and even tension would not be honest. As the Board and individual missionaries have grappled with the Lord's leading over the years, some interesting compromises have been reached. Bud tells how, when he and his wife Marge joined in 1952, they had told the Board of their desire to serve somewhere down the Mackenzie River (northwestern Northwest Territories). The Board's reaction was, "We know you want to go there, but would you go to Churchill (northeastern Manitoba) temporarily?" Looking back, Bud notes that "temporarily" turned out to be 15 years!

Other workers have not been so flexible. In the 1940's, for example, the Board told one missionary couple that they may be asked to move from their station. In response they wrote: "If the Board wants us to move we think that we would rather stay on independently, as we believe the Lord has a work for us to do."<sup>20</sup>

Another of NCEM's earlier missionary couples said that they "went north to serve the Lord, not the Mission." And they say they are glad they went -- and stayed -- with that attitude. When hardships and disagreement with leadership decisions came along, they considered these issues to be "little things" and didn't let them distract from the work. Perhaps the "realistic, spiritual balance" mentioned in the Mission's Principles & Practice is best summed up by these same veteran workers when they say, "We needed the Mission, but we were serving the Lord."

## **HEADQUARTERS: SERVING THE FIELDS**

The concept of having a "headquarters" probably wasn't in the minds of the early NCEM missionaries at first. But with their vision to see the work expand to other communities, and with Buffalo Narrows already known as a fishing and trading centre, perhaps it was natural for the missionaries to begin thinking of NCEM's first station as the hub of the work.

Funds were already being channelled through the little office set up in a missionary home there. With the Collies and Tarrys living in that village, and both Stan and Art being Board members, Buffalo Narrows served as the first location for the Mission's headquarters. Missionary prayer letters and monthly issues of the Northern Lights magazine were printed in Buffalo Narrows and mailed from there. By the early 1950's it had also become a base for an aircraft ministry, and it was the site of the Mission's first language school sessions.



However, with the Mission growing numerically and expanding geographically, it was not long before the Board saw it best to move the headquarters location. Buffalo Narrows was still fairly isolated and not reachable by all-weather road. The town of Meadow Lake, about 160 miles to the south, was an obvious choice for the new location, especially when buildings originally owned by the Meadow Lake Bible Institute were turned over to NCEM. The move took place in 1951. The buildings were renovated and used as office, dwelling, and language school. Additional housing for missionary families was built soon after on the donated property and on purchased adjoining lots.

## **TWO MOVES**

A second move came in 1965 when, again, the need was seen to have headquarters more centrally located and accessible. Also, the Meadow Lake facilities were no longer very satisfactory. There was no indoor plumbing and the main building, especially, was not comfortable in cold weather. Projected costs of upgrading were high and thought to be an unwise use of funds.

NCEM headquarters' second move was to the central-Saskatchewan city of Prince Albert, where a large three-storey house, formerly a Roman Catholic convent, was purchased. It more-than-adequately accommodated office space, comfortably housed most of the office staff, and provided lodging for missionaries travelling through. And the new facilities were appreciated by office workers for another reason. "We have running water and sewer, and how we enjoy the bath tub!" cheered an office secretary.<sup>21</sup>

While the Prince Albert headquarters facilities housed NCEM's finance office and hosted the semi-annual Board meetings, it was not until 1980 that it fully became an administrative hub. That year, for the first time, the Board's three Executive Committee members (General Director, Assistant General Director, and Secretary-Treasurer) all resided in the same vicinity. This move was a practical outcome of the major organizational changes brought about in the late 1970's.

In 1977 a 1.8-acre lot was purchased five miles west of the city, which made room for a printshop building, followed by the construction of a new office building with 4800 square feet of office space, ready for use by May 1980. None of this facility development came as a strain to NCEM's finances, though, because the value of the building purchased in 1965 had more than quadrupled.

Full-time headquarters staff (including directors) had increased to eleven workers by the fall of 1980, and within a year it grew even more with the initiation of the television ministry. TV staff began producing the "Tribal Trails" program in the basement of the office building, but by 1983 a new studio building was completed, making it the third structure on the headquarters site. In the mid-80's the printshop doubled its floor space and an addition for a book store, maintenance workshop and chapel has been built since. With parking and storage space limited on the 1.8-acre lot, the Mission has more recently been pursuing the lease of adjoining property.

## **HQs IN THE 90'S**

By the early 1990's over 30 full-time workers were serving at headquarters (not counting spouses, many who serve there on a part-time basis). For a mission whose goal is to establish churches in Native communities, that many workers in one location may appear to be a misappropriation of manpower. 30-plus staff -- working day-in and day-out -- could all their work be necessary? And how closely could all this activity be related to the mandate of reaching Native people for Christ?

The role of headquarters staff can most simply be described as a support to the Mission's front-line field workers. Finance Department personnel work to make sure that missionaries across the country receive their allowances. Printshop staff produce prayer letters, prayer cards and other ministry-related literature. The television crew produce weekly programs that reach into Native homes, along with the coordination of personal follow-up to inquiries from viewers.

It seems there is no shortage of work. There are approximately 24,000 donations being processed at the office each year. Each donation must be channelled to the proper fund, and must be acknowledged and receipted. There are letters of inquiry concerning various aspects of the work that must be answered. There is the addressing and mailing of thousands of letters and the Mission's news magazine *Northern Lights* (circulation presently over 12,000). There are Executive Committee meetings and staff strategy sessions. It all takes people and it all takes time.

But more than just the administrative and media hub of the Mission, headquarters serves as a centre for prayer. Regularly, calls for urgent prayer come from missionaries on stations across the country. When necessary, headquarters staff stop their work and gather in groups to pray. Prayer requests from the various fields are included in half-hour chapel sessions at the beginning of each work day. And there is also a weekly staff prayer meeting which includes spouses and children. A telephone prayer chain is used after office hours. "When there [is] an urgent need ... we can call headquarters," notes an appreciative field director. "We have the assurance that God is going to answer because of others interceding on our behalf."

## **A BIG STINK?**

A well-known international evangelist was once heard to say: "Missionaries are a lot like manure: put them in a pile and you'll get a big stink. Spread them out and they'll do a lot of good."

Was he right? Likely none of the 30 staff members "piled up" at NCEM's headquarters would deny the need for God's grace in getting along with coworkers. But as far as "spreading out" goes, even headquarters staff do it. They are involved in ministries with nine or ten local churches, as well as outreaches in the prisons, children's Bible clubs, home visitation, and other personal evangelism and discipleship opportunities with local Native and non-Native people. Special outreaches have been organized on occasion. For instance, in 1993, 2,000 pieces of Gospel literature were distributed by headquarters staff during the Indigenous Games held in Prince Albert.

God has given diverse gifts and abilities to members of His Church. That is clearly demonstrated at NCEM's headquarters. They are not out on the "front-lines" of missionary work most days. But they are busy assisting front-liners by doing behind-the-scenes tasks, working to build Christ's Kingdom among Canada's Native people.

## **IMPRESSING?**

Buildings, land, airplanes, equipment ... it seems people start to take notice of Christian ministries when these tangible things appear. Back in the early 1950's, when the Mission began acquiring facilities in Meadow Lake and soon occupied a whole block in the town, NCEM had the townspeople's attention.

The Mission has never intended to impress people this way -- its goal has been to build the Kingdom of God in the hearts of people. Buildings and equipment are simply necessary items to reach that goal, and God has graciously provided these things to help NCEM's headquarters function.

One of the duties of headquarters staff is to guide visitors through the facilities. Even when the guests have arrived on a day when a stack of urgent jobs awaits their attention, the staff remind themselves that that visitor may have helped pay for the equipment they use everyday, and they may be supporters who pray regularly for the staff by name.

Whoever they are, they are shown the big map on the office wall where each field station and worker is marked. You see, the staff don't want to give them the impression that headquarters is where the action is! Yes, seeing the Mission's facilities can be inspiring and helpful. But so can be the faith that works for that which is unseen but eternal.

## **MISSION GROWTH: FAITH & GOALS**

Compared to later growth trends, the increase in number of workers in the years immediately following the Mission's organization in 1946 is remarkable.

In the first year three new fields were opened and the Mission family grew from nine to thirteen workers. By late 1952 there were 16 stations spread across an area 2000 miles wide -- 54 missionaries had become engaged in the work. That year the Mission acquired an aircraft which immediately was used to open two additional isolated stations. Another development that year was a "Children's Home" which was caring for 16 homeless Native children.

During the year 1955 more stations were opened than in any single previous year. Five new fields were added making a total of 23 stations in four provinces. On the Mission's tenth anniversary year (1956) there were 69 workers, and by 1960 there were over 80 workers on 30 stations in eight provinces and the Northwest Territories.

On the Mission's 20th anniversary in 1966, there were 46 stations manned by 123 workers, including 14 Native missionaries. By the late 1960's, however, the number of workers had dropped below 100. The 1970's saw the numbers climb again and hover around 120, followed by a growth spurt in membership in the early 1980's.

## **HOW BIG IS BIG ENOUGH?**

Statistics ... numbers of workers and stations ... if growth was desired, what was the goal? How big would the Mission have to be?

Growth was never seen as an end in itself -- but accomplishing the task was. The early Mission leaders talked of "reaching the Northland." What did they mean?

The minutes of a June 1951 Board of Directors meeting record: "There was an open discussion regarding the policy of the Mission as to the best and quickest way to evangelize the Northland. It was unanimously agreed that we look definitely to the Lord to send forth sufficient labourers into the Northland within the next ten years so that the whole population might have an opportunity to hear the Gospel. Furthermore, it was agreed that the most effective way to accomplish the evangelizing of the Northland was through Native evangelists and that missionaries should place the upmost emphasis upon the teaching and training of Native converts to assume this responsibility."

This goal was presented and accepted by the Mission's members at the Workers' Conference in 1952. These were ambitious aspirations, but perhaps it was the belief that they really could be accomplished that inspired the missionaries' prayers and efforts in the following years.

That particular 10-year goal was not reached, but not because it was too ambitious. On the contrary, newly appointed General Director, L.W. (Bud) Elford wrote (in 1980): "NCEM's vision has not changed, but to accomplish it is going to take far more missionaries, finances and technology than we envisioned in 1952 ... We have had problems growing beyond 120 workers.

"As nearly as I can compute, considering the number of still unevangelized villages, the distance in miles, and the linguistic diversification, we must have at least 100 more field missionaries and perhaps 25 more resource personnel to fulfil our mandate ... Workers are needed to evangelize every Indian village in the North (where no one else is doing it), provide adequate training for converts, and establish biblically based churches."<sup>23</sup>

## **FAITH GOALS**

If the "mandate" was to reach every unreached Native community, the term "faith goal" has been used to define and measure its accomplishment. A Northern Lights magazine issued in 1986 told of two faith goals:

*"In 1980 NCEM set a faith goal to double its staff in five years. We then went public in a Northern Lights article. At that time our total staff numbered 120. In the next few months 12*

*resigned, leaving 108. That severely tested our faith and Satan's whisper suggested we revise our goal. But God was faithful and graciously honoured our faith so that by 1985 our staff numbered 220. Since then, our growth has slowed. At this writing NCEM's staff numbers 227 with 5 on loan from other sources.*

*"We may have unconsciously let down ... At any rate, the need that still exists among Canada's Natives clearly indicates that we must not stop growing. Many villages get visited only rarely: over a hundred have no resident missionary. Tribal Trails (NCEM's Native Gospel TV broadcast) is beamed into many locations but must be followed by personal contact.*

*"At our most recent Governing Board meeting we set another faith goal regarding growth. We believe God to add 150 recruits to our staff by 1991 (in five years). Allowing for resignations and transfers, we are aiming at a staff of 350 by that date."*<sup>24</sup>

That particular goal was not reached either, but that has not stopped faith goals from continuing to be set by Mission leaders in recent years. The number of staff was just one way of gauging. Other ways of measuring the accomplishment of the mandate have been verbalized. In 1986, General Director Carroll Hill told NCEM's supporting public of a 10-year goal for the establishment of 20 new churches.<sup>25</sup> In 1994 a "5-year Plan" was approved by the Governing Board, with specific targets for each of the five years listed.

## **GROWTH PAINS**

God has revealed Himself as one with generous ideas for growth -- expanding the influence of His people in the earth. Scriptural examples include Noah, Abraham, and the first-century Christians who were told to go to "all" nations.

But growth produces problems (and not even missionaries like problems). When NCEM re-entered the Inuit field in the early 1980's, the problems increased -- \$2800 just for a director and his wife to visit the teams there. In 1979 there were absolutely no TV problems whatsoever. Now costs for air time and equipment roll over and around as daily fare. Across the Mission there are more staff who need care, more trips to more locations, more receipts to issue, more letters to acknowledge and more printing to do. Costs have increased along with these growing needs.

Growth problems have also occurred when stations have been turned over to NCEM from other missions. In 1967 the small Northland Indian Mission turned its assets and work over in the Peace River area of Alberta. In 1973 NCEM took responsibility for nine stations previously occupied by the Yukon Baptist Missionary Society. But it was not an amalgamation, for in both of the above cases there were no workers accompanying the properties and buildings. The question has often arisen ... how thin can NCEM spread itself? Despite the doubting, there has been an underlying belief that God could somehow supply the need.

Problems related to growth have been seen at every level. But problems can be seen as more than just problems. They can be seen as signposts. As one Mission director said, "...So much more let the problems increase -- that is, if they come on account of our growth in God and not because of

some carnality or stupidity on our part ... When they stop coming, [we've] ceased moving.”<sup>25</sup>

A goal, by definition, is a picture of the future, and therefore a statement of faith. The emphasis on specific numbers or dates may be criticized by some; in NCEM they have been mentioned only as a management and motivational tool. Simply put, the goals have been -- as best as can be known at a point in time -- what the Mission believed should be accomplished.

## **WANTED: WORKERS**

If, to accomplish the mandate, workers were needed ... where would they come from? And just who are these people who, since 1946, have joined the team?

They are just ordinary people. NCEMers would be the first to tell you that. But it seems not everyone believes it. One missionary said, “People say to me, ‘I could never live in the Arctic!’ ” But she responded by saying, “If I can, you can. I even hate the cold. We are just ordinary people whom God has called to go ... and share the love of Jesus.”

When listening to NCEMers’ testimonies of how they became missionaries, you’ll notice that their “call” was not necessarily an extraordinary experience, nor a dramatic sequence of events. But all of them will tell of receiving direction from the Lord, in some way or another, regarding their joining NCEM.

Where did these recruits come from? How did they find NCEM? Or how did NCEM find them? Traditionally NCEM (as other faith missions have) has found most of its new workers at interdenominational Bible schools. Many of these students, in fact, chose their training with a view to full-time missionary service.

While the majority of candidates come from such schools, a growing number of newcomers are those who have been in the work force for a few years. Another recent trend is the increasing number of “associate” workers joining NCEM. Many of these are involved with other employment such as teaching school, pastoring non-Native churches, or farming, but they assist in Native ministries on a part-time basis as they are able. Other associate missionaries are those who have retired from their professions and have joined NCEM to be involved in full-time ministries.

And not all missionaries have white feet! ... though it’s taken the Northern American church awhile to get used to that idea. Noriko Suzuki became the first Asian in NCEM, when she joined in 1976; others from overseas have followed. And Native workers have been part of the Mission since the 1950's.

## **P.R. ... PRAYING FOR REAPERS**

While the Church has been “praying the Lord of the harvest to send forth workers,” NCEM’s public relations (PR) people have been visiting the campuses of Bible colleges and churches. And the Mission has used a variety of other ways to inform Christians of the need to “pray, give

and go.” Some of NCEM’s associate members have served as “resource personnel,” residing on Bible school campuses and promoting the work of the Mission.

Literature and audio-visual presentations have been used much in recruitment over the years, as well. But, as other missions have found, the most effective means of “PR” is individual missionaries influencing their friends, relatives and acquaintances. As NCEMers have shared their experiences -- the blessings, and the great needs -- their vision has “caught on.”

Even though at least a couple hundred new missionaries had already joined in the work, it wasn’t until the early 1970’s that NCEM officially had a Candidate Secretary. Prior to this time the Mission’s Board, which usually met only three times a year, did all the processing of applications and relative matters.

By the late 1960’s, missionary Marge Elford was helping with the necessary filing and secretarial work accompanying applications (working out of her home in Cold Lake, Alberta). Marge developed the “department” and became the Mission’s first Candidate Secretary in 1973. Handling the increase of staff in the early 1980’s would have been difficult, no doubt, without Marge’s efficiency. In 1989 Cathy Hill assumed leadership of the candidate department until 1995.

NMTC, the Mission’s summer program, has been greatly used in directing potential workers. Missionary Venus Cote is just one example. A Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute student, Venus first received her burden for the Micmac people when she spent a summer in the Maritime region with the NMTC program in the late 1980’s. She went back to Alberta to finish Bible school but the burden never left. After graduating from KBI she joined full-time to serve in NCEM’s Eastern-Field.

## **STILL A GREAT NEED**

Though the Gospel came to Canada’s shores many years ago, the spiritual need among the Native people in this country is still great. That is why NCEM has continued to recruit workers. While recent statistics classify five or six percent of Canadians to be evangelical, it has been estimated that only two percent of North American Native people attend an evangelical church or fellowship. In Canada there are estimates that only one percent of Native Canadians are born again believers.<sup>26</sup>

To be sure, Native Canadians are but one mission field among the world’s many spiritually needy peoples. Population-wise, they are a comparatively small field. Yet every people is important to God. Among those of “every tribe and tongue and nation” mentioned in Revelation 5:9 will be Native North Americans.

So how does the Lord direct people to the mission field of His choice? The ways He leads could be as different as the missionaries themselves. Some have told of how, even as young children, they had a desire to become missionaries “to the North.” Some have been employed in the Native communities, seen the need, and chosen full-time missionary work. Some are naturally

attracted to the outdoor lifestyle. Some have joined as support workers, seeing opportunity to put their technical skills to use for God's Kingdom.

Sometimes direction from the Lord doesn't come easily. One worker tells of how he thought that the Lord might want him in missions, but he had no idea where. As he tells it, it wasn't until he said an uncompromising "yes" to the Lord, that the Lord showed him where. And sometimes it is not until he or she is on the field that the missionary's calling is confirmed. "It's a privilege to walk down the street," realized one worker after beginning his ministry, "because it's really Jesus walking there (through His Spirit)." This worker was impacted by the realization that, on his station, Jesus had never "walked" before, or at least not for a very long time. Missionaries soon become aware that they may be the only "Bible" that the Native people will ever read.

"We've seen a lot of needs in the villages," says another missionary, "but one of the biggest needs is for consistent Bible teaching." In some locations evangelism has taken place in past years, but there is confusion because of a lack of Bible teaching. "When the confusion is taken care of, life begins to change for the people," he says. Unfortunately, there is not always someone available to teach. "Can you imagine the helplessness that I [feel]?" asks a field director, "when some small village ... asks for someone to come and teach them ... and I have no one to send?"

## **EDUCATION & ORIENTATION**

A genuine desire to serve the Lord should be in the heart of every potential missionary. But is "desire" all it takes? What about training, experience, and the right skills?

Throughout the Mission's history, it has been expected that candidates will come having completed Bible school training. A few candidates have joined the Mission after also having completed graduate studies or additional professional training. Regardless of candidates' educational background, the need for specialized training to prepare them for the "northern field" was seen right from the Mission's start. No doubt it was because the very first missionaries had experienced culture shock and they wanted to pass on to the new missionaries something of what they had learned.

Early candidate training in NCEM was not highly structured nor very extensive. The sessions were part of "Language School," and addressed the practical aspects of cross-cultural ministry to Native people. By 1955 a one-year "preparation course" was begun. It included six months of practical work, often at the Mission's Children's Home at Montreal Lake, which was followed by a six-month language course held at Meadow Lake. During the year the candidates were officially "on probation" with the Mission.

In 1964 an official orientation course was established (in addition to language school). Missionary Allan Franz was in charge of the program at Meadow Lake that included Principles & Practice, Anthropology, Indian Culture, Indigenous Church, and Missionary Philosophy. Later, in 1968, General Director Phil Howard took on leadership of candidate preparation. The facilities at the La Ronge Bible School were used.



Along with those from other IMCO missions, NCEM candidates attended the first Missionary Development Program (MDP) held on Thetis Island, British Columbia, in 1970. Phil and Margaret Howard were instrumental in developing the Program and directed it for several years. The Program, usually about three months in duration, was also held in locations including Quesnel and Quadra Island, B.C., and at Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute's facilities at Lac La Biche, Alberta. While IMCO's MDP program continues, NCEM established its own candidate training program again in 1991.

## **THE GREATEST IS LOVE**

If you were to talk with some of NCEM's seasoned workers, you might detect a little scepticism concerning formal cross-cultural education (and perhaps about advanced education in general). In fact, one of them had a favourite saying that went like this: "I'm joining those who are running things, while the experts are still training to do the job." None of these NCEMers, of course, would say that the study of missions (missiology) is useless. But they would say that, "it's more important to know the Lord." One veteran worker points out that, despite all the complexities of cross-cultural communication and contextualization, missionary work is still primarily a spiritual ministry. "If you have no devotional life, you won't survive."

Another veteran missionary, when asked what message he would give to future workers concerning educational preparation, said, "It's more important to love the people." That same thought can be heard from other experienced NCEMers, no matter how much formal education they have or haven't received. If applicants to NCEM have been turned away over the years, more likely it has been because of poor health, lack of Bible education, or because of spiritual immaturity. When appointing workers, there's been much more to consider than acquired training and skills. There's been the conviction that "availability" is more highly valued by God than "ability."

## **FINANCES: A MISSIONARY AND HIS MONEY**

...are soon parted. But before that happens, something amazing takes place!

The Lord has blessed NCEM by sending workers. Every year, for 50 years, candidates have come, received additional training, and begun their field or department assignment. Each has sensed God personally directing him or her to join the work. And they come trusting Him to supply their needs. The amazing part? ... He does!

But just how does it happen? The costs of the missionaries' food, shelter and clothing, the costs of transportation, the costs of raising a family, the costs of ministry ... how have all these been provided?

## **A FAITH MISSION**

NCEM identifies itself a “faith” mission. (That isn’t to imply that some other missions don’t have faith ... or that NCEMers always have the faith they should!) The term has generally come to mean that the mission is not structurally funded by a denomination, church conference, or any other organization. The idea is not new with NCEM, of course. Since the modern missionary movement began, many societies have sprung up with similar financial structure. A faith mission is, simply put, one that trusts God to supply financial needs through prayer.

How has the “faith” principle been applied within NCEM over the years? Does just trusting God mean the same to the NCEM missionary of the 1990's as it did to Stan and Evelyn Collie, who went North in 1939 with no church behind them and no promised support?

While NCEM considers itself just as much a faith mission today as it did in 1946 when it was founded, there have been some modifications in the Mission’s financial policies and practices over the years. Today’s missionary candidate still doesn’t know for sure where his support will come from, but at least he knows how much he needs to raise. Art and Martha Tarry, two of the earliest workers, weren’t even thinking “dollars” when they set out. “I hadn’t even thought about financial support until it wasn’t long before we were to leave,” says Art. “I believed that God was calling us and if He was calling us He was going to take care of us.”

As it turned out, the Canadian Sunday School Mission did pay the Tarrys a monthly salary for awhile before they severed ties with CSSM and co-founded NCEM. Ever since then, “The Lord has certainly undertaken for us,” says Art. Other early workers testify to the Lord’s provision, too.

After the Mission’s founding, gifts from churches and friends “in the south” began coming in. At one of the Board’s first meetings it was decided that, “...the maximum monthly allowance be 30 dollars for each adult worker, plus 10 dollars for each child, with a maximum of 40 dollars for children; to be supplemented by a cost of living bonus in zones where living expenses are higher than at Buffalo Narrows.”

Gifts to the Mission designated “personal gifts” or “Workers’ Fund” were divided among the workers who were paid monthly. Undesignated gifts were used to cover the Mission’s administrative and other costs. The levels themselves were probably adequate at the time but, unfortunately, the Fund for missionaries’ salaries was often under-supported. A 1950 report to missionaries stated: “You will, of course, notice that the percentage this month is again very low, only 34 percent ... Do you know that if all our workers to date had 100 percent this month, it would be necessary to have \$1135. As it is, the total amount of personal gifts was \$258.84.”<sup>27</sup>

Beginning in January 1947, the Mission’s General Fund had attempted to make up this deficit in the workers’ salaries. But, with the many expenses of a growing mission, the General Fund wasn’t always able to help much. Among other things, there were the costs of buildings, travel, printing, and postage. Missionaries were encouraged to have their supporting friends and churches send more for “personal gifts” but with the Fund being pooled, overall, workers’ salaries remained low.

## **GETTING BY**

So how did these missionaries get by? While they testify of God's supply, stories of economic hardship surface too. This kind of difficulty wasn't something new to most of them, though. Many of these workers were used to going without. Raised amid the Depression on the prairies, to be without cash was almost normal. On the field these missionaries had to eat, naturally, but with fish or wild meat usually available, they kept food on the table. "We just lived off the land because we had to," says one veteran missionary. "But that's just what everyone else was doing" (i.e., local Native people).

While "living-off-the-land" may be a dream for some back-to-earth types of recent years, the months when no support came must have been difficult for the missionaries. Staples such as flour, sugar and salt still needed to be purchased. There were other costs in living, too, including transportation, clothing and medical (this was before the days of Medicare).

It seems that if missionaries could live and raise their families without much cash, so could the Mission operate. In fact, it appears money wasn't even considered so much a factor in Board decisions. One missionary tells of being sent on a survey trip all the way down the Mackenzie River area in 1956. There was not even one missionary or friend along the way with whom he could lodge until Aklavik. Yet it seemed the Board had no plans to give him money to help with costs of the trip. Finally, one Board member suggested that the missionary be given 90 dollars to cover expenses.

## **POLICY REVISED**

In 1952 the workers' monthly allowance was raised to \$40 per missionary but, for the most part, it wouldn't make a big difference because only a portion of that amount was coming in. A policy change was being called for. At the Workers' Conference that year it was decided that missionaries should go out and "raise their own support." The Mission's General Fund, which by then was also paying the operating costs of an airplane, could no longer afford to subsidize the missionaries' salaries. It was acknowledged by all that there would be more active faith taking place when the workers were "praying it in" for themselves.

The change did not come easily and for several years, while the issue was still being grappled with, the Mission continued to subsidize those workers in desperate need. It was not until 1957 that the new policy was fully implemented. A report to Mission members that year said, "...The majority of the missionaries expressed their willingness to trust the Lord for their support, and they were in favour of the Mission not taking anything from the General Fund for that purpose."<sup>28</sup>

A personalized support system was begun which continues to the present. Allowance rates are published and, from time to time, are adjusted to keep pace with the cost of living. Allowances are dependent upon designated funds received and cannot exceed the established rate. Rates are set that will enable the missionary to live and to minister -- for that, too, costs money. And to keep missionaries relating well to those they minister to, it is a level neither far above (or, in

some cases, below) the average income in the Native community.

## **UNDERPAID MISSIONARIES?**

Financially, missionaries are often put in a special category. “It’s alright if they’re underpaid -- they’re missionaries.” That idea is fairly widespread, says one leading authority on world missions.<sup>29</sup> Whether that attitude is common or not, it can’t be denied that some in NCEM (and in other missions) have been underpaid (or not paid at all).

Missionaries have found, though, that payment is not necessarily measured in dollars -- true rewards are counted in a much more valuable currency. One missionary described it this way: “When you hear someone say, ‘If it wasn’t for you I wouldn’t know the Lord today,’ then you know you’re not underpaid!”

## **HOUSING**

Until the mid-1970's, the provision of housing by the Mission helped to keep the cost of living down for workers. But it was getting increasingly difficult for the Mission’s General Fund to carry the financial load of housing construction and repair in so many locations. In 1974 the ownership of dwellings was transferred to individual missionaries, and from then on the workers would be responsible for their own housing costs.

The change was not without some vibrations. Some thought that the new housing policy would make missionaries less willing to move when requested. And some missionaries probably didn’t see any benefits in becoming home-owners. But as fairly as possible the transactions were made, dependent on how long the missionary had served, the estimated value of the dwelling, and the value of building improvements the missionaries themselves had made.

Overall, the new housing policy proved satisfactory. One acknowledged oversight, though, was that, because property in some communities has now become very difficult to acquire, it would have benefitted the Mission to have retained these assets. In recent years in NCEM’s Eastern-Arctic Field, the Mission has again built and assumed ownership of a few houses, a primary reason being that individual missionaries simply could not afford the high cost. (Missionaries living in NCEM-owned housing there, and in other locations, are responsible for rental payments.)

## **THE “GENERAL”**

While these policy changes required individual workers to exercise faith for their own financial needs, the Mission has also been totally dependent on God’s provision corporately. Though the General Fund hadn’t subsidized workers salaries since 1957, and though it would no longer bear the brunt of opening new stations, the Fund would still come under much stress in the following years. Administrative costs such as travel, printing and postage would soar, due in part to economic inflation. Different than most missions, NCEM was not deducting any amount at all from workers’ support income to cover these costs.

There were no administrative deductions from workers' salaries ... but there were many reminders to the missionaries of the benefits they received from the General Fund! In 1986, for instance, the General Fund had paid out over \$63,000 for the employees' share in Unemployment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan. Many workers had all along been voluntarily giving to the General Fund, but in 1990 the "3% Program" was begun -- the amount that all workers would return to the General Fund, especially to help cover the administrative costs directly related to employment regulations.

## **THROUGH PRAYER**

While missionaries may choose how straightforwardly they make their personal needs known, the Mission itself has made very few general appeals for funds since the support policy change in the 1950's. Very few times since then have the needs of the General Fund been mentioned to the supporting public, though the Fund is essential to the continuation of the work. Except for a few occasions in the first decades, when property and equipment were purchased "on time," never has the Mission borrowed funds from outside sources. If the Mission didn't have it, it didn't spend it.

It is God who has supplied over the years, but it has not been without much prayer and waiting. At one point in the mid-1980's the General Fund was \$20,000 "in the red." "We wanted to get [out of the red] by the end of December and I prayed and prayed about it," recalls then Secretary-Treasurer, Bill Dyck.

Bill tells about reading a book from Wycliffe Bible Translators, and how they had trusted God for a huge need ... millions of dollars. "I remember I read that book one evening ... and I couldn't sleep. I knelt down by my couch in the living room and said, 'Lord, you did it there. Why can't you do it for us?'"

Bill remembers praying and pleading for a long time that night until he got a sudden sense of peace. "The Lord assured me that the \$20,000 would come," he says. And even though December 31st was fast approaching, and he was plagued by all kinds of doubts and fears in the following days, he kept believing that that amount would come.

"It was right on December 24th, in the morning," recalls Bill. "I was at the office opening mail ... and all of a sudden I yelled out, 'Praise the Lord! We got it!'" "A cheque for exactly \$20,000 had been sent by a Saskatchewan businessman. "That was wonderful!" says Bill. "We were out of the red by the end of the year!"

Yet the challenge continues. With the ever present need to economize, the Mission's leadership has sought to keep in touch with God's priorities. NCEM is, in fact, reaching a very expensive mission field. Villages are small, and distances are great; and there is a very high cost of living on some stations. But, as one NCEM leader put it, "Jesus did not say, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel only if it's not expensive.'"30

## **MINUTE-MEN**

Much of God's gracious provision to NCEM has been due to the tremendous source of encouragement and supply provided by the Mission's "Minute Men." Since 1960, when the program began, Christian friends, young and old, have helped supply crucial ministry needs.

Minute-Men are men, women, boys and girls who have covenanted to help with a gift of at least one dollar whenever the "call" goes out (to a maximum of three times per year). Thousands of dollars have poured in to meet various needs such as Bible school building construction, television studio equipment, and travelling costs for evangelistic teams. The largest response to a Minute-Man appeal came in 1994 when \$105,000 was raised to purchase the Timber Bay Bible Centre.

## **STILL JUST TRUSTING GOD**

The Mission's first workers went north "just trusting God." The first administration operated and expanded "just trusting God." In 1996, with an annual budget of over 3 and-a-half million dollars, that's how the Mission is still operating. Other than God's promises, there are no guarantees.

God is the One who supplies, and it seems most often He uses His people. Missionaries are often touched and humbled by the continual gifts from many dear saints to the work. They are not unaware that a gift represents a portion of one's life. Sometimes it comes at great sacrifice. Missionary Marshall Calverley wrote the following account in 1956:

*One Sunday morning after presenting the need of funds to complete work on an aircraft I was assembling, an old lady with love for the Lord just shining in her face, came to me. She asked if I could call around to her house as she had something she wished to give me.*

*I called a day or two later and was shown up the stairs to a small room on the top floor. After greeting me, she handed me a ring and said, "I don't have any money to give you for your airplane, but please take this ring and sell it."*

*I didn't know what to do nor what to say, for I knew something of the way she did without things we would think necessities, so that she could give to the Lord. I took the ring at her insistence and trusted that the Lord would make this widow's sacrifice bear fruit. I went almost immediately to a jeweller's store and asked them to put a value on the ring.*

*After looking at it carefully, the jeweller said, "It's a very old ring and is out of style now; however, there is gold in it and I would be willing to pay you ten dollars for it." I thought of the old lady sitting in her room without even her ring now, and felt sure the Lord would put a higher value than ten dollars on such a sacrifice. So I kept the ring. I carried it around in my pocket for some time, and then one evening while talking to some friends, I happened to take the ring out and told them the whole story. They were quite moved by it and agreed that ten dollars was too small an amount for such a sacrifice.*

*The days went on and I continued working on the plane, trusting the Lord to supply the money as*

*the bills came in. One night the electrical engineer said, "I've finished the wiring and would like to get my money as soon as possible." I had agreed to pay him 150 dollars when he was finished. Now the time had come and I didn't have a dollar of it. However, I said I would have his money for him in the morning. I simply couldn't see how I could get that much money overnight, but I prayed about it.*

*On my way to the airport the next morning (without the money), I was accompanied by an acquaintance whom I was giving a lift part way out. As she got out of the car she handed me an envelope and hurried away. As soon as I could I pulled over to the side of the road and opened it. There inside was exactly 150 dollars! She had known absolutely nothing of the need for that amount. I praised the Lord and paid the electrician.*

*A short time later I saw the lady who had given me the money and she said, "The night you told us the story of that old lady's ring I made up my mind to sell my car and give the proceeds to the Lord."*

*As far as I know, that car was the only possession she had. Later I went to that lonely room again and visited the widow who had made the first sacrifice, and told her the story of how the Lord had used her ring. She wept for joy. I still have the ring, her offering to the Lord, and I trust that He will continue to multiply it and bless this offering to the salvation of many souls.<sup>31</sup>*

## **MISSIONARY TEAMWORK: WHEN GOD GETS THE GLORY**

With missionary teamwork the theme of this chapter, it seems fitting to conclude with an illustration of how lives are touched when it is practised. After all, the NCEM team wasn't formed just to be a team. Its purpose is to reach people. The following is from a missionary's report written in 1978:

Tony, a Chipewyan Indian from Wollaston Lake, Saskatchewan, attended some Bible studies with missionaries from the Continental Mission. He had also heard the Word in his own language from Bud Elford.

Because of alcohol Tony landed in Ile-a-la-Crosse at a treatment centre. Edwin Heal, missionary from Buffalo Narrows, visited him, greeting him in Chipewyan and giving him a Christian paper.

Under conviction of the Holy Spirit, Tony phoned long distance to Bud Elford in Cold Lake for help. Because of the impassable roads Bud couldn't get in to visit him. However, Albert Heal (Edwin's son) was able to fly in his small plane and visit Tony. Tony also met Georgina (Heal) Hill who work(ed) at Ile-a-la-Crosse. An Indian believer from Buffalo Narrows also went to visit Tony and shared his personal testimony of deliverance from sin.

These are the contacts that Tony has had with the Gospel. He knows at this point that all Christians say the same things about Jesus Christ. He also knows they care enough about his soul to travel long distances at considerable expense to tell him about their Lord.<sup>32</sup>

As this report shows, God can use many of His servants to minister in one person's life. Sometimes it's humbling. Missionaries have told of hearing Native people give their testimony. Thinking that they were the ones who had led them to the Lord, the missionaries are sometimes shocked to hear someone else's name mentioned!

On the other hand, sometimes years later missionaries hear how they've led people to the Lord when they have no recollection of it at all. But that's part of being "labourers together." It seems God can do more when we're more concerned that He gets the glory!

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NOTES: 1--Collie's Corner: A Collection; 2--Northern Lights magazine, issue #364; 3--NLs #327; 4--Labourers Together newsletter, issue #1; 5--LTs #1; 6--LTs #1; 7--LTs #15; 8--LTs #1; 9--LTs #1; 10--LTs #25; 11--LTs #14; 12--LTs #1; 13--NLs #171; 14--LTs #198; 15--LTs #445; 16--LTs #55; 17--LTs #19; 18--LTs #206; 19--LTs #211; 20--NCEM brochure, 1952; 21--LTs #205; ???/// 22--NLs #404; /// 23--NLs #363; 24--NLs #400; 25--NLs #386; 26--Mission Today magazine 1994 (Berry Publishing Services, Inc.); 27--LTs #22; 28--LTs #104; 29--Myths About Missions, by Horace L. Fenton (IVP); 30--NLs #374; 31--NLs #122; 32--NLs #352.

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*The original printing of Light on the Horizon included photos with captions, and text boxes. Here is text from some of them:*

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## ORGANIZATION BEGINNINGS

### The Little Mission with the Big Name

"...and in June 1946 the little Mission with the big name was born -- Northern Canada Evangelical Mission. We would have added 'Interdenominational Fundamental,' but we didn't want an 'IF' ... and how would one ever get all that on a cheque?!"

--Stan Collie (from Collie's Corner: A Collection)

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## LABOURERS TOGETHER

Labourers Together newsletters of past years illustrate both the privileges and responsibilities of serving with a Mission family. This note from Issue #29 (March 1951) speaks of accountability:

"We have been checking over the report cards for 1950 and it is noticed that when two (single) workers are together they state 'Please refer to M... 's card.' It has been decided that when there are two workers and they go visiting together, or when counting the number of visitors to their home, the number should be divided between them; i.e., should you both visit 20 homes together put down ten on each card. If you visit by yourself you then should add this to the ten, or the number you have. This is true also for the



services held and total attendance.”

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## **CONFERENCE**

Workers’ Conferences highlighted reports from the fields, along with testimonies of Native Christians.

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## **CONFERENCE**

“Over thar, over thar...”: Missionary Leslie Garrett’s “Jonah’s Song” became a favorite Conference feature.

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## **CONFERENCE**

At the Workers’ Conferences held in Meadow Lake, many friends from the area joined the missionaries for evening and Sunday services.

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## **BOARDS**

NCEM’s General Directors:

Stan Collie  
1946 - 1958

Ray Bradford  
1958 - 1962

John Penner  
1962 - 1967

Phil Howard  
1967 - 1974

John Thiessen  
1974 - 1980

L.W. (Bud) Elford  
1980 - 1988

Carroll Hill  
1988 - 1995

Philip Knight  
1996 -

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## **ADMINISTRATION**

“The Board” in 1959: (left to right) Stan Collie, John Penner, Ray Bradford, Art Tarry. For many years administrative positions (except for Secretary-Treasurer) were not considered full-time jobs, but were carried on by men with field responsibilities.

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## **HEADQUARTERS**

One of NCEM’s buildings on the Meadow Lake Headquarters site where “sawdust” was the word. It was fuel for the furnace and cook stoves, and it insulated the building which was used for Language School, student and staff residences. When the building was being torn down, it was discovered that sawdust in the attic had been moved to one end where certain “mk’s” had piled it four feet high to play on -- that explained why some rooms were frostier than others!

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## **HEADQUARTERS**

NCEM’s Headquarters in the city of Prince Albert, in use from 1965 to 1979.

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## **HEADQUARTERS**

Headquarters site 5 miles west of Prince Albert (office on left and Printshop on right). The 1.8-acre lot allowed room for TV studio (located behind office) and Printshop extension and chapel/workshop (to the right).

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## **RECRUITMENT**

NCEMers say that finding God’s will was not so difficult after they made the big decision -- “Am I really prepared to follow God’s leading?” Larry Linton tells of being “button-holed” by NCEM representative, Marshall Calverley, who was visiting his Bible school. When Larry asked Marshall what he had to offer him, Marshall said, “A log cabin in Rupert House, Quebec ... and 500 people who don’t know the Lord.”

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## **RECRUITS**

Not all missionaries have white feet: Noriko Suzuki’s ministry to the Inuit (see chap. 3) was preceded by a commissioning service in Japan.

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## **TRAINING CANDIDATES**

Two missionary candidates in the early 1980's at IMCO’s Missionary Development Program. Besides intellectually and spiritually challenging sessions, candidate training has also included enjoyable times of fellowship.

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## **Support Policies**

“Just last night I was speaking to Art Wellwood at La Loche on the phone on a few business matters and I found that the hardest thing for me to tell him was that there was no allowance whatever this month. You will note that the percentage this month is nil. Beloved, we are remembering you in prayer at this time, particularly for your financial needs. I certainly appreciate the attitude Art took when I told him. He said, “Well, the Lord knows what is best for us. We hardly know how we will get along but the Lord does not allow any burden to come along greater than we can bear.”

In 1957 missionaries began “raising their own support” (the Mission has not subsidized workers’ income since then). Previous to this, monthly allowances were pooled and paid from the Mission’s General Fund which was sometimes quite low. The above is quoted from the Labourers Together Newsletter (Nov. ‘50), written by Secretary-Treasurer, Art Tarry.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

# MISSIONARY LIFE: IS IT REALLY LIKE THIS?

The story is told of some blind men who were allowed a close-up “look” at an elephant following a circus show. One who got hold of the tail described the elephant as like a rope -- long and flexible. One who had hold of a leg was sure that the elephant was like a tree -- strong and immovable. Really, neither of them was wrong. And neither was telling the whole story.

When people read and hear of missionaries’ experiences, they may get impressions as diverse. That which has been a significant part of one missionary’s life may not have affected another’s at all. Perhaps, in part, that’s what makes their stories intriguing.

This chapter has been designed to offer some glimpses from the unique lives of NCEM missionaries:

### ISOLATION INCONVENIENCES

Especially for some missionaries has been the challenge of living in geographically isolated locations. In the early 1950's, Marshall Calverley wrote this about it:

*One of the hardest things a missionary to either Africa or the North has to endure is isolation. He is cut off completely and for long periods of time without mail.*

*I recall while working in the North [i.e., previous to his missionary service] travelling 500 miles by dog-team along the shores of the Hudson Bay for one bag of mail, and thought it worth the effort ... Mail service is considered good in the North if monthly deliveries are made by the mail plane. Some of our missionaries have only five mails a year guaranteed.<sup>1</sup>*

For missionaries serving in the 1990's, even the most remotest communities will have mail service at least weekly. But the challenges of living in isolation remain. David Loops tells what it’s like:

*The village of Wollaston Lake is somewhat isolated. The nearest town lies 300 miles to the south. Travelling out of Wollaston involves a 31-mile boat ride (or ice road in the winter) followed by 270 miles of gravel road. During a portion of the year, travelling in and out is possible only by aircraft.*

*Living in a remote settlement has its own virtues as well as difficulties. Among the difficulties, which are few, is the inability to obtain supplies either readily or easily. Often the only store in town is out of stock of what is needed. The store may not stock the needed item at all, and if it*

*does, will charge an exorbitant price.*

*As a missionary in this type of setting, one finds himself surrounded by personal supply needs, and the needs of others. Dealing with the constant state of “need” one begins to realize and experience several reactions. Among them is an initial sense of frustration, irritation and helplessness.*

*Recently a local friend came over to borrow some medium-size nails. Such a treasure as nails is often jealously guarded, but his project required all the nails available from my meagre supply on hand. Of course my immediate thought was “What am I going to do when I need nails ... probably get frustrated, that’s what!” But then there was the gentle reminder to lend and not to be concerned about tomorrow’s repayment, if any. So as unto the Lord, the nails were given away.*

*A few short days later a contractor was packing away supplies and asked if any nails were needed. “Here,” he said, “Take these. I don’t want to carry them out.” And there, in abundant supply were 100 pounds of medium size nails.*

*One summer, while recovering from knee surgery, the doctor recommended that I use an exercise bicycle. Now, exercise bicycles are scarcely a common item in the North, so we prayed and asked the Lord for an exercise bike. The next day we went to the store for some small items and there, on the bulletin board, was an advertisement for a good used exercise bike ... at a reasonable cost! The local RCMP officer was moving away and had just put up the sign.*

*Can we depend on God to supply all that is needed in seemingly impossible situations? The answer comes back a resounding “Yes!” We never need to be uncertain about going wherever God may send us. The above two examples could be multiplied countless times with the same result. God is good and dependable; we can count on it just as God’s people have been doing for centuries and continue to do today.*

*“The days of the blameless are known to the Lord, and their inheritance will endure forever. In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty” (Ps. 37:18,19).<sup>2</sup>*

## **LIFE & DEATH**

In the earlier years, isolation meant more than just inconvenience. Missionaries have lost children at birth -- lives that may have been spared had they been closer to a hospital. Roy and Marjorie Markel were one couple who experienced such a loss. Years later they shared that because of the ordeal they felt closer to the Lord. And they felt closer to the Indian people, too, for the loss of a child at birth was an all-too-common occurrence for their Native friends.

Today’s urban Christian facing an emergency may as easily dial “911” as call upon God for help. Many NCEM workers, however, have faced situations where there was no one but God to call upon.

One missionary wife recalls times when ministry duties would call her husband away from home and she would be left alone with three kids. There were no police, no doctors or nurses, no roads out and flights only twice a month, no phone, no radio contact. Fearful thoughts reminded her that there were people in the village influenced by evil spirits. She describes those as times when she learned to rely totally on God. "I couldn't rely on my husband's spirituality then," she says.

## **FEELING FAR FROM HOME**

Isolation cannot be measured merely in miles, kilometres or mail service. Living isolated from other Christian believers can bring deep loneliness. Most Christians enjoy fellowship with other believers at least weekly. Not so for some NCEM missionaries who live in locations where fellowship can't easily be found.

Needless to say, it is a special treat for these missionaries to attend church while out on furlough or holidays. One missionary, when filling out a visitor's card at a church he was visiting, wrote "yes" in the blank space following "Home Church."

Missionaries all over the world -- including Canada -- struggle with loneliness. It isn't easy, but many testify that God has sustained them through times when friends and family seemed so far away. Knowing you're where God wants you makes a big difference, though. One missionary couple put it this way: "Our station is our home. We've never thought of somewhere else as home."

Of course, using the word "isolated" reflects the missionary's perspective as an outsider. To Native Canadians who have grown up there, these communities are home. But even they, after having moved away and returned, will acknowledge some feelings of isolation, especially in the villages not accessible by road.

## **INDEBTED**

To give the impression that the missionaries are "stranded" out on their stations certainly doesn't give a true picture. Missionaries have often been graciously cared for by local Native people ... people who were not necessarily believers nor sympathetic to the Gospel.

Ron Knightly tells about feeling indebted to his Native neighbours who lent their help when he really needed it. But how could he repay them?

*One fall I had cut some logs for a new cabin. They were then peeled and pulled down to the river. Then came the cold, wet job of tying them together into one large raft in order to float them fifteen miles down-river to the village. There were two fellows helping me. As it was getting late, the two fellows decided to go for supper and they would catch up to me later as I followed the log boom down the river in my boat.*

*I had a tin can filled with oil and rags burning on the raft offering some light so that I wouldn't run into any river boats in the dark. Everything seemed to be going well as we drifted down the*

river.

*Then things began to happen. The light went out on the raft and I couldn't seem to re-light it. When I went to get back into my boat from the raft, it had drifted away! I was about to jump into the river and swim after it, but I had been in the cold water a lot that day and thought maybe I'd get cramps.*

*Anyway, the boat was now lost in the darkness. Moreover, the raft was now drifting toward the wrong side of the river. There was nothing to do but drift along on the logs and wait for the other fellows to find me. Finally, I heard their outboard motor in the distance, but it was too dark for them to see me. As they came closer, I began yelling at them, but the noise of their motor drowned out my voice and they went right by me. I continued to drift down-river.*

*By now it was after midnight and I was getting close to the village. With no boat to bring my logs ashore, I would have to try to yell for help. As I yelled, the sled dogs of the village started barking, which made it harder for anyone to hear me. Finally, I heard an Indian lady yelling at the dogs to quieten down. After awhile there was the sound of an outboard motor. It was the chief of the village and another man. They came out and helped me pull my logs ashore.*

*Early the next morning another man and I set out in a borrowed boat to look for mine which had been drifting all night. We found it 40 miles away still drifting down the river. As we headed back home in the two boats, I wondered how I would be able to pay the chief and the other fellows who had rescued me and pulled my logs ashore. Then, up ahead, I saw two caribou swimming the river. A thought struck me that this could be the solution. This could be divine provision! A caribou would be good payment for the help I had received.*

*I had a gun in the boat, but as a non-Native I wasn't allowed to shoot a caribou. "So why not take it home alive?" I thought. I had my friend take his boat ashore and we both went after the caribou in my boat. He ran the boat while I made a lasso and threw it over the antlers of the smaller caribou. I then proceeded to turn it upside down and tie its feet ... with much churning of water! Then I rolled the caribou into the boat.*

*When we arrived at the village I went to the chief's house and told him that I had a live caribou in the boat for him. He laughed, thinking I was joking. But out of curiosity he did come down to the shore ... and gratefully accepted his payment!<sup>3</sup>*

## **EMBARRASSING MOMENTS**

It's hard for the new missionary, especially, to know what is the culturally acceptable thing to do. Some embarrassing situations have developed as missionaries became acquainted -- one way or another -- with local Native traditions. Missionary Virgie Mueller told about one ... or two:

*I wouldn't want to miss a feast. I love them. I guess that's the reason I got myself into some embarrassing situations when my husband and I first went into the James Bay area of Quebec as missionaries.*

*We were opening a new mission station and were not familiar with the customs of the people. And since we were the first white family to move into that area, the Indian people were not familiar with our customs.*

*When the first feast came along, the invitation was, "They want you to come to the feast." I went along as would be our custom. I really should have known better since I came from the Deep South where we distinguish clearly whether we mean "you" (singular) or "you all" (plural).*

*Imagine how I felt when we were seated with the chief, councillors and other men of distinction and there were no other women present at the tables! Several times during the meal, ladies came to the doorway and smiled broadly. I smiled in return and pretended everything was fine. The next time I waited until I received my own invitation to eat with the important women!*

*But as time went by we noticed a change. Women were being seated at the first sittings at the feasts. I wondered if my ignorance had started to change a custom!*

*At one of the very earliest wedding feasts we attended, we were surprised to have no less than 13 cakes passed around. I do like cake and took three or four pieces but after this I politely refused.*

*I did notice the others, though, take one piece of every cake. What they didn't eat at the feast they took home. This was their custom, but we didn't know it at the time. We were trying to be careful not to offend our hostess but we, too, would have loved to enjoy a piece or two of Indian cake the next morning.<sup>4</sup>*

## **THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT**

The missionary's goal, his purpose for being there, is to communicate. He may find, though, that even without a major language barrier, his intentions can be misunderstood. Just on the field a few months, Wayne Friesen saw people responding to his Bible lesson ... but not the way he'd hoped!

*One Sunday I thought I would use a certain illustration to bring out the lesson from a Bible text. There were 33 pupils in class that day ranging in age from two to 65 years of age. A fellow missionary had used the illustration with great success and so as a new missionary I was looking for the same results, if not better. I explained to my students that a dirty house can only be cleaned up by removing the dirt. Likewise a dirty life can only be cleaned up by removing the sin through the cleansing power of the Blood of Christ.*

*I dramatically presented this illustration. With great optimism I was expecting results similar to those in "Peace Child" (the book by well known missionary-author Don Richardson).*

*Well, it wasn't long after Sunday school that someone came to the door to borrow our rake. And it seemed that a lot of the people started right in to clean up their houses and yards. We didn't mind seeing them cleaning up their homes ... but that wasn't the result I had hoped for!<sup>5</sup>*



## HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Whether or not a Native community has seen an evangelical missionary before, he or she will be assigned a “role.” In the minds of the local people, he may be thought of as a Protestant priest, as a religious social worker -- or whatever -- but he or she will be a “something” to them.

Though the missionary would simply want to be known as a fellow human ... a servant of Christ, teaching and exemplifying the Good News ... on occasion local people will have unreasonably high expectations. At least that’s how it seemed to Nils Folkvord, an early missionary in La Ronge, Saskatchewan:

*“This morning the dog was barking out by the road. [There was] a drunk lady walking by and talking to our dog. She was heard saying, “You are a missionary’s dog. You won’t bite.”*

*I thought to myself, “They expect a lot from the missionaries -- even the dog should behave!” Our dog may not always behave as he should but, what is more important -- are we always living for the Lord? Can people see Christ in us? ... If people expect much kindness from the missionary’s dog, what do they expect from us?<sup>6</sup>*

## LOSING YOUR TESTIMONY

The missionary thought he had blown it. All his efforts to show that being a Christian makes a difference seemed futile now that he had destroyed his testimony. Chris Friesen writes about it:

*“Chris,” Wayne called as he hurried in through the door. “One of the men asked me to go hunting with him. It’s just what I’ve been waiting for.” He grabbed his gun, some bullets and was gone.*

*“That’s nice,” I thought. “This is a good chance for him to get to know this fellow better.” We’d been on this field for about a year and were finding it difficult to gain the friendship of these shy people.*

*The afternoon passed and I was preparing supper when the door slowly opened and in walked my dejected husband, dragging his feet up the stairs.*

*“Did you shoot anything?” I asked excitedly, as game was scarce in the area.*

*“Yes,” he replied. “I shot a marten.”*

*“Well, why do you look so glum?” I put in. “A marten is good, isn’t it?”*

*“Martens are out of season,” he replied, adding, “You’d better pack my striped pyjamas, honey. We don’t have money to pay the heavy fine, so I’ll have to go to jail.”*

*Wayne explained to me that as they had started out he had said to the Lord, “You send the game*

*and I'll do the shooting." Wayne was a new missionary and a young man and he was eager to prove himself to the Native fellows who had come along on this hunting trip. The group had been walking some distance apart when Wayne sighted the marten. He hollered to his companion, "Do you want a marten?"*

*When there was no answer he took aim and the deed was done.*

*It was then that he realized the marten was out of season. His Indian friends could have shot it, but Wayne, being non-Native, could not. Now he was filled with remorse and self-condemnation.*

*So, now at home, he further explained to his wife. "There's no other way out. I'll just have to turn myself in. He shook his head sadly. "Think of it! Me, a missionary, shooting an animal out of season. I'm not capable of teaching the Indian people about God when I can't even obey the law. I'm a disgrace to the Mission and to God. I just can't see anything good coming out of this."*

*He slowly turned and walked down the road to the police station. Wayne and the policemen were just beginning to form a friendship. Wayne related his story.*

*"What?" the officer exclaimed, putting his hands over his ears. "Don't tell me that. I'm a cop." The policeman, because of their friendship, didn't want to become involved in this affair. However, now that he knew, the law must prevail. The game warden was sent for and soon arrived in the village.*

*"Where's the evidence?" asked the warden.*

*At the outset Wayne had given the marten to the Indian fellows, but it had changed hands so many times that it couldn't be traced. Anyway, the shock of Wayne turning himself in was more than the policeman or warden could understand. After deep thought the warden turned to Wayne with a strict reprimand, "Don't do it again."*

*About a week later, when Wayne was just getting over the whole ordeal, we heard through the raisin-vine (we don't get that much fresh fruit up north) that a certain police officer had been very impressed that Wayne hadn't tried to hide what he'd done. He said, "That preacher sure practices what he preaches."*

*So we learned again "that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose." We learned also how weak we are, yet how reassuring to know that God can use us even through our human mistakes.<sup>7</sup>*

## **ANOTHER OUTLAW MISSIONARY?**

Speaking of high expectations of the missionary ... surely no NCEMer other than Wayne Friesen would have a run-in with the law. Or would they?

After visiting a home on the Frog Lake Indian Reserve, missionary Harold Roberts was asked by the family if he would give them a ride to nearby Elk Point. It seemed that their grandchild had just become quite sick and needed medical attention.

Harold knew that some of them had been drinking, and was not too surprised when one of them asked him if they could bring a case of beer along. Of course he said no, but that he would give them a ride. They seemed to agree to that, and began to load some of their belongings and groceries into Harold's Volkswagen van.

"On the way home they were quite gracious to me," says Harold. "They were giving me garlic sausage to eat and Coke to drink." He didn't think too much of the clanking of bottles coming from the back seats.

"It was night-time and dark and I couldn't see that they had opened a case of beer and were drinking," says Harold. But somebody on the reserve had an idea of what was happening and had phoned the RCMP.

So when they arrived at Elk Point, an RCMP officer was up ahead with his lights flashing. One of Harold's passengers yelled, "Step on the gas and get out of here!" Of course, by this time Harold had caught on to what was happening.

As the Mountie came to the driver's side of the van, one fellow slipped out the other side and disappeared. The Mountie soon found the open case of beer and asked if Harold didn't know what was going on. He then informed Harold, "You're responsible and I have to lay a charge."

And he did. Then he turned to Harold's passengers and scolded them. He said, "I don't blame this man if he never takes you anywhere again after doing something like this to him."

In about a week Harold was in court. The judge was a local farmer and the policeman was the only other person there. The two discussed the whole case and then the policeman said, "I recommend that you give this man the leanest sentence that you can."

It happened to be a \$29 fine. But it was much more than Harold had. They gave him a week to pay.

"The following week one of our supporters sent us a cheque that just almost exactly covered it," says Harold. But it wasn't until many years later that the missionary told the supporter what he had used the money for.<sup>8</sup>

A humorous incident in retrospect, but one that is tempered with the deep and widespread sorrow and destruction caused by alcoholism. Harold later learned that these people had fed tobacco to the child to make her sick, to justify their request for the ride to Elk Point.

## **NATIVE CHILDREN: YOU JUST HAVE TO LOVE THEM**

Whether or not the missionaries have children of their own, they'll have to get used to kids being around, and learn to love them. Canada's Native population is young -- on average a lot younger than the non-Native population -- and that means lots of kids!

The missionary can focus on ministry to adults, and try to "put up" with the kids. Or he can see the children for what they are worth -- individuals just as valuable to God as any adult, but with a whole life ahead of them ... to waste, or to glorify the Lord.

Joe and Helen Pope are among those whose ministry confirmed the value of these young ones. In this 1968 report from Cumberland House, Saskatchewan, they were praising the Lord for the Mission's new house with a full basement which they could use for their children's meetings. "Full" was right! Most of the village's kids must have been there.

Is the time and money spent worth it all? With the first week of classes finished, and without the use of posters or special advertising, some 90 children came!

It was really good to sing the songs, hymns and choruses with them again and they really take in the Word of God. Each time they come is an opportunity to present the Lord Jesus Christ. It is thrilling to see 15 and 16 year-old boys coming again as this is a critical age group in which to keep their interest.<sup>9</sup>

## **TRAPLINE EVANGELISM**

If NCEM's ministry is unique among the Church's world-wide missionary endeavour, it is in part because the people to be reached are so scattered. While the urbanization of Native Canadians has changed the scene somewhat, NCEM's outreach has primarily been directed to Native communities with relatively small populations ... and spread out across one of the largest countries in the world.

Northern Native communities may be small and scattered. But to reach all the people the missionary must travel even farther, for some Native people spend much of their time out on traplines. Carroll Hill tells of some of his trapline evangelism experiences while serving in northern Alberta.

*My only means of transportation was two strong legs and a pair of good boots. The trip was to cover 60 miles, mostly over rough terrain.*

*It was March and small creeks were already accepting icy water from the higher slopes touched by the sun. Whenever I had to cross a stream I'd take off my boots and socks, roll up my pant legs and walk over. It was pretty cold but at least I had something dry to put on at the other side.*

*The first day I covered 20 miles and stopped at the cabin of a 75 year-old Indian man. This year he was alone. Previously he had brought along his wife. However, she had become blind. Last year he had tied a rope to her wrist and the other end to the cabin so she wouldn't wander off and get lost in the woods while he was out checking his traps.*

*We spoke Cree together. He enjoyed the visit and we studied the Bible by the light of an oil lamp. In the morning the old man walked five miles with me to show me where to find the next trapper's cabin.*

*The Indians on the trapline are always glad for company. Some of them spend weeks without seeing another person. Very often they are surprised that a missionary would search them out and visit them back in the bush.*

*On the second night I stayed with another Indian man who was also alone on his trapline. I gave him some Cree literature and we studied the Cree Bible together. It was this man that took me to a small isolated stream. No sport fisherman had ever visited that area and the fish were plentiful. I don't know whether it was in appreciation of me visiting him or not, but as we stood by that stream he showed me the secret of flipping fish out of the water with a stick.*

*On the next night I camped with a family. Four other trappers from nearby came and we had a good Gospel service together.*

*The next day I moved on, still travelling by foot around frozen lakes until I had visited 15 trappers' cabins.*

*What a joy to walk into an Indian's cabin or tent, eat the food they eat, talk the language they talk and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup>*

## **ELDERLY AND OUT-OF-THE-WAY**

Regrettably, it is often the elderly in our societies who are overlooked and neglected. And when they live in out-of-the-way places it takes extra effort to show them that they are important. Owen Salway wrote this episode from missionaries Ed and Anne Heal's ministry to the elderly:

*Grandma Sigurdson was a Cree Indian -- small and frail. Most of her waking hours were spent sitting on the edge of her bed. A huge overgrown tree stood like a sentinel in front of the log house where she and her husband lived. Across the lake, a good mile from the rest of the settlement, their home had its periods of isolation according to the whim of the weather.*

*Missionary Anne Heal spent many happy hours visiting in that home. "Grandma," as everyone referred to her, was 84 years old and though almost completely bedridden, was always happy. Anne often accompanied the settlement nurse as they visited the old lady and ministered to her physical and spiritual needs.*

*"The nurse was very faithful in looking after Grandma," said Anne. "She would go by canoe in summer and dog team or on foot in the winter. One day Grandma told the nurse, "My only hope is in the Lord."*

*Then one day Grandma came down with pneumonia and they brought her across the lake to the nursing station.*

*“What a blessing we got her across the water when we did,” related Anne. “Freeze-up was starting and ice was already forming on the water. A little later and she would have been isolated -- cut off from help.”*

*Several loved ones sat at Grandma’s bedside but it wasn’t long before she slipped away to be with the Lord. Said the nurse, “I’ve never seen anyone die so peacefully.”*

*Grandpa Sigurdson, still unsaved, began to think about spiritual things when he saw how his wife was prepared for death.*

*“But a problem arose,” put in Anne. “The cemetery was on the other side of the river and it had frozen over with weak ice. We went ahead with the funeral arrangements anyway. The day of the funeral the Lord sent a strong wind. It smashed the ice and made a trail for the five canoes in the funeral procession to go through. When they returned the wind died down and the river froze over until spring.”*

*The following Easter, Anne’s husband, Edwin, went over the lake to visit old Grandpa Sigurdson. He found him just going out to the bush to cut wood.*

*“Why don’t you come over to our place for a visit, Grandpa?” asked Edwin.*

*Grandpa hesitated.*

*“It’s Easter,” put in Edwin. “Come over to our place for dinner.”*

*Grandpa laid down his axe and the two travelled together across the lake.*

*“While I was preparing dinner,” said Anne, “I looked in the living room several times. Grandpa was standing looking at a flannel-graph picture on the wall. He must have looked at that picture for a good 20 minutes. It was a picture of Jesus carrying His cross.*

*Finally he asked, “Why did they do that to Him?”*

*Ed and Anne talked with him about it and explained the way of salvation to him again. This time he seemed to grasp it, and that day he accepted the Lord as his Saviour! “It was a wonderful day,” say the Heals.<sup>11</sup>*

## **IS 60 MILES TOO FAR?**

The missionary can’t sit waiting for people to come to him -- he must go to them. But how far would a missionary travel to visit one couple? Judy Matteson visited a northern field and wrote about it. She says it could be as far as...

*“Well, here’s Baking Powder Creek. Joe’s tent should be here somewhere, perhaps at the end of this trail,” thought missionary Gordon Gruchy as he crested a hill and walked along a ridge. “No, no cabin or tent here. I’ll just end up in a lynx trap or wolf snare if I follow this path.”*

*Back at the car he found one of the tires had gone flat. While jacking up the car, along comes Joe, the man he was looking for. Joe helped him change the tire and then invited the three of us to his place for a cup of tea.*

*I, along with Gordon and his wife, Deone, had travelled 60 miles to visit Joe and Agnes on their trapline. Now Joe led us downstream to a little log-framed tent house where his wife was cooking beaver meat. A row of choice beaver and lynx furs hung over the ridge pole.*

*Agnes served us steaming hot tea while Joe asked, "Where you coming from ... Cassiar?"*

*"No," replied Gordon.*

*"Have you been to Good Hope Lake?"*

*"No, we came down to see you and Agnes," said Gordon.*

*They could hardly believe that anyone would come sixty miles just to see them! Agnes had been at her brother's place some time before when the Gruchy's were having a Bible study. She had stayed behind to study a booklet on the "Four Spiritual Laws." They had sensed her interest but she didn't commit herself to the Lord that day.*

*A few days later she came to the missionaries' house in Watson Lake seeking peace with God. She was unable to sleep because of the concern she had for her soul. That day she put her trust in Christ. Now, in the tent on the trapline, we shared a word of counsel and a time of prayer with her.*

*This dear soul ... so young in Christ and so in need of prayer and fellowship. They are here one week and somewhere else the next on the trapline.*

*A few days following this visit Gordon met Joe on the street in Watson Lake. He came to their house and together they shared the Word of God over a cup of tea. Joe still wasn't ready to commit his life to the Lord, though he did comment on the wonderful change in his wife's life. Once again he expressed his appreciation for our visit to his trapline.<sup>12</sup>*

## **OUT ON THE LAND**

Sixty miles -- too far to go to look for one open heart? Never! Opportunities to witness for Christ can take place anywhere. Time spent with local people means being there with them when they are ready to talk about spiritual concerns. Arlyn VanEnns tells of an evangelistic Bible study ... out on the land:

*The grey, drizzly May morning was about as long-faced as we were, as we trudged over the thick, decaying ice. We carried poles in case we went through the ice. By holding onto the poles we would be able to get out. My friend with me called this day, "Mutchie-keesekow" ... an evil spirit day.*

*As we travelled, we had already consumed our beaver and moose meat, and were down to two muskrats. For our proposed breakfast we hoped to have four fat ducks. We had shot them the night before but had not retrieved them because of the darkness. Now as we went after them, all we found was a bunch of feathers. We discussed the predator's species and again my friend remarked, "Mutchie-keesekow."*

*As we sat warming ourselves by the fire I recalled how, a few hours previous, my friend, having been awakened by his arthritis, felt an urge to discuss spiritual things.*

*Now, sitting by the fire in the morning light, he was happy at my suggestion that we read a chapter of the Bible together. I opened the Bible at John 14 and we took turns reading. After my friend haltingly made it through Verse 6, he stopped for a long time, "I wonder if that means you can confess your sins to God and not have to confess them to a man?"*

*That day this Native man began to have freedom from the religious shackles which had bound him all his life. As we sat there, he added, "We have never had anyone to teach us the Bible before."*

*The Word of God is not always respected in the Native communities in which I've served. One day an elderly woman told me the Bible was full of lies, since it dared to disagree with her. However, as I discussed the Word with my friend that day, I could feel the Spirit of God working.*

*And so that "Mutchie-keesekow" ... evil spirit day, as my friend called it, ended. I preferred to call it a "Holy Spirit Day" instead!<sup>13</sup>*

## **NOT JUST SPIRITUAL NEEDS**

There are those who have criticized evangelical missionaries, saying that they have been concerned only with peoples "souls" ... of working hard to make Christian converts, but not so concerned with the people themselves, their social and physical needs.

It is true that primary to NCEM's existence as a mission is the belief that men and women need, above all else, to receive the gift of eternal life. That is why communication of the Gospel and the establishing of churches is forefront in the Mission's efforts.

It is also true that NCEM has not carried on social programs per se (although the operation of a "children's home" would be considered by some to be of that classification). But while a look at NCEM's 50 years of service won't reveal these kinds of programs, it will reveal people reaching out in love to people ... ministering to their whole person, as Christ would.

Evangelism includes ministering to peoples' "felt" needs and, at a personal level, there are many examples of such service within NCEM. Here Cathy Hill tells of helping someone who received both physical and spiritual food:

*I am reminded of an old Indian man from a reserve on which we worked in the North. He lay*



*dying in the hospital, unable to keep any food on his stomach. He had his sons sign him out of the hospital so he could die at home.*

*That night after my husband had driven him home from the hospital, Carroll mentioned to me that maybe baby food would help the man. My first thought was, “Lord, I can’t give up my baby food. It might be long time before we are able to buy more, and our own baby needs it.”*

*The Lord dealt with me about the issue, and next morning I carefully picked out some cans of baby food that I thought would be best for the man. I took them over to the man’s house and carefully gave him instructions to eat only a little at a time.*

*The next day we found the plan was working, and so gave him more. Before long the man was up and around, to the great surprise of the doctors!*

*Even in his eighties this man was still very much alive and going out to his trapline every spring. He often wrote to us and told us how he is living for the Lord and praying for us.<sup>14</sup>*

Carroll and Cathy Hill wanted what was best for the people among who they were serving. In northern Alberta Carroll helped the people move towards financial independence through a cattle-raising program. On other occasions he helped to secure employment for local Native men on public construction projects.

Avenues of ministry to Native peoples over the years have been diverse. Food, shelter and transportation have been provided countless times by individual workers. Compelled and enabled by the love of Christ, missionaries have reached out in various ways.

## **MEDICAL MISSIONS**

In the Mission’s early years some of the stations had neither educational nor medical services. In 1951, missionary Doris Elliot wrote from Thicket Portage, Manitoba: “I’ve been here for less than two days and already have given medical aid to six people. Pray that God will grant wisdom in this part of the work also.”<sup>15</sup>

In 1954 Cliff and Ingeborg McComb wrote the following from Round Lake, Ontario:

*The load gets pretty heavy at times but it is wonderful how the Lord does undertake. Ingeborg has the school from 9 a.m. to 12 o’clock noon with about 50 enrolled. Besides [there is] the medical work, and that is day and night service when anyone is seriously ill. It’s a little hard to crawl out of bed and walk down to the village when it is cold, but we would never refuse to go.*

*The medical work has been a real source of breaking down barriers and it has been a real testimony to them. Tommie Adams and his wife are keeping the two tiny children of James, the chief’s son who passed away. They stay in the village, so Ingeborg makes formula for them and cares for them when they get sick. Because of this contact the Adams’ send their children to our school, and it increases enrolment considerably, as they have quite a few.*

*One evening, after Bible school was over, Elijah, Albert and Andrew came and began asking questions on the Bible again. Elijah, Albert and another man, called Abel, sat up all night until 4 o'clock to show two men from Sachigo the way of salvation. One man was saved, but does not know much about a separated life. If anyone comes in they sit up hour after hour teaching them the Bible.<sup>16</sup>*

Missionaries have attended to various needs but, as evidenced in the above report, it has not been separated from their primary focus -- reaching people for Christ. But ministering to these many needs could leave the worker exhausted. In the early 1950's Martha (Heppner) VanNortwick wrote about her longing for a good night's sleep:

*"I'm tired tonight, Doris (her ministry partner), and am going to bed." But this was not to be, for no sooner was I sound asleep than a loud knocking was heard at the door. Then the Postmaster's voice: "Please let us in. I've got a man here that's badly hurt."*

*Quickly a lamp was lit and the door unlocked. By this time the porch floor was a bloody mess. First aid was applied to the best of our untrained ability; "doctor books" were searched, as prayers were silently uttered.*

*The patient had a cut on his wrist which he had received in a drunken quarrel with his wife and relatives. He insisted he had only been eating soup and got cut on the bowl, but the foul smell betrayed him. They had all left him to his own fate and we marvelled how God had directed his drunken steps first to the Post Office, thus giving us the help of the Postmaster.*

*It didn't seem to make a difference whether or not the missionary had medical training; they were expected to know what to do. "But," Martha added, "if help can be given, we are able to win their confidence and friendship and, in time, we trust to be able to win them to our Lord and Saviour."<sup>17</sup>*

Feeling inadequate to handle these ongoing medical emergencies, Martha did pursue some basic medical training. Of course, in subsequent years the level of medical care provided by government has improved greatly in these communities.

## **MISSIONARY OR NURSE?**

Regardless of the nature of the task, NCEM maintains that its workers are, first of all, "missionaries." Trained as a nurse, Virgie Mueller gave insight on what it means to submit to God's call to minister as He chooses. In 1972 she wrote:

*As the years slipped by, my nursing friends (from college) became head nurses, operating room supervisors, and one became a director of nurses. All were keeping up with the latest techniques on nursing and newest medications, while I was in an isolated community two hundred miles from a hospital, doing everything but medical work.*

*There I watched a young mother slip into eternity because the flying conditions did not permit an*

*aircraft to evacuate her to a hospital. I saw a young wife's hand torn by a sled dog. I saw a child with a nosebleed that lasted three hours, and I myself gave birth to a baby without a hospital, doctor or medication. More and more my desire was to be involved in helping these people among whom I lived. "Couldn't I serve the Lord more effectively as a nurse?" I reasoned.*

*When my husband and I were transferred to Thicket Portage it seemed my ambition would become a reality. The lady dispensing medicine was untrained and would gladly turn the responsibility over to me. However, one week before we moved in, the government sent in a Nurse's Aid to dispense the medications. (In a community of less than 600, they [would] not hire a R.N.)*

*I was disappointed. I did not understand why the Lord did not permit me to serve in my profession. Isaiah 55:8 came to my mind, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."*

*It meant a time of surrendering my own personal ambitions to the will of God. From time to time I have been able to help various ones in a time of crisis. My husband says my training has kept me from losing my head in emergencies when we have lived in isolation ... Perhaps someday I will be able to devote more time to nursing, but if not, then may it be true in my life that, "I have come to do Thy will, O God."18*

## **A HOME FOR CHILDREN**

Over the years NCEM's efforts related to social concerns have been carried out on a low key and "unorganized" level. Perhaps the only exception was the Montreal Lake Children's Home, which NCEM operated for almost 20 years.

It had its beginnings when missionaries Anne (Koop) Heal and Mary (Kehler) Bartel, who were stationed at Molanosa, Saskatchewan, sought to reach the children in their community for Christ. These ladies could not overlook those who were unwanted and uncared for. Some children were literally left on their doorstep and these missionaries didn't have the heart to turn them away.

Soon their little cabin was full and overflowing. The next year Martha (Heppner) VanNortwick teamed with Anne. The Mission built a bigger house for them, yet the number of children needing a home continued to grow. An extension to their house served only as a temporary remedy.

In June of 1952 the Mission's Board decided to establish a "Christian Home for Neglected Children." The stated purpose of the Home was to: "(A) Seek to win boys and girls to Christ; (B) Care for the body of boys and girls who otherwise have been neglected or who have no home life." Children up to the age of 16 were welcomed and it was decided that "...parents should not be held to a definite financial obligation...."

That same year the Mission began building dormitories at a location just south of Molanosa at the present site of the village of Timber Bay. The ministry soon became known as the Montreal

Lake Children's Home, and NCEM would operate it for the next 16 years. Some children came from homes where they were not receiving proper care, and some came because there was no schooling available near their homes. Whatever their background, at the Home they received Christian teaching combined with personal love and care.

John (& Hulda) Penner served as director for the majority of those years. The Mission carried on the Children's Home ministry until 1969, when it was turned over to the Brethren in Christ Church (Canadian Conference). An article from NCEM's Board to the supporting public that year said, "We believe the Lord is definitely leading us to eventually be relieved of this work, in order to devote our personnel and finances more directly to evangelistic work, and a Native church planting ministry. We are making provision to ensure that the ministry of our Children's Home will be carried on in very good hands."<sup>19</sup>

## **SCHOOL DAYS**

Closely connected to ministry to children has been NCEM's involvement in public education. During the Mission's first years, the government was just beginning to build schools and to send teachers into some of the smaller, more isolated communities. There was not much educational opportunity for those children who hadn't left home to attend residential schools, so missionaries did what they could to help. Art and Dorothy Acton, for example, initiated the construction of a school building in Deschambault Lake, Saskatchewan in 1950.

Only a few NCEM missionaries have worked as regular school teachers. Yet in related ways the Mission has been, and still is, involved with education. Many Christian school teachers have closely worked alongside missionaries (some of them officially as "associate" NCEM members). Early NCEM publications regularly advertised openings for school teachers in northern communities and the Mission did what it could to coordinate their placement. At Timber Bay, Saskatchewan, for example, at least until 1962 the public school was consistently staffed with Christian teachers.

In many locations Christian school teachers and NCEM field workers have benefited from mutual fellowship. When possible, missionaries teach religious instruction in the schools, and many school teachers have assisted with Sunday school outreaches and selflessly assisted in other church-planting ministries.

Social concerns can sometimes sidetrack a mission from its mandate, and NCEM has sought to keep its efforts closely related to evangelism and church-planting. The passing years have seen social services increasingly provided by the various levels of government. Yet missionaries still find many opportunities to minister to physical and social needs.

## **SOME UNIQUE OUTREACHES**

Visiting homes, leading Bible studies and church services are all avenues one would expect an evangelical missionary to be engaged in. In many cases that would be a close description of an NCEM field missionary's activities. That is often how people are reached, and that is usually

how they are disciplined.

In some places, though, because of resistance to the Gospel, and because it takes much time to earn the people's trust, some non-traditional ways of outreach have been used. For example, when serving near Hobbema, Alberta, Jim Stauffer tried this unique approach:

*Rodeo photography! Since photography was my hobby I thought I'd try to put it to work for the Lord. Next to his prize money and trophy buckles, a rodeo cowboy cherishes a good photograph of himself in action.*

*With my own darkroom I could develop pictures overnight and have them on display the following day at the Gospel film trailer. I was sure that the photograph aspect would do away with reticence or embarrassment that might keep people from coming to a Gospel booth.*

*It took a lot of preparation over several months. Our first rodeo was to be a Hobbema, advertised as the largest all-Indian rodeo in Canada. The Lord answered prayer in many ways. New equipment was necessary to catch the fast rodeo action. A trailer especially built to minister at fairs and rodeos was located. Permission had to be granted by the Rodeo Society president to operate within the rodeo grounds, and there were the needed funds and helpers to acquire.*

*We parked where cowboys could easily find us and word spread that pictures would be available of each day's events. There was good activity around the trailer concerning the photos. However, apart from that, visitors were discouragingly few.*

*Our next step was to display posters advertising Gospel films. We parked the trailer for the Sunday events just outside the mid-way near the exit. The rodeo announcer let everyone know we were there.*

*Several Christian Indian friends stopped by and a few cowboys stayed to watch a gospel film. Several groups of children kept coming and going. Though it was a small turn-out, friends encouraged us. At least it was a beginning.*

*During the following days, people I had never met before, stopped me on the street. Tough young cowboys who would ordinarily disdain a preacher, were coming to our house for pictures.*

*Many friendships were struck up. In the darkroom they watched with fascination while I printed their favourite pictures. Cowboys began expressing their appreciation for the service I was giving them. The editor of the Bear Hills Native Voice published an article in their all-Indian newspaper about the minister who was using his hobby to become involved in the community.<sup>21</sup>*

## **A DOOR BLOWN OPEN**

Though Jim's photography outreach was not carried on for very long, it did create openings for spiritual ministry. Another missionary, Tim Gradin, found that teaching CPR (cardiopulmonary

resuscitation) provided open doors ... doors into communities that had previously made no pretence that they wanted an evangelical missionary around.

*Before we joined NCEM, while we served on the support staff of Prairie Bible Institute, I was part of the volunteer fire crew there. At that time I became an instructor in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in order to train the rest of the fire crew. Not long after completing that task, we joined NCEM and moved to northern Saskatchewan.*

*I remember thinking, "It would be good to be able to teach these life-saving techniques to people here where medical services are often a great distance away." But I wasn't sure how it would work out. You see, our main job description was to learn the Dene (Chipewyan) language.*

*Well, eventually I received notice that unless I could teach four CPR courses within the next four months, I would lose my qualifications. To me it seemed impossible to do that. But I prayed, "Lord, if You want me to teach CPR, You work it out." He did!*

*To make a long story short, I taught several courses in Uranium City, Fond-du-Lac, Stony Rapids and Black Lake. The Lord has thrown in an added bonus because it actually helped me in learning Chipewyan. It took me to new communities and gave me prolonged contacts with Dene people. I even began to teach part of the course in Chipewyan. More importantly it opened other doors for spiritual ministry to these people who need to know Jesus Christ.*

*Yes, God used the "wind" of CPR to "blow" me toward my spiritual ministry to Chipewyan people. He is not limited in the things He can use, for He "works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11). The important thing is for us to be sensitive to His leading as He places opportunities in front of us.<sup>22</sup>*

CPR "blew" open even more doors that Tim Gradin expected. On a trip to Uranium City to teach the course, the plane landed in Fond-du-Lac, a place that Tim had "heard stories about." It didn't sound like Fond-du-Lac would be a village that would welcome evangelicals. At the airport Tim was practising his language skills and struck up a conversation with a man standing in the terminal. After telling about himself and his CPR course, the fellow asked, "Are you coming to visit here too?"

The man turned out to be the village chief, and Tim responded to his invitation by saying that he would be glad to come if he could stay in a Native home. So on several occasions Tim stayed at the chief's house while teaching CPR in the village. It was no secret that Tim was an evangelical missionary, and he found opportunities to show Gospel videos and share individually with people there -- where no missionary had visited for 20 years.

## **"MKs" & MISSIONARY FAMILIES**

Raising children ... a concern of on-the-field missionaries, and one of the biggest worries expressed by parents who are considering future missionary service. Children are priceless and fragile gifts from God. Their needs -- their safety, their spiritual and social development, their

education -- must all be cared for. And these needs should be “given to the Lord,” say experienced NCEM missionary parents.

One veteran missionary couple tell of how they verbally gave their children to the Lord. They promised the Lord that, “If You will take care of our children’s health, morals, education ... then we will go anywhere.” He did ... and they did!

That is not to say there are no struggles. One missionary couple told of the great sympathy they felt for their children who never gained any close friends in the village. The Native kids were not all unfriendly, but their children never gained any close companions over the years.

Moving to a particularly isolated mission station was a “family decision” say one couple -- their children had a part in the decision. And though they were tempted to think of their assignment as “sacrifice,” to their surprise, some of their supporters thought of them as “privileged.” (These friends thought it would be advantageous to raise kids away from the negative influences of the “South.”)

But what do MKs themselves say about growing up on the field? Looking back they tell of frustrations and fun; they mention “...hurts from being an MK ... being a minority in a village and facing prejudice,” but they also speak of pleasant memories: “...hunting, fishing, ski-dooing ... Native kids were my friends and we had fun together.”

“As a child, the burden of the work was never felt,” says another MK. “I remember the abuses ... and the good times. I remember the picnics in the snow and the Native traditions.” “Being an MK was easy for the most part,” says another. The hard part, he says, was the “moving and travelling.”<sup>23</sup>

These quotes are all from MKs who themselves have chosen to serve with NCEM as missionaries. Looking back, even the difficult aspects of MK life can be seen as having positive value. One MK tells of feeling “...deprived of the privilege of growing up normally.” But later she wrote: “Thank God we grow and mature with age. As I left home and the influence of my parents, I began to see things in a new light.”<sup>24</sup>

Missionaries’ children can, of course, be a great benefit to the work. They help cross racial barriers. One missionary mother tells of an occasion when she noticed her daughter and a young Native girl sharing a glass of water and a cookie, even though they couldn’t initially understand one word of the other’s language. They were overcoming barriers not so easily crossed by adults.

And for the missionaries’ kids, though it may not always seem so at the time, there are numerous benefits to growing up in another culture. It’s an education in itself, and one that will benefit for life. They will learn to better relate to people of another culture, and some of them will learn a second language.

Having children of their own helps missionaries in teaching others how to raise their kids, says one worker. The veteran missionary confessed that he thought he had “all the answers for raising

children” -- and freely gave advice to Native parents. But as problems arose with his own children, he found that he could empathize much closer with Native parents’ concerns.

It might not be too presumptuous to say that problems with children are about the same on the field as off. But problems or not, it’s true that many MKs grow up under unusual circumstances. Some must be raised “on the firing line” where the Gospel is being pioneered in conflict with Satan’s strongholds. As one missionary writer notes: “Along with their parents, they may bear scars for the sake of Christ; but before God this will be to their glory, and not to their shame.”<sup>25</sup>

## **FOR THE STOMACH’S SAKE**

No missionary presentation seems complete without at least one story of “cultural cuisine.” Not wanting to disappoint readers, here’s a tale (actually a “nose”) written a few years ago by an “experienced” field worker:

*Let me tell you about Celestine. He is an old man. He visits often bringing little surprises like a fish, a caribou leg, or even bear-burgers. He does not talk English, and my vocabulary in the Chipewyan language is limited. He tells me he has killed a moose. He has brought me some. I am very happy.*

*Then he says he has saved the best part for me -- the moose nose. My stomach takes a flip. Now I am sure I have misunderstood him. I tell him he shouldn’t give me the best, but to just give me a small piece of meat. But he insists!*

*I take the nose from the bag after he is gone. It looks like it has been in the fire. And it looks like it should go in the garbage. It is dirty, hairy, singed and smoky. I feel like throwing it away. But I reconsider. I trim it carefully; wash it thoroughly; and boil it clinically. Finally I decide it is sterilized enough for the final cooking. This takes about four hours. In the meantime I add to it onions and every kind of suitable spice that I have. After it is cooked, I cut the nose into small pieces, pouring the liquid over it. It sets overnight.*

*The next day, shortly before lunch, Celestine is back again. This is another surprise. He has come to help me eat it. How thankful I am to the Lord that I hadn’t thrown it away. I slice it and we sit and eat together. It turns out to be the most delicious head cheese. He is very pleased with my efforts. Now I am really his friend. He says he will bring me another moose nose sometime.*

*Since then I have learned to cook and eat everything a Native person gives me -- a muskrat carcass, a caribou head and even a beaver tail. Good as these may be, one does get a yearning once in a while for some good plain hamburger.*

*“Yes, whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will be willing to let me tell him of Christ” (I Cor. 9:22, Living Letters).<sup>26</sup>*

## **NOT IMMUNE**



They may be choice servants of the Lord, sacrificing to serve others. But that does not make them immune from disease and accident. What happens when a missionary loses his health? Native missionary, Stan Williams, shares this experience:

*“Why, Lord?” I questioned. I was lying flat on my back in a hospital bed, my legs in traction. “You know I’ve got a lot of work to do. There are letters to answer, cassettes to duplicate, next week’s radio program to tape, and a lot of people to visit. I hope you know what you are doing, Lord, because I sure don’t.”*

*As I lay there, I thought about Romans 8:28 a number of times that day. I knew the verse well. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” In fact, I had even preached on that verse a good many times. But that was small comfort as I lay there fighting the pain and fretting about all the work that was falling farther behind each day.*

*As the hours passed, my thoughts went back to the many ways God had blessed me. During my early teens I had developed a severe case of tuberculosis. The doctors had not expected me to live, but God, by His grace, had brought me through it.*

*Later, while serving in the armed forces during World War II, I got an overdose of chlorine gas. I was discharged from the service and again the doctors were doubtful if I would recover. But once more God brought me back to health. I was not a Christian at the time and did not see those recoveries as God’s hand on my life. But later I came to see how God, in His mercy, had spared me from a Christless eternity.*

*In September of 1955 I made a decision for Christ at a Billy Graham Crusade in Toronto. Later in 1961 the Lord led me, with my family, to mission work among my own Ojibway people on Manitoulin Island. Besides pastoring a small congregation, I became involved in counselling and a radio ministry on a number of local stations covering most of Northern Ontario.*

*It seemed as if God had given a steady green light until this incident in the winter of 1977. I had been out tobogganning with the children and had taken quite a tumble. The fall severely wrenched my back and made my left lung almost useless.*

*I hobbled around using a cane for a few days until I finally gave in and went to a doctor. He discovered I had a pinched nerve in my back and put me into the hospital right away. For treatment I was tied down to the bed with my legs up in the air. There was to be no activity until the pressure on the damaged nerve was relieved and healing had begun.*

*All day Friday I fretted and stewed about the situation. On Saturday I was still complaining and blaming God for wasting both my time and His. After all, I had commitments in His work that needed to be kept.*

*By Sunday my resistance came to an end. I told God, maybe not too cheerfully but at least willingly, that I was satisfied to stay in this situation as long as He wanted me here. At that*

*moment peace filled me and I was able to get the rest that was needed for healing to take place.*

*Early Monday morning the hospital staff brought a man into the empty bed next to mine. It seemed as if all the gloom in the world had settled on him. His depression was so deep I could feel it as soon as he entered the room.*

*He sobbed and cried all that day and most of the night. I tried to talk to him but he would not respond to anything I said. This went on through most of Tuesday.*

*Finally, on Tuesday evening he began to open up. He told me that he had been having severe family problems. He had become so depressed that he had decided to take his life. He felt there was nothing to live for any more. Taking a gun, he had gone outside to end it all, when a neighbour discovered him. The neighbour talked him out of his plan, and then called the police who brought the man to the hospital.*

*I began talking to him of God's concern for him and of his spiritual needs. He was quite bitter towards God. If there really was a God who was personally interested in him, then God had surely given him a dirty deal, he said.*

*We argued back and forth for some time. Finally in the early hours of the morning, I was exhausted. I did not seem to be getting anywhere with him. As simply and forthrightly as I could I explained God's plan of salvation to him. Then I told him that I was going to sleep. Just before I did, I silently committed him to God's wonderful mercy and to the working of the Holy Spirit.*

*I awoke early the next morning. There he sat on the edge of his bed between me and the window, a smile across his face as bright as the morning sun. Immediately I knew what had happened.*

*"You don't have to tell me," I said, "I know."*

*"Yes," he said, "I've accepted the Saviour to be God and king of my life. I just feel as if all my burdens have been lifted."*

*In the following hours before his release we rejoiced together in his new-found freedom.*

*I stayed in the hospital a few more days before I was well enough to go home. However, I was content and continually thanking the Lord that He controlled my life. He knew best where I could most profitably serve Him each hour of the day.*

*I found out later the doctor who had admitted the desperate man to the hospital had requested he be placed in the room with me. The doctor had quickly recognized that the man's problems were spiritual, not physical. He felt that I, as a Christian pastor, might be able to offer the needed help.*

*I still marvel at God's grace and perfect timing. If the whole situation had occurred any differently, who knows what might have happened to this man?<sup>27</sup>*

## JUST TRUSTING GOD

Living by faith and trusting in God alone to supply their financial needs ... what's it like? Missionaries who are honest about it will tell you that there are both blessings and challenges. Whatever the case, workers serving by faith are very conscious that everything they have comes from God. Giving back should perhaps come easier for them than it does for those who feel they've "earned" their wages. Missionaries have learned, though, that God can hold back just as easily as they can. Marge Elford has told about giving and receiving in her "soap story":

*It was a beautiful baby indeed, just a week old. The Indian mother smiled proudly as she showed her to me. "Do you have any baby clothes?" she asked. "A few," I replied.*

*"Do you have a bar of soap?" she asked again. I went and looked in the cupboard. One bar of soap was all I had. I picked it up, hesitated, and put it back. Then I reasoned with myself ... I need it; it's Saturday night; the stores are closed; my children need baths too.*

*But I had no peace. Quietly I picked it up and put it in the bag. She was a very grateful mother when she left. She at least had a few baby clothes and a bar of soap.*

*Later that evening I was preparing to wash the supper dishes. As I picked up a new box of detergent soap, I noticed on the outside of it in large letters, "FREE--ONE BAR OF SOAP." Immediately I began to pour the contents into jars to get this treasure. When I got to the bottom of the box, I was surprised to find not one bar of soap, but two! Surely the Lord had that box especially prepared for me! I was just thrilled with the Lord's provision. He had given me double of what I had given away. He had provided it just when I needed it.*

*The Lord continued to bless with soap. My own home church sent soap; friends sent soap; Indians neighbours gave me presents of soap. Soap! Soap! Soap! All kinds, all colours, all sizes and all fragrances.*

*Then we moved to Ft. McPherson, Northwest Territories. Again I found a good quantity of soap in the house left by the Christian school teacher who had started the work there. The next spring as I was making out my grocery list (we only ordered once a year in the Arctic), I pondered, "What about soap? I have lots on hand but it won't hurt to have extra." So I ordered a case.*

*Despite God's blessing, I had become oblivious to it. It was a short while after I ordered that case of soap that He reminded me. Had He not provided marvellously with soap those past 13 years? Then I saw His hand in it all so clearly, but it was too late. When I took matters into my own hands, no one sent soap any more. His supply had stopped!*

*A sad ending? ... in a way, yes. But it has been a new and wonderful experience in reminding me to be thankful for His every provision, no matter how trivial, insignificant and temporal it may seem. A bountiful supply, and a blessed rebuke, both lovingly given.*

*Luke 6:38 (TEV): "Give to others, and God will give to you; you will receive a full measure, a*

*generous helping, poured into your hands ... all that you can hold.”<sup>28</sup>*

## **GOD’S PROMISES**

As members of a faith mission, workers have to trust the Lord for their individual support ... just believing that God will supply as He has promised to. Should be no problem, right? Shirley Jackson wrote about a difficult testing early in their missionary career:

*For most of us there are times when God made His promises real, rather than just verses we had learned and accepted as true.*

*There is one experience that is especially precious to me. It happened shortly after we were married. We both believed Philippians 4:19: “God shall supply all your needs...” otherwise we wouldn’t have dared to come into missionary service. My husband had proved it many times, but as yet I hadn’t come to the place where I must look to God and Him alone for material needs.*

*One Saturday we had two dollars and had no idea when we would receive any more money. We needed one dollar for gas to go to the reserve to hold services on Sunday. What should we do with the other dollar? We hadn’t had any meat for awhile and thought it would be nice to get some. Finally we struck on an idea. We decided to use that dollar for gas as well as go to a lake and fish. That way we would have lots of meat. Bill knew there was a boat beside a lake that was seldom used. It belonged to a friend and he would not mind us using it.*

*When we got to the lake the boat was gone. We had used our last dollar for nothing. I’m afraid my faith hit an all-time low.*

*Bill remained quite undisturbed and decided that this was a nice spot to prepare his Sunday sermons. I sat alone by the lake thinking some pretty gloomy thoughts until Bill decided we had better start back home.*

*On the way we had to pass by a farm where Bill had once worked. These people had asked us several times to come and visit them. When Bill suggested that we should stop for a few minutes, I protested. The very last thing I wanted to do that day was visit. However, he assured me that we wouldn’t stop for long, so I agreed.*

*The family were fine Christians and our visit was very pleasant. When we were ready to go, the lady asked us to wait a few minutes. She disappeared downstairs and came back with a big box of canned chicken, fruit and vegetables. Then her daughter came into the house with a pail of eggs that were soon packed into a box and given to us, along with a bowl of home-made butter.*

*Unless you have given into doubts about God’s faithfulness as I did that day, you will not know how unworthy and guilty I felt. These people knew nothing of our financial position but God did.*

*Many times since that experience I’ve looked back to that occasion and been encouraged and blessed.<sup>29</sup>*

## **GOD'S SUPPLY**

It's humbling when God uses individuals to meet the missionaries' needs. But that is the way He works. Ron Knightly also tells about it:

*Aircraft inspection is required by the Ministry of Transport and my plane was due for its check-up, so I flew it to Edmonton. Of the two things that did not pass inspection, one was simple and easily corrected. The other item posed a more serious problem. It was the propeller. Where I had had some of my experience (in the United States) a log book on propellers was not a requirement. In Canada it is. Without the log records the propeller will not be passed, no matter how good its condition may seem. I was directed to replace the prop.*

*I was in a quandary. My plane was grounded and so was I -- without money to make any replacement of the propeller. I didn't have enough even for a used replacement, let alone a new one. Prayer was my only recourse, so I prayed. I tied the plane down securely and walked across the street to a city bus stop. The bus routes were unfamiliar to me and soon two buses came bearing down on me.*

*Already facing too many decisions, I jumped on the first bus and told the driver I wanted to go to the Greyhound bus depot. I found that the other bus would have taken me much closer. As I rode, I continued to seek the Lord for His solution to my plight.*

*As we neared the downtown area the bus driver began to talk and asked me where I was heading by Greyhound. I told him I was heading home to Fort Nelson, BC. In the course of the conversation he inquired about what had brought me to Edmonton and the story of my plane came out. He now realized that I would have quite a long wait at the depot since the Fort Nelson bus would be several hours later. He kindly suggested I visit awhile at his home. He was just finishing his shift.*

*To my surprise, and somewhat to my dismay, since I didn't have the necessary money, my host suggested I telephone around to locate a propeller. Reluctantly I made my calls until all my leads on used propellers ran out. My newfound friend, whom I now realized was a fellow Christian, did not seem to share my dismay. He calmly suggested I try the companies for a new one. When I did locate one, the price was approximately \$800.*

*My friend then invited me to stay over night so that in the morning I could see what the new propeller was like. We would pick it up and he would pay for it! The final price was over \$700 and it was paid for in full. I was excited and delighted with this miraculous answer to prayer. I had the plane ready to go in no time. The inspection passed; the plane once again certified as airworthy and I was winging my way northward. Up front was the shiny new prop, evidence of God's listening ear and providing care. Another prayer had been answered.<sup>30</sup>*

## **ARE NCEM MISSIONARIES UNIQUE?**

No matter where in the world they serve, there still seem to be things that all missionaries have

in common. Besides similarities in the ministry work itself, there is the matter of support and relationships with supporting churches. Deputational travel, writing prayer letters, and prayer card photos ... these are things synonymous with being a missionary.

Another area that NCEMers and some foreign missionaries may find common ground is ministry to “non-nationals.” On NCEM stations they usually have been referred to as “whites.” They, too, need the Lord, but missionaries sometimes struggle with how to reach them. Often they are part of a white clique; many are transient, earning fast money, then leaving. How can the missionary reach them without being distracted from his mandate?

Just as the Apostle Paul considered himself “...debtor to both the Greeks, and to the Barbarians, both to the wise, and to the unwise” (Rom. 1:14), so have many NCEM workers made efforts to reach various people groups within their communities. One missionary couple, for example, held a Christmas party each year, especially for the “southerners.” It didn’t seem like much, but God used it. One young couple, both schoolteachers, came to the party and wrote a big “thank you!” in the guest-book. They wrote that it was especially appreciated on “our first homesick Christmas.”

Two years later the missionaries received a letter from the same couple. It said, “I want you to know that we have both been saved and it was mainly because of your lives.”<sup>31</sup>

Though it has been a “sideline” for NCEMers, ministry to non-Natives has resulted in several churches being planted. Among them have been congregations at Uranium City and La Ronge, Saskatchewan, and Watson Lake, Yukon.

What makes NCEMers unique among the world’s missionaries? Acclimatization, inoculations, immigrations, isolation ... perhaps these aren’t as much a factor. And maybe on NCEM fields it is easier for the missionary to “escape” from the pressures of ministry when home is not so far away. Whether unique or not, NCEMers know the need to keep their mandate in view, and be committed to it.

## **THE REWARDS**

There are many more stories that could be included to help answer the question: what is missionary life really like?

For some it has meant a lot of moving, for others not so much. One couple counted 21 or 22 moves during 40 years with the Mission. That doesn’t mean it becomes an easy thing to do. In their case, the wife said that she was reluctant to move every time. But she always gave in to the Lord about six months after hearing of the proposed move. She wonders now why she didn’t give in to the Lord right away to save all those six-month periods of distress!

The excitement, the adventure of missionary life ... it all wears off in the first few weeks on the field, say the workers. Then it all boils down to sacrificial service for Jesus. Or does it? This concluding story shows that missionary life offers rewards not gained doing anything else.

*Sitting by Catherine's bedside, I looked into her thin, jaundiced face, the results of the terminal disease which was eating away at her body. She knew her days were numbered but she was not anxious.*

*Just a few months past she had put her trust in Jesus Christ and peace now registered within and without. Catherine was always ready to tell of her new found faith and of how Jesus had brought "light" into her life. I used to visit her often to read from the Scriptures and to pray with her. These were precious times. My heart was blessed just to be with her.*

*During one of my last visits she called to her husband, "Bring my snowshoes." This he did -- a beautiful pair, new and small, for she was a small woman. She fingered them for a few minutes and then said, "My husband made them for me last spring. I have only worn them once. Soon I will not need them. I want you to have them. They'll remind you of me." Then she handed them to me. As I took them tears filled my eyes. It was very hard to contain myself.*

*In a couple of weeks this dear one was promoted to glory. Her snowshoes, which hang in our front entrance, serve as a constant reminder of her. These snowshoes are an inheritance to me from one who in the world's eyes had nothing. Yes, I cherish them very much, but she left an even greater inheritance which I cherish more. It is one that will go on forever:*

*"Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves" (Col. 1:12,13).*

*She has gone on to her inheritance in Jesus Christ, an "inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade -- kept in heaven for [her]." (I Pet. 1:4)<sup>32</sup>*

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NOTES: 1--Northern Lights magazine, issue #91; 2--NLs #418; 3--NLs #354; 4--NLs #305; 5--NLs #360; 6--NLs #190; 7--NLs #393; 8--video interview, date ??; 9--NLs #259; 10--NLs #294; 11--NLs #324; 12--NLs #332; 13--NLs #397; 14--NLs #344; 15--NLs #64; 16--NLs #94; 17--NLs #120; 18--NLs #301; 19--NLs #255; 21--NLs #360; 22--NLs #382; 23--NLs #435; 24--NLs #346; 25--Joseph Cannon, For Missionaries Only: Baker; 26--NLs #248; 27--NLs #359 (originally published in Indian Life magazine); 28--NLs #276; 29--NLs #294; 30--NLs #351; 31--NLs #342; 32--NLs #339.

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*The original printing of Light on the Horizon included photos with captions, and text boxes. Here is text from some of them:*

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## ISOLATION

An isolated village, inaccessible by road. Ed Heal says that when he first served at Stony Rapids, Saskatchewan, he never saw another born again Christian for two years (it wasn't until he met a Christian forestry worker who stopped in). It was three years before he saw another missionary, and that was while out on a trip to attend his mother's funeral. He adds that if a government plane hadn't "happened to be" in

Stony, he would have missed the funeral.

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### **The Enquiring Generation**

“One learns from experience not to be too elated over success or too discouraged over reverses. Situations are always changing, depending on how people feel. The teenagers often give me a bad time, yet occasionally are very lonely.

“The younger set are usually free and friendly and full of questions. ‘Miss Lumley, is there a Santa Claus as my dad says?’ ‘Is J--’s ghost really walking around?’ ‘Is it wrong for a Christian to wear nail polish?’ ‘Is it a sin when my mother spends the night with another man when she’s too drunk to know it?’

“Perhaps it is the enquiring generation that I am best able to help.”

--Betty Lumley (from Northern Lights, 1974)

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### **CHILDREN’S HOME**

Betty Lumley served at the Children’s Home for six years. “Our big square house at the Children’s Home was very crowded,” she wrote. “My wee room, along with others, had only curtains over the doorway. One time I saw a little girl come out of my bedroom brushing her teeth vigorously with my only toothbrush!

“Occasionally our Mission pilot flew in. One time he asked me what we did on our days off. I replied, “I know nothing about days off, but we do have our off days.”

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### **CHILDREN’S HOME**

Martha (Heppner) VanNortwick with her hands full. The missionaries at Molanosa couldn’t overlook children who were unwanted and uncared for.

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### **CHILDREN’S HOME**

Though the ministry originated a couple miles away at Molonosa, the Montreal Lake Children’s Home was established at Timber Bay, Saskatchewan in 1952. NCEM would operate it until 1969.

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### **EDUCATION**

Dorothy Acton with school children: some of the villages still did not have government-operated schools.

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### **UNIQUE OUTREACHES**

Indian cowboy at Hobbema, Alberta: Jim Stauffer’s rodeo photography service provided opportunities to



meet and minister to “tough young cowboys who would ordinarily disdain a preacher.”

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## **CHAPTER SIX**

# **SHORT-TERM MISSIONS**

Time was, in Christian missions, that anyone who was not willing to make a lifelong commitment was somehow unworthy of a missionary appointment. Some of the concerns were: could short-term missionaries be effective? What about the cultural and linguistic barriers? And wouldn't short-term workers drain time and energy from career workers?

Despite these and other questions, the idea would not go away. By the 1960's many missions had begun programs for short-termers, though most mission societies had no intentions of using them to replace long-term "career" workers. While recognizing the limitations and the risks of this new way of doing missions, many organizations saw significant value in short-term programs.

The idea was being discussed informally among NCEMers, too. It seemed, though, the general consensus was that it would be too difficult for a Bible school student, with no previous exposure to Indian people, to enter the Native villages to minister. In fact, some of the career workers were reporting that it was taking up to six months to have any meaningful contact with Indian people in their areas. Some said that a summer missions program could do more harm than good. So, accordingly, NCEM did not pursue the short-term missionary idea.

In actuality, short-term workers had been involved with NCEM as early as 1947 when a couple of Bible school students spent their summer assisting missionaries in the Buffalo Narrows area. And in the following years a number of ministry-experienced people had spent short periods of time on NCEM's stations, filling in for missionaries out on furlough.

But a decided thrust in short-term missionary effort would not emerge until later. It would come primarily through the vision of one man -- Art Tarry.

### **A NEW WAY OF DOING MISSIONS**

In 1968 missionary Art Tarry was visiting Briercrest Bible College. A young lady student approached him and introduced herself, and Art found out that her parents were members of the church that he had pastored before going north. They had heard that Art was going to be visiting Briercrest, and had encouraged their daughter to make herself known to him.

Art and the young lady made arrangements to meet during dinner in the dining hall. During the meal she told him of her recent experience as a summer missionary in South America. Art began to quiz her about the kind of work that she did. She admitted that, as far as making meaningful contact with nationals, she felt that perhaps the summer was a failure.

She emphasized, however, that by going, she herself had received much. She said she now had a broader view of missions. She came back to school with a greater determination to study in

preparation for the mission field. Her studies, her devotional and prayer life took on a whole new meaning. Though she did not feel that she had done much in the line of winning souls for Christ, she knew it had caused a transformation in her spiritual walk.

As she was telling Art all of this, he looked over the couple-hundred students eating dinner that day and he saw potential ... the potential of young people who were wanting and willing to serve God, but just didn't know how.

He started to think that there must be a way to help these young people. The oft-quoted words of former U.S. President Kennedy came to his mind: Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country. That day Art asked himself, "Am I more concerned what these young people can do for me and our Mission, or for what our Mission and I can do for them?"

His experience on the Bible school campus that day gave Art Tarry a new and specific burden. He saw in Canada a mission field with the potential for preparing people for missionary work around the world. There were four criteria which he felt were essential:

### **POTENTIAL FOR PREPARING**

First, it was a cross-cultural environment. In the Native communities young people would see and experience a culture completely new to them. But because Native people were becoming increasingly bilingual it would not be necessary for these short-termers to learn the Indian language to be able to communicate.

Secondly, Art knew that through this short-term exposure, young people would be exposed to those in spiritual bondage to false religions. Surely this would be an experience that the trainees would never forget.

Thirdly, Art knew that this mission field in Canada would be relatively easily accessible -- just a few hundred miles and they could be on the field. It would not cost the thousands of dollars that overseas travelling does.

And lastly, Art believed the time was about right for this venture. After many years of limited results, Indian people were beginning to respond to the Gospel. What an encouragement it would be for young people to present the Gospel message and have the joy of leading some to Jesus Christ!

In the following weeks Art Tarry's burden became greater and his vision became clearer -- not just getting young people to help for a summer, but rather to get them trained and motivated for their part in reaching people in Canada and around the world. Art envisioned a summer program with a difference. Young people would get a taste of real pioneer missionary life "on their own" in the villages.

At the time, Art and his wife, Martha, were field missionaries in the Burns Lake, B.C. area. He

shared his growing concern at the next meeting of the Mission's Western Field Council. "I was real disappointed when they asked if I would put it into writing and present it at the next Board meeting," admits Art.

Disappointed? Yes, Art was hoping his plans could be implemented immediately. The next Board meeting was still six months away.

At the Board meeting the idea received a favourable consensus. "Then I was asked to present it [to all the missionaries] at the next [staff] conference," says Art. He realized, with disappointment, that that meant another six-month delay.

At the conference the missionaries "had quite a few questions," recalls Art, but overall they seemed to be in favour of this concept of training young people for missionary work. Art got the green light to go ahead, and he began making plans.

### **GREEN LIGHT TO GO AHEAD**

Art remembers with gratitude the advice received from Bill Lottis (Director of NAIM Ministries) in setting up the program. And he remembers the first planning meetings with fellow staff: Bud and Marge Elford, Russ and Virgie Mueller, Carroll and Cathy Hill, and Ray and Cathy Bradford. They began to write policies, and they discussed a name for this new venture.

The concept of "training" people was prominent in their discussions, and they agreed that the name might as well have the word "training" in it. Someone suggested that since there were so many "training camps" being held -- basketball training camp, hockey training camp, military training camp, etc. -- why not call it "Missionary Training Camp"? The idea caught on, and it was also agreed that the word "northern" would describe the location of most of the summer stations.

It was 1970. NCEM's lake front property at Lac La Biche, Alberta, would serve as a base camp before the trainees were to be sent out in pairs. At the time, the facilities were perhaps even more primitive than what the trainees would have on the field. There was no dining hall -- a quonset building was there, but it had no shingles on the roof and no floor. Water would have to be carried by pail from the lake and heated on open fires. There was no electricity in the cabins and toilet facilities were crude.

However, the staff felt that they could make do, and they began to eagerly await the coming of the first trainees. Bill Lottis told Art that if he got 12 trainees the first year he should be very thankful. But as it turned out, instead of 12 that first year, there were 21 who came.

Prominent in memories of "Seminar Week" that first year was the rain. And did it rain! Some thought that the program could better have been named Northern Missionary Raining Camp. But the trainees coped well with the leaking roofs and the mud at the base camp, and NMTC's first year was off to a good start.

## TRAINEES I REMEMBER

Has NMTC accomplished its objectives? If the primary reason for the program was the trainee (and not just the ministry he or she would carry out), then it is fitting that the trainees themselves be considered. As director of the NMTC program for most of its years, Art Tarry has seen many trainees come and go. He tells about a few of them:

### ONE THING YOU DON'T KNOW

*I think, first of all, of young John Kaiser. John was an MK, his parents missionaries in Nigeria. He had been attending Prairie Bible Institute and had come to Training Camp to get some experience of his own. He had plans to return to do missionary work in Africa.*

*John was a very talented young man, and a good public speaker. If we were classifying the trainees, he'd have been there right at the top. When it came to assigning the trainees into teams of two, we put John along with a fellow by the name of \*Patrick. Patrick was very quiet and reserved. He was not pushy in any way. He was showing himself to be a follower, not a leader. (\*not his real name)*

*So John was naturally the leader of the two. Soon after they got onto the field John saw that he was doing all of the work and was making all the decisions. Their training at Seminar Week had stressed that one person was not to take on all the leading. And so John decided that Patrick would have to do something.*

*So John gave Patrick an assignment. He was to tell a story to a group of boys around the campfire that night. Well, Patrick began the story, but he just didn't get to first base. He stumbled. He made lots of mistakes. And these half-dozen boys, 12 and 13 year-olds, began to laugh out loud. And Patrick couldn't take it. Instead of finishing the story, he got up and walked back to his tent. That left John with the boys, and he had to finish the devotional time.*

*John was rather disgusted with Patrick, so after the boys had left he went back to the tent and was getting ready to talk to him about it. But Patrick wasn't in the tent. John began to look around and finally saw him sitting in his car. John was about to get his attention, when he realized that Patrick was praying.*

*So instead of disturbing him, John took a little walk down the pathway in the bush. And while walking along, God spoke to John in a very definite way and said, "John, you may be talented. You may be gifted. But there's one thing that you don't know how to do that Patrick does. Patrick knows how to pray."*

*And right then and there John stopped and prayed to God: "God, this is true. Patrick is a better missionary than me." John then made a complete dedication to God. Later on he told me personally -- and he has shared it publicly -- that his experience with NMTC that day changed his life.*

*Following missionary service overseas, John returned to Prairie Bible Institute to become*

*professor and chairman of the missions department, and has since provided leadership in world missions through other avenues as well.<sup>1</sup>*

## **SHE'LL NEVER MAKE IT**

*Iris was from Boston, Massachusetts. I remember that her father didn't want her to come out to Training Camp, to what he considered the wild frontiers of Canada's Northland. But she really wanted to come, and he finally gave her permission.*

*Iris's father had phoned ahead to a friend of his in Edmonton and told him of his concern for his daughter. He asked his friend to meet Iris at the airport and to personally drive her up to Lac La Biche -- "wherever that is." I remember their arrival so clearly. I was standing outside when they drove onto the campus.*

*The fellow got out of his car and asked to see the director, and I made myself known. He told me that he'd brought this girl from Boston. We walked around to the other side of the car and Iris got out. There she was, all dressed up ... high-heeled shoes, short skirt, big earrings, and all painted up. I thought to myself, "She'll never make it."*

*We then proceeded to get her luggage out of the car -- three big suitcases ... and no bedroll. I asked about that. Iris said she didn't know that she would need one. When her dad's friend offered to drive into Lac La Biche to buy her one, I suggested that we could probably find a spare one that she could borrow. (You see, I was sure that within a few days she would be heading back to Boston!)*

*Well, Iris walked over to her assigned cabin and came back wearing jeans and flat shoes. And she stayed. She added life to the Seminar Week, and was lots of fun. She went out into the field and came back at the end of the summer wearing moccasins and a head band.*

*When she gave her report she told how she had won someone to Jesus for the very first time. And that meant so much to her. As far as I know, she continues on in a successful Christian life.<sup>2</sup>*

## **NO SUCH HIPPY**

*I also recall a fellow named Richard. Apparently he was saved not too long before through a Jesus People group. I remember him telling me how he was pumping gas at a filling station in southern California when a car pulled up and the people began witnessing to him about Christ.*

*Richard told these Christians of how he had got saved, but that he had become discouraged and was ready to give up because he didn't seem to be getting anywhere in his Christian life. Well, these people -- who I still do not know -- handed Richard a little bookmark produced by NCEM. And it was the bookmark and their encouragement that pointed him to Northern Missionary Training Camp.*

*So Richard wrote in, but we could see from his application that his qualifications were lacking.*

*His doctrinal statement -- if it wasn't a serious matter -- was laughable. I thought, "We can't accept a guy like this." But some of the other members of the NMTC Committee thought that we should give him a try. So, against my own judgment, I said, "Okay, we'll give him a try."*

*When Richard's Greyhound bus pulled into Lac La Biche from Edmonton, I was expecting some hippy-like fellow with dark glasses, beads and long hair -- but no such hippy got off. I began to meet some of the other trainees who had arrived on the same bus, and then I met Richard, a clean-cut fellow.*

*Though he was somewhat backward in some spiritual things, I was happy that Richard fit in quite well. He enjoyed Training Camp and it seemed to be a help to him. Right after his summer with NMTC he worked in Lac La Biche for awhile and then enrolled at Prairie Bible Institute and attended for three years.*

*I recall one occasion while visiting at Prairie. While sitting at the dinner table, Richard came and sat beside me and began reminiscing about the first time we had met. Now here he was, just about to graduate from Bible college. With a joy-filled heart he slapped me on the knee and said, "And to think of it, Mr. Tarry, you almost rejected me!"<sup>3</sup>*

## **CHILD NUMBER FIVE**

*I think of one more. She came from Hamilton, Ontario, and she was very shy. I knew she found the summer to be hard. There was nothing particularly noteworthy about her report at "Recap," and she was obviously very bashful about speaking in public.*

*The next year I happened to be in Hamilton and I phoned her home. (That was generally my custom -- to phone trainees when I was in their area, to see how they were getting along.) Her mother answered the phone but said, "No, she's not here." I asked when her daughter would be back and she said that it would be quite a while.*

*I finally told her mother who I was. Though we'd never met before, she seemed to know me from what her daughter had told her. Then she said, "Oh, Mr. Tarry, I can't thank you and your staff enough for what your training camp meant to my daughter and to me.*

*"We had five children, and I'd prayed that God would take one of these children and use them in His service full-time. Child number one, child number two, number three, number four ... they grew up and didn't seem to have any particular interest in going into mission work. Then child number five -- our last.*

*"She was so shy that I concluded that God wasn't going to call any of my children. But she went to your Training Camp and she came back a different girl."*

*This trainee later went to South America to serve as a missionary. And her mother can't thank me enough for how God had answered her prayer through the help of NMTC.<sup>4</sup>*

## **ANOTHER REASON**

As the name indicates, NMTC's primary purpose is to provide cross-cultural missionary training. But that is not to down-play another purpose: evangelism. "It is a secondary purpose, but a natural outcome of the first," clarifies Jake Klippenstein, a former director of the NMTC program.

Many reports have come back over the years from trainees who not only received firsthand cross-cultural training and experience, but were able to lead Native people to a saving knowledge of Christ!

Here are some articles based on the oral reports trainees have given at "Recap" at the end of their summer. Read them and praise God for what He has accomplished through these short-term missionaries!

## **PERSEVERANCE PAYS**

...They won't necessarily appreciate your presence, found out these two trainees...

"I want no more papers! You can take your chair and go!" declared the elderly Indian lady from her bed. But Bonnie and Dianne, who were burdened for this woman who was suffering from cancer, did not stop going over to visit her. After observing some needed work to be done around the house, the trainees washed the dishes and cleaned up. Another time cookies were brought over.

Even though the lady would at times turn her face to the wall, refusing to speak to them, the trainees did not give up. Then it happened! One day her heart softened and she responded to an invitation to receive the Lord.

Shortly thereafter, a neighbour lady came to the trainees explaining that if "that old lady" could come to the Lord, then she would like to receive the Lord as well. And she did! Not long after this, the neighbour lady's brother responded as well. The trainees' perseverance in prayer and sharing certainly paid off.

Up to 70 children were ministered to in this same village. Of these, at least three responded. Yes, these trainees did not only diligently sow the Seed, but God also gave them the joy of doing some reaping.

## **"WE'LL HAVE AN EVANGELISTIC CRUSADE!"**

...Along with some guidance from their supervisors, trainees are given freedom in choosing which methods of evangelism they will employ...

It was the first year that trainees had been placed in this particular village, a community in which the Native and non-Native populations are geographically divided by a road. In past years, most



Christian outreach had taken place on the “white side.” As Paul and Eric prayed about a way to reach Ross River (Yukon), they felt burdened to ask the Lord for a way to minister on the “Native side.”

“We’ll have an evangelistic crusade,” concluded the trainees after seeking the Lord for a strategy. But where? The logical choice seemed to be the Reserve’s Band Hall. But when they approached the chief with their request, he was not in favour and mentioned that the Hall was being used.

The next day the trainees visited the chief again, not to make the same request, but to bring him a gift showing that they felt no resentment for his blunt “no.” He was so touched by their gentle response that he asked them, “When do you need the Hall?” When the trainees gave him the dates, the chief replied, “You can use it. In fact, those are the only days when it is not being used.”

The trainees put up posters in the laundromat, the stores, and in the bar, inviting people to their evangelistic crusade. The posters announced: “An evangelist from Canada and one from the United States.” Then they began praying and preparing for the services.

Prior to the commencement of the evangelistic meetings, the trainees prayed that the Lord would bring ten people to Himself. As the crusade progressed, hearts began to be touched. There were seven first-time decisions, and three backsliders restored. The trainees spent their remaining days in the village instructing the ones who had responded to Christ.

### **FOR A TIME SUCH AS THIS**

...Neither trainees (nor their supervisors) can predict just how God will choose to use them during the summer...

Steve was a second-year trainee and wanted to spend his summer with NMTC in a certain Native community. He was quite disappointed when he found out that he would be placed somewhere else. But after awhile he saw the Master’s plan.

He and his partner, Allan, had started having Bible studies with an old man by the name of Johnny. So it was quite a shock one morning to hear the news that Johnny had passed away. The trainees were invited into a home where they found a group of Johnny’s relatives and friends weeping over the loss.

They knew that comfort was desperately needed. Johnny’s sister-in-law asked, “Come, will you pray with me and read the Word like you used to do with Johnny?” A few days later she commented that, “Since you have been reading and praying with me, I have peace.”

When Steve recalled his summer’s experience and the disappointment of not being sent where he had hoped, he was reminded of the Book of Esther (especially chapter 4, verse 14), and that he had come to this village for a special reason and “for a time such as this.”

## **TO BE CONTINUED...**

...Some have criticized short-term outreaches, saying that new converts are left behind at the end of the summer with no encouragement or follow-up. NCEM recognizes this concern and, where possible, these communities are visited during the year. But a notable feature of NMTC is that often the program “is” follow-up!...

Kevin was also a second-year trainee, and had finished the program the previous summer somewhat discouraged. Nothing significant seemed to have been accomplished, he thought.

Kevin realized that he was beginning to learn how a missionary feels when he works for years, and seemingly has nothing to show for it. On a positive note, though, Kevin had got to know a young Native fellow by the name of Kerry.

His second summer, Kevin returned to the same village in the Northwest Territories, and was able to continue his ministry to Kerry, and this time to Kerry’s family as well. The family accepted Kevin’s invitation to attend a family Bible camp held nearby, and some of them accepted the Lord while at camp!

Kerry’s father said, “It’s because of people like you guys, and because of my wife and children, that I want to change my life. I want to thank you for coming.”

## **LONELY CHRISTIANS**

...In the least-likeliest places, trainees have found Christian fellowship...

Yoka had been looking forward to coming to Canada from Japan, and in particular to seeing the Yukon. But like many other trainees, she came with numerous fears (most of which disappeared during NMTC’s Seminar Week). From the beginning, village work seemed a challenge to Yoka, and at times she felt like she was wasting her time.

She was encouraged, though, by Tony, an older man in the community, who shared his stories with her. After listening, Yoka told him the story of her conversion, and was excited by his response. “You come to our place tomorrow and I’ll tell you how I got saved,” he said.

What a surprise! In the midst of reaching out to unsaved people, these trainees were encouraged to find believers in some of the most unexpected places. Just as NMTC trainees in many other locations have done, Yoka spent part of her time with these lonely Christians who are hungry for spiritual fellowship. Tears were shed at the end of the summer when “good-byes” were said.

## **DISAPPOINTMENTS**

“Lord, show me the right way -- is it Indian religion or another?” prayed a Native man. Three days later an NMTC couple arrived in his village and led him to the Lord. The trainee couple had been praying that the Lord would prepare the hearts of the people before they got there.

“It’s not that I want to ... but how do you accept the Lord?” questioned a Native child.

“What exactly do I have to do to be a Christian?” asked the chief’s wife.

The searching hearts of people (such as the above three) would encourage and motivate any Christian worker. But even though trainees are often able to gain rapport with local Native people during their summer, there are also times of rejection and disappointment. Even during the short span of a summer, trainees may experience some of the same emotions felt by long-term missionaries.

In some locations the trainees themselves -- not just the Gospel message they bring -- may be opposed. In spite of this there is a growing positive attitude towards NMTC trainees in many Native communities, and it can help prepare the way for future year-round missionary outreach.

One trainee team felt the disappointment of preparing for visitors to their cabin and not having them show up. Another team could not get permission from the chief to hold a Vacation Bible School. One trainee found opportunity to make contacts by working alongside a Native construction crew -- but enraged one of the workers by refusing to go and buy whisky for the men.

But God gave creative ideas to each of these trainees and, in spite of opposition, doors of opportunity were opened:

The couple who were refused permission to hold a VBS enrolled their own young children in a local day-care, and this led to meeting Native people. The enraged construction worker later became a friend of the trainee -- giving him gifts and taking him moose hunting. Dough art classes, a door-to-door survey, using mechanical skills, teaching swimming lessons ... were some of the ways that the trainees got involved in the lives of the local people, thus making opportunities for Christian witness.

## **REACHED BY A TRAINEE**

The trainee’s goal is to reach out to individuals and families in the Native community. Sometimes, though, initially it is only the younger children who will display friendliness and show any openness to the Gospel. But the following testimony written by Donna (Anderson) Lakey gives evidence that ministry by trainees to children is not to be underrated:

*When I find myself talking to an eleven-year-old, I try to picture all the good things that God has in store for them if they will accept Christ as Saviour. That is how old I was when I came to the Lord for salvation.*

*It was at a family Bible camp in northern Alberta that Darlene Bankert counselled and prayed with me. Did she wonder and question whether or not I knew what I was doing? I don’t know. But I know that, as a Christian worker, I have often wondered how much the child I am counselling understands. Yet that day is still so clear in my mind and in my heart. It was real and*

*I know that something happened!*

*Darlene and her partner came to my home community of Gift Lake, Alberta, as trainees with the NMTC program. My most clearest memories of that summer are of Darlene explaining Bible verses to me. Off and on, over the years, Darlene and I have kept in touch with each other. In fact, her first baby girl was named after me! I still praise the Lord for leading Darlene to join the NMTC summer program, and for all the encouragement she has been to me.*

*I became God's child in July of 1970, and He has had His hand on me ever since. I have sensed this in very real ways. I often think of how my life is full of hope because of what the Lord has done for me. There is a reason to live!<sup>5</sup>*

Reached through the program, Donna herself became an NMTC trainee one summer during her Bible school years. She attended Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute, graduating in 1980. In the following years she served the Lord full-time in a number of ministries. Donna was an original member of the Tribal Trails television program staff, co-hosting the program. She also served in the Philippines for a short-term with Venture Teams International. In 1988 she married Terry Lakey, also a KBI grad, and they served on staff at the School, and later in field ministry in British Columbia with United Indian Mission.

## **LONG-TERM IMPACT**

What has over 25 years of NMTC accomplished in the Native communities? In many cases trainees have been assigned to places where a shortage of full-time workers has left the community without year-round Christian outreach. In a number of locations, though, this short-term outreach has resulted in something more permanent. Through the NMTC program the village of Cormorant, Manitoba, for example, was opened to year-round Gospel outreach resulting in the establishment of a church. That church is now reaching out to other communities. Missionary Cliff McComb tells how it happened:

*In 1971, Mission business took me by train to Thicket Portage, Manitoba. As the train stopped in Cormorant on the way, the number of people that came to watch the train really impressed upon my heart the spiritual need of this village. As I took note of the many young people in the crowd I wondered if this perhaps would be a village in which the Lord would have us place NMTC trainees for the summer. As my wife and I prayed about it we were indeed convinced that this was the place.*

*In early June I again got on the train and headed for Cormorant to see what arrangements could be made regarding accommodation for trainees. I didn't know anyone in the village so I went to the general store. I told [the storekeeper] what was upon my heart and he was very considerate. I told him we needed a cabin or house for a couple of summer missionaries to live in. He said there was a cabin that might be available but he would have to look into it.*

*I spent the rest of the day visiting in the village and then found a place to stay while waiting for the train to arrive in the early morning hours. A few days later word came from the storekeeper*

*that the cabin was available and there would be no charge for the use of it. This gave us great assurance that God was indeed leading.*

*Finally the day came when the trainees arrived. I accompanied them to Cormorant. Everything needed for living in the village for the summer had to be taken in by train as there was no road into the village at that time.*

*The boys did a good job that summer and they found that there were indeed many young people in the village. Bible studies, Sunday school and their witnessing was entirely new to the people there. I went in once a week to see how the fellows were making out.*

*In each of the following years, trainees were placed in Cormorant. Then, in 1974, it seemed that people were beginning to show genuine interest in the Gospel. That year one girl went out to a Bible camp with the trainees and I believe she accepted the Lord as Saviour. The Seed had been sown and it was beginning to sprout!*

*In 1975 missionary Dennis Anderson and I went to spend a day in the village. By this time there was a road to the south side of the lake. We went to the home of Bert Genaille, but only Elizabeth, his wife, was home. She welcomed us -- it was her daughter who had been out to Bible camp.*

*As we talked with Elizabeth she expressed a sincere interest in spiritual truths. In due course I asked her if she would like to receive the Lord as her personal Saviour. She said, "That is what I want." We explained the way of salvation and Elizabeth accepted the Lord. From that day until now there has been no turning back!*

*We did not see Bert that day but much prayer was offered on his behalf. In the days that followed, more came to know the Lord in the village. Among them was Bert. Bert and Elizabeth became faithful in Bible study and church attendance. Every week they would make a 100-mile round trip to attend the service at the Big Eddy Chapel (near The Pas). They also began a Sunday school in their own home as well as a weekly Bible study.*

*Bert was burdened to have a chapel at Cormorant for their services. A few years after this he bought a lot, then waited and prayed. Then the village of Cormorant offered him a mobile home that had been damaged by fire. Much work, renovation and rebuilding restored the mobile home to like-new condition. Their faith was rewarded as they saw many give hours of labour and gifts of love and money until the building was finally dedicated to the service of the Lord. The chapel is a monument to the faithfulness of these folks who have remained steadfast even when the going was rough.<sup>6</sup>*

The work at Cormorant continues. The Chapel has seen some attend Bible school and become involved in the work of the church. Bert and Liz left for Bible school in 1993, were NMTC trainees the summer of 1994, and then entered full-time ministry with Continental Mission, based at Thompson, Manitoba. And it all started through the NMTC summer missions program.

## **SHORT-TERM CONCERNS**

The NMTC program has not been without cost and without risk. It's true that trainees enter the stations relatively inexperienced in ministry and limited in knowledge of the culture. And it does take extra effort on the part of full-time workers to accommodate them.

Yet the NMTC program has proven that it's worth the risk. For one thing, summer workers can be a real boost to career workers. They often bring with them enthusiasm, boldness and creativity to their assignment; this encourages and motivates the Mission's career workers who are there for the "long haul."

NMTC has helped young people know God's will for their lives. Some find that they're not cut out for pioneer missionary work, but go on to make excellent technical support missionaries. There are those whom God does not call to full-time ministry, but who become effective in challenging their local churches with the call of missions.

And some, after completing their Bible school training, have decided to return to their NMTC summer station. After seeing the great spiritual needs, they've realized that if they don't go to reach these people with the Gospel, then perhaps no one else will.

## **BIBLE CAMPS: MINISTRY IN THE OUT-OF-DOORS**

Missionaries running camping programs for Native people? The idea does sound ironical. After all, historically Canada's first peoples are campers. Many were nomadic, each year moving from their winter dwellings to summer camping grounds.

Though the summer camping tradition may have been lost by some Native people, it remains an attraction to many. "These people really don't like living in town all year," noted one retired missionary, after returning to a former post and noticing the number of cabins on the lake shore close to a newly constructed town-site.

It is exactly for this reason that camping has been a viable outreach for NCEM. Bible camps have brought Native people and the Gospel together in a natural setting.

Several types of camping programs have been implemented by NCEM workers over the years, some resembling traditional Native camping practices more than others. Though NCEM's goal has been to reach whole families, it would seem at first glance that the majority of camping efforts have been geared for Native children.

There are reasons for this. One is the regrettable fact that in some areas there is not enough spiritual interest by teens and adults to bring them to camp. But parents will send their children.

Besides touching the lives of these youngsters, in indirect ways children's camps have led to open doors of ministry to their parents and to their communities.

## **THEIR CLOSEST FRIEND**

Some of the children who come to camp feel lost, lonely and unloved. As a result, they are ready to respond to the truth of God's love shown through camp staff. Lyle Anderson, who served for several years as an NCEM camp director, wrote about one such camper:

*"I'm going home. I don't like it here. You can't make me stay!" Calvin threw the words over his shoulder as he took off into the darkness and headed for home. I was about 100 yards behind him. "Wait up, Calvin," I shouted. "I want to talk to you."*

*Fortunately he stopped.*

*Calvin had arrived on the second day of a five-day camp. He came in the back of his dad's old Chevy pick-up truck with his brother. Calvin was excited about being at camp for the first time and got his bunk ready in a jiffy.*

*But camping didn't go smoothly for Calvin. He had brought along a problem that had plagued him for a long time. You see, wherever Calvin went the kids teased him. He was big for his age and overweight. Calvin handled the situation by flattening the teaser. Of all the things Calvin could do, he could fight best and was afraid of no one.*

*We had several unscheduled visits from Calvin (and the one he had tackled) that first afternoon. Finally, just before supper hour I took time to help Calvin cultivate a friendship. It seemed that for the first time in his young life he had a friend. Billy and Calvin got along famously until evening chapel time. It took special coaxing to get Calvin to attend the service. Later, during devotions and snack time in the cabins, Calvin, unnoticed, packed his bag and slipped out into the night.*

*I quickly caught up to him and the two of us sat down and talked for over an hour. While we talked, the bitterness and hatred that had welled up in his eleven year-old heart spilled out in torrents of cursings and threats. He hated his mom because he didn't have a real dad and she made them all live with a white man. He hated his school and teacher because they all teased him. He hated God and the church because there was no love there. Now, he hated me and the camp because we were the same as everyone else.*

*As we talked, a flicker of light dawned in his eyes when he admitted that he thought his counsellor loved him. He also realized that he had made a friend that afternoon. Reluctantly he even thought that perhaps I loved him. After all, I was sitting there in the middle of the night trying to comfort him.*

*His counsellor welcomed him back to the cabin, but Calvin was still uttering threats as he climbed into his bunk. Next morning the staff worked and prayed for Calvin. Billy stuck with him*

*too. Calvin began to enter into the games and even listened at devotion times. He loved to swim, canoe, and ride the horses.*

*Calvin and I still had our little visits when he decided to flatten someone. He said he couldn't stop. But now he said it with a smile and apologized to his victims.*

*Calvin and his brother were the last two campers to leave. The last time I saw him he was riding in a boat with his folks. He shouted and waved, "I'm going home. See you next year."*

*Camp was over and Calvin had not given his heart to the Lord, but he had learned some valuable lessons. He had learned that Jesus wanted to be his closest and best Friend and that He would forgive his sin and change his life.<sup>7</sup>*

Knowing the strengths and limitations of a ministry is important. NCEM recognizes that in many cases children's Bible camps have produced mostly long-range results. In other words, it is mostly a "seed-planting" ministry. The results of the sowing of God's Word are sometimes not known for years, even decades.

Many missionaries will tell how it is a regular occurrence for them to meet Native people, now young adults, who say, "I know you ... I went to your Bible camp." They will comment on the good time they had at camp. They may not be living for the Lord now -- and they may have caused a raucous while they were at camp -- but they remember camp as a place where God spoke to them. Even many years later the missionary can talk to them openly about the Lord because of their camping experience.

For some Native kids, Bible camp is the beginning of their walk with the Lord. It's true that many will come to camp just for the fun, but the Holy Spirit often does serious work in the lives of campers. For many of them, it is like an oasis in a spiritual desert.

## **PLANTING SEEDS THAT SPREAD**

Bible knowledge implanted in their hearts at camp can have long-range effects. Even though camp lasts just one week, the Seed of the Word gets planted. And as Bible camp coordinator Len Breen told it, the Word can spread!

NCEM Native Bible camps almost always include time for making crafts -- and for good reason. Years afterwards, you can probably still find an "original piece of art" hanging in some campers' homes, reminding them of their week at Bible camp.

One year a group of young people from Rapid City, South Dakota, assisted at one of our camps. Along with them they brought materials and a craft idea that proved a real blessing.

Most Christians are familiar with the "Wordless Book" -- a visual aid made of blank coloured pages that illustrates the plan of salvation. This volunteer group, however, taught the children how to make "Wordless Bracelets" out of leather and beads.



The campers loved the project. As they worked making their bracelets during craft time, each colour was explained as God's story of salvation was told ... and remembered!

One day one of the camper's parents arrived for a visit, bringing with her some extra clothes for her daughter. Down at the beach the little girl ran up to her mom. Forgetting to even say hello, she excitedly boasted, "Look what I made, Mom!"

With great pride she showed her mom her "Wordless Bracelet." Unable to get even a word in, the mother stood there listening as each colour was described ... along with the way of salvation!<sup>8</sup>

## **CORRECTABLE FAILURES**

Mistakes ... NCEM makes no claim that its track record in camping has been gold medal level. There have been failures. Sometimes a "white" camping program has been tried with Native kids ... unsuccessfully, of course. Some camps have had to rely on staff who were too young and were untrained in cross-cultural matters. In some cases camp discipline was poor, and sometimes follow-up was lacking.

All these failures are serious, but all are correctable. NCEM believes that none are reason enough for discontinuing camping. When missionaries hear what Jack Gordon heard, they know that the weeks and months of planning and preparing, the recruiting and training of volunteer staff, the investment of money and time in campground facilities ... is all worth it! Jack writes about it:

*Saul was no ordinary boy. Right from the first day of camp we wondered what problems lay ahead of us. We knew that he came from a broken home, and that he had been expelled from school twice that year. Wherever he went he seemed to take turmoil with him. How many problems could a 12-year old create? We were soon to find out.*

*Once camp was under way and the unfamiliar surroundings and strangeness of his camp counsellor had vanished, Saul was true to form and began to live up to his reputation. As the days passed, things became progressively worse.*

*One night, while sitting at the evening meal, one of the campers said to me, "Jerry won't come to eat. He's crying." I went over to the cabin and was shocked at what I saw. There sat a precious boy whom God and his parents had entrusted to us, face scratched and large bruises on his face and chest. Both bruises were swollen and the skin had been broken.*

*"What happened?" I asked. "I had a fight with Saul," was the reply between sobs. "He jumped on my bed and when I told him to get off he hit me and I hit him back."*

*My heart sank as I saw the awful condition of this boy. What would his parents say? Would they ever send him back to camp again? My first reaction was to send Saul home. We had had enough. However, we talked it over and prayed about it and decided to give Saul one final*

*warning -- one more outburst would see him sent home.*

*The next day God intervened. Saul was led to the Saviour. We watched for signs of change in his life. There seemed so very little. Around the campfire on closing night of camp he gave his testimony. We wondered about what he said. Did he mean it?*

*Well, camp ended, fall came and school started. About two months into the school term I felt led to call Saul's social worker and inquire as to how Saul was doing. To my joy this is what I was told: "He's a different boy. He's been at school for two months and we haven't received a single call from the school principal. He has settled down a lot. He's thinking of going to Bible camp again next year." Finally, the social worker added, "I have written on his progress report that I believe Bible camp had had a real good influence upon his life."9*

### **IS CAMP JUST FOR THE CAMPER?**

Not all campers are like Saul, nor like Calvin. Each is an individual -- unique and specially loved by God. But is camp just for the camper? NCEM doesn't believe so. Each year volunteer workers play a big part in the ministry. A camp director tells about one worker, in particular, whose experience was much more than "just a summer at camp."

*At 14 years of age, Denise was one of the youngest in a church group that came to assist at an NCEM Bible camp for a couple weeks. The following year we were pleasantly surprised when we received her completed application form saying she wanted to come again, and this time to spend five full weeks working at camp.*

*Near the end of her time with us last summer, she called me aside, saying she wanted to talk to me. (Usually when a staff member wanted to talk, it was because there was a problem. I was relieved to find out that that wasn't the reason!)*

*When we sat down, she began to tell me her story. She said that when she was about eight years old, her home church held a missions conference. She remembered that there were several organizations represented there, and NCEM was one of them.*

*She didn't remember his name, but she clearly remembers meeting the NCEM missionary. As she wandered from table to table looking at the displays, it seemed to her that this missionary was the only one who wanted to talk with an eight-year-old.*

*As a result, that night the Lord gave her a special desire to share the Gospel with Native people "someday" as a missionary. This longing never left her, but she had always thought that her missionary service could not take place until she had "grown up" and finished Bible school.*

*So, at the end of a busy summer, Denise wanted me to know that she was grateful for the opportunity to get involved. NCEM's Native camping program had made it possible for her to begin seeing her goal realized sooner than she'd expected.*

*I was personally encouraged -- and reminded ... God “does” call kids.<sup>10</sup>*

## **STARTING UP A BIBLE CAMP**

What does it take to start a Native Bible camp? A burden to reach people with the Gospel is a prerequisite. Add some prayer, some staff, some water, some buildings, some land, some...

“How’d they make that road? Did the [caterpillar] driver follow an old bull moose through the bush?” That was the reaction from the truck driver who hauled in a cement mixer during construction of Pine Ridge Bible Camp.

Yes, NCEM’s camps may be out of the way, but that’s the whole point. One of the benefits of Bible camp is that it gets people away from the day-to-day distractions of life at home and in their communities. Even those who receive Christian teaching during the year benefit greatly from camp because so much more concentrated time is spent in a Christian atmosphere where the Gospel can be taught, displayed and practised in daily life.

Though some of NCEM’s Native Bible camps are held on rented facilities, other camps are owned by the Mission. Pine Ridge Bible Camp is one of NCEM’s camps that has developed into a facility with year-round ministry. (Another is the Arrowhead Native Bible Center on Grand Lake, New Brunswick, which began its ministry in NCEM’s Eastern-Field in 1988.)

This is how it all began at Pine Ridge. In 1970, missionary Harold Roberts was directing at Jeanotte Lake Bible Camp’s rented facilities, with Bill Jackson as camp speaker. The original plan was for one week of camp, but before that week was over Harold received a phone call from a social services worker at Buffalo Narrows asking if they would hold another week of camp for about 100 kids.

It was difficult for these missionaries to turn down such an opportunity! It turned out to be a full and busy week, with more than a few discipline problems. Though overall it was considered a successful camp, it was agreed that a place specifically for these Native children from further north was needed.

Not too long after, a piece of land was located just west of Beauval, in northwestern Saskatchewan, and the construction of buildings began -- a large kitchen with dining room, and three cabins. 34 campers came the first year, 1972, with three one-week sessions being held.

Right from the start, a goal of Pine Ridge staff was for year-round camping. It began in a small way during Harold and Esther Roberts’ years at the Camp and has been carried on by succeeding staff. Outdoor winter activities have included tobogganning, cross-country skiing, ski-dooing and ice-fishing.

Besides the desire that Native young people would find the Lord as their Saviour and grow in their faith at Pine Ridge, a long-term hope was that some of these would come back to serve on the Camp’s staff. And that, too, has happened.

Harold and Esther Roberts and other missionaries involved with the Camp have seen many young people come and go. In their ministry in later years the Roberts' note that some of their most encouraging conversations are with people who remind them of their summers at camp -- especially when they say, "I've never forgotten what I learned at Pine Ridge."

## **FAMILY CAMPS**

Traditionally, Native tribal groups would meet each summer near quiet water for fellowship, social exchange, sports and competitions, feasts and religious ceremonies. Their summer camping activities always included their children.

More than any other of NCEM's Bible camp programs, family camping best reflects historic Native practice. In numerous locations, these camps are now held on NCEM fields. In most cases the camps are organized by the missionary and local Native believers, and are held on campgrounds not too far from their communities.

Twin Lakes Bible Camp proved exceptional. It became a meeting place for unusually large numbers of Native families from several north-central Alberta communities. In 1989 the Camp celebrated its 25th Anniversary, and missionary Shirley Jackson took opportunity to recount the Camp's beginnings and some of the more memorable happenings:

*In the early 1960's Clarence Jaycox (of the Christian & Missionary Alliance, and one of the first evangelical missionaries in north-central Alberta) was on his way home to Loon Lake. With his children needing a break from travelling, he stopped at Twin Lakes. While they enjoyed the beauty and tranquillity of the natural surroundings there, Clarence and his wife Ruth together thought, "What a nice place for a Bible camp."*

*When my husband, Bill, visited the Jaycoxes a while later, they discussed the possibilities of beginning a camp. About this same time a young missionary couple, Carroll and Cathy Hill, moved into the area. They too thought that starting a Bible camp was a great idea. Soon Carroll, along with the help of a teenage boy, was working hard at clearing trees and preparing a spot for the camp.*

*When time for the first camp rolled around, the Hills took their monthly support cheque and a donation from friends and spent it all on groceries and lumber for picnic tables. No one had any idea how many people would come.*

*Bill brought in some extra workers and the first camp began. The cook that first year was Irene Haglund, a school teacher from Mallaig, Alberta. The camp workers watched in wonder as Irene capably cooked on an open fire. In those first years we looked after a number of children who came without their parents. (Now Twin Lakes is strictly a family camp, with each family unit taking care of its own cooking.)*

*That first summer about 200 people showed up and the following year twice that many came. It kept growing until an estimated 800 attended one summer! Scattered all over the campgrounds*

*and nestled among the jack-pines were 110 white home-made tents and teepees. It was a captivating sight, especially at dusk, when campfires blazed inside each teepee and near the doors of each tent.*

*Today the teepees are gone and have been replaced with modern tents and truck campers. Fewer people attend now -- it seems organized sports and other attractions have drawn people away. But those who attend do so because they have a sincere desire to be at Bible camp. A number of the elderly folk who came year after year are no longer around. Some of these who have passed away came to know the Lord at camp.*

*Many people have made decisions to follow the Lord at Twin Lakes Bible Camp over the years. Backsliders have been restored and a number of campers have been baptized. Some of the Christians, now in their 30's, remember coming to the Camp as children. One of these was baptized at the 1989 Camp.*

*Some interesting things have happened at the Camp over the years. During the Anniversary Camp, as we gathered at the original site of the big tent, we recalled a number of "never-to-be-repeated" events:*

*Many of us remembered the evening that four covered wagons pulled in at sunset. In those days a number of people would come by covered wagon, some from as far as 50 miles away.*

*Another time a car came driving in with the sleeve of a leather jacket whirling around one of the wheels. Apparently the driver had had trouble with a wheel bearing and had stuffed part of his jacket around the car's axle to keep the wheel on ... and they did make it to camp!*

*Everyone remembered the night a camper came running to the camp nurse with the message, "Someone is having a baby over there in that teepee!" Sure enough, the nurse arrived just in time to deliver a healthy baby boy. A few years later another baby was born at camp. Two weddings have been performed at the Camp.*

*Some remembered the afternoon when a car came driving into camp and burst into flames just as the engine was turned off. This caused quite a stir until the flames were drowned with bucket after bucket of sand.*

*Everyone at the 25th Anniversary celebration enjoyed reminiscing about past events. There was a common theme of thankfulness to God for His blessing on the Camp -- thankfulness because many have heard and responded to the Gospel at Twin Lakes Bible Camp over the last 25 years.<sup>11</sup>*

Whether family camps, children's or teen camps, these outreaches operate as much as possible in cooperation with local Native churches and fellowships. They have, in fact, served as both an outreach for the fellowship groups and as a growth catalyst for them. The family camp at Twin Lakes, for example, was instrumental in the initiating and growth of Native churches at Peerless and Loon Lake, Alberta. Other churches in the area were nourished through the ministry of the

Camp.

## IN THE WILDERNESS

While “resident” Bible camps are effectively ministering to younger kids, teens have been more difficult to reach through these programs. Native community leaders acknowledge that many of their teens are restless, frustrated and aimless, and do not receive much direction at home. In the last few years, NCEMers have begun developing camp programs to bring the hope of the Gospel to this age group.

“Upward Bound” began in the Mission’s Western-Field in 1993. Workers on other fields, as well, have been begun using wilderness camping as an outreach. There is less emphasis on planned programs, and more on activities that teach interdependence. In wilderness camping there is no strict time schedule; the emphasis is on applying what’s going on at the moment. Leaders call these “teachable moments.”

Still in the developing stages, those involved are excited about the potential for this type of ministry on NCEM fields. They say it can be adapted to most regions. Besides hiking and canoeing, it could include horseback. And it need not be restricted to teens. Native adults, too, can be “Upward Bound.”

## WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

As anyone who has experienced it will know, there are a lot of things that can go wrong when you’re out camping. The problems seem bigger because usually you’re not very close to help. And the problems can be overwhelming when you’re responsible not just for yourself, but for dozens of campers!

From tornados knocking down trees and power lines, to hungry bears wandering onto the grounds -- it’s all happened at NCEM Bible camps. In the late 1970's, camp director Lyle Anderson told about the difficulties of one particular camp:

*Trials began at Jeanotte Lake Bible Camp when we were faced with four times as many campers than we had planned for. We hadn’t expected very many to come but had determined to carry on no matter how few. We believe that one little child coming to know Christ makes a camp worthwhile.*

*When time to register came we were faced with 57 eager campers from ages 7 to 16! Registration could easily have turned to bedlam as everyone seemed to arrive at the same time. With God’s help we were able to sort things out in time for a good hot meal and got ready for the first chapel period. From the very outset it was evident in the way the children listened to the message that it was going to be a good camp.*

*However, problems began to loom with the “lights out” bell. Counsellors began to hear timid voices, “I don’t have a blanket.” Then, “I don’t either.” Boys’ cabins -- girls’ cabins -- both had*

*the same refrain. "O Lord," I prayed, "You know it's warm here during the day, but the nights are so cold. What do you want me to do? These little ones must have covers tonight. Please help us Lord."*

*Trying to be as practical as we could be, we pooled our resources. There were a few extra blankets -- but only a few. Friends could double up and crowd together in the cold bunks. We could keep a fire roaring in the camp kitchen where the coldest ones could come to "thaw out." We worked on ideas to solve our dilemma.*

*No one really noticed the car headlights as a car pulled into camp. We were engrossed in our problem. The car was the arrival of our handcraft teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Taylor. As we helped them unload their much loaded vehicle we shared our predicament with the Taylors.*

*"Look what we brought," they said. "Fifteen handmade woollen blankets made by the ladies of our church during the winter months." With hearts overwhelmed, we hurried to cover our cold campers. When we were done not a blanket was left over but neither was there one child without a cover. Our God knew how many to plan for at camp!*

*During the previous winter, Mr. Taylor had spoken to a group of praying women in a farming district at Coronation, Alberta. They were constrained to make blankets for a summer camp. Surely they could have felt a bit like Noah -- blankets, woollen blankets for a July camp? But they obeyed and began to sew. They sewed until they had 15 blankets. The precise number we were later to need. "Thank you Lord!"*

*We awoke to a rain-soaked soggy world on the third day of that camp. Everything was water-logged. Praying for a cheerful attitude, I threw back my shoulders and decided a great big campfire was just what the campers needed. I hefted the axe to make preparation only to remember that our wood supply had been finished the night before. I walked out into the drizzle knowing that the woods were soaked and prayed, "Lord, where will I find dry wood for the kids this day? Please show me, Lord. Amen."*

*As I stood alone in the clammy silence of that rain-drenched morning, the only sound that came was the sound of a truck on the nearby road that passes the campsite. Instead of passing by, it slowed for the camp entrance and turned in. "Must be lost," I thought, and walked forward to see whether I could help the driver in any way.*

*"Where do you want it?" came a voice from inside the cab.*

*"Want what?" was my loud reply over the sound of the motor.*

*"This load of wood."*

*"Oh," without really thinking, "Just put it over near the woodshed." And, would you believe it ... when he backed the big truck in and tilted the box, out tumbled the most beautiful, dry, ready-to-burn firewood!*

*I turned to thank the men, but they were already gone. I could but turn heavenward with my thanks. I don't know where the firewood came from nor how God worked on the answer to that prayer, for most certainly He had heard before I called in order to get that truck ready ahead of time. My faith was strengthened as I realized anew how much He cares and how He answers the cries of His children. Later surrounded by cheery campers around the hot stove in the big dining area, I realized as never before the meaning of "Casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you."12*

A number of campers made decisions for Christ at that camp. The blanket-makers, the wood-suppliers, and many others will all share in the final rewards. And so will many who have financially sponsored campers and counsellors over the years.

## **WHEN CAMP IS OVER**

One week at camp is a short time. But when campers come for several years in a row, sometimes even those with hard hearts begin to soften. And when camp staff are able to carry on contact with campers after the summer is over, God's love continues to break through in even greater ways.

Missionary Laura Ford provides such an example. She told of 16 year-old \*Sandra who had been to camp four years straight (\*not her real name). After her fourth year they began corresponding. The following are excerpts from some of Sandra's letters to Laura:

*"I remember the first year I went to camp. It was the first time I had left my mom because of my choice. As soon as I got to camp I wanted to turn around and go home. Boy, was I scared! But when camp was over and I did leave, I really missed it."*

*"I don't know why I went back the second year, but I do remember hearing someone say that you're drawn to places where you feel you're loved. I felt a lot of love at camp. I guess that's why I returned."*

*"The third year I went back because I liked it. Still, it was only this fourth year that I remember my cabin counsellor telling me she loved me. Even the first morning I arrived at camp she showed me she cared. I was in pure misery and her caring really helped."*

*"One night we went for a walk down by the dock. We talked about a lot of things. On the way back to the tent I started to laugh. I had gone down to the dock full of bitterness and tension. And for some reason I was returning full of love and happiness."*

*"I had been living in an institution for some time and I was afraid to go back alone to where there was dope and drinking. My life had been full of loneliness, defiance and bitterness. But somehow my counsellor had reached me with her love. She told me I didn't have to go back alone or be filled with bitterness. She told me to reach out to God and pray to Him. I did just that."*



*“When I arrived back at the institution I didn’t remain quiet concerning what had happened to me. I told. I told my closest buddy that I was a Christian. I fully expected him to tell me to be quiet, but he didn’t.”<sup>13</sup>*

Laura says that Sandra later moved to a group home (and her friend became a Christian just before she was transferred). Laura continued to correspond with her and noticed her growth in the Lord.

It took a period of time for Sandra to allow the Lord to take over in her life. But it was at Bible camp that it all started, and it was through the encouragement of camp staff that it had continued.

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**NOTES: NMTC’s beginnings: adapted from taped report by Art Tarry (1989), supplemented by report by Bud Elford given at NMTC’s 25th anniversary celebration, Lac La Biche, AB; 1--Adapted from taped report by Art Tarry (1989); 2--Ibid.; 3--Ibid.; 4--Ibid.; 5--Northern Lights magazine, issue #422; 6--NLs #389; 7--NLs #356; 8--NLs #439; 9--NLs #351; 10--NLs #439; 11--NLs #417; 12--NLs #356; 13--NLs #368.**

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*The original printing of **Light on the Horizon** included photos with captions, and text boxes. Here is text from some of them:*

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#### **NMTC**

Art Tarry and a trainee. Art saw the potential of young people who were wanting and willing to serve God, but just didn’t know how.

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#### **NMTC**

Though NMTC’s primary purpose is to provide cross-cultural missionary training, evangelism is a natural outcome. Many have been saved and disciplined through the program.

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#### **NMTC**

NMTC trainees have found their way into the hearts and homes of many Native families.

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#### **NMTC**

Trainees have freedom in choosing their ministry approach. Many have found openings for ministry as they have worked and socialized with Native people.

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#### **NMTC**

NMTC trainees 1972. Jake Klippenstein (front row, third from right) joined NCEM later that same year -- and his canoeing partner becoming his life partner! Jake directed the NMTC program in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

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## **NMTC**

Water and boat safety are part of NMTC's curriculum. Some of the trainees would be assigned to community's situated on lakes or rivers.

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## **NMTC**

Cultural and geographical fascinations soon fade: just as in career missionary work, NMTC proves to be a spiritual challenge.

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## **NMTC**

Bert & Liz Genaille: NMTC was instrumental in the establishing of a church in their home community of Cormorant, Manitoba.

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## **NMTC**

Trainees are "on-their-own" for the summer, but career missionaries stop by to give counsel and oversight. Jack and Ginnie Norcross (Ginnie, back left) supervised trainees at Sturgeon Landing, Saskatchewan for several years.

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## **NMTC FACTS & FIGURES**

--NMTC's first 25 years saw approximately 1100 trainees participate.

--The highest attendance was in 1978 with 74 trainees.

--One year 36 Native communities hosted trainees, 12 of which had never before had an evangelical worker reside there.

--Estimating conservatively, about 25 percent of all trainees have entered full-time ministry of some kind.

--NMTC directors have included: Art Tarry (1970-87); Jake Klippenstein (1988-92); and Philip Knight (1993-p).

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## **NMTC Problems?**

Of course there is risk in sending young and experienced people to the mission field. Problems have been minimal, though, say Mission directors. Not many trainees have had to be sent home, although one did

have to get bailed out of jail (a case of mistaken identity). One supervisor couldn't find his trainees for quite some time (they had gone fire-fighting without leaving a message for him). "We've had romance at NMTC, too," says one director, "but it has rather fallen out to the advance of the Gospel."

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## **NMTC**

Dear Mom & Dad...

"...I have arrived in Lac La Biche. I almost didn't survive my survival training."

"...I do not like fish and the idea of filleting one repels me. However, at camp I was persuaded to reconsider when our instructor talked bluntly about starving in the wilderness."

"...With some embarrassment, I requested another match from the instructor. I thought to myself, 'Whoever wrote that song "It Only Takes a Spark to Get a Fire Going" never went through survival training' "

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## **What NMTC Meant to Me...**

"I thought to myself, 'There is no one in this village that I can really trust, no one I can run to for help.' Through times like these I came to know God a little better and I drew closer to Him and His Word. I am really grateful for these times because I learned to trust the Lord on a day-to-day basis." (G.S., Fair Lawn, N.J.)

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## **What NMTC Meant to Me...**

"I had to adjust to many things including outdoor bathrooms (with no doors yet), cooking over a camp stove, and (ugh!) eating boiled, unscaled fish, all totally foreign to me before this summer. I also found out about a need, a real need among the Indian people for something stable and secure in their ever-changing [world]." (D.H., Newtonville, Mass.)

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## **BIBLE CAMP**

### **Making Do...**

Facilities and equipment haven't always been the greatest -- but Bible camp staff learned to make do with what they had. One missionary couple told of an early camp where they were trying to teach a chorus to the children, but there was no blackboard to be found. So what did they use?

An old stove-pipe with the words written in chalk was rotated as the song went on (and on and on).

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## **BIBLE CAMP**

Campers on their way home. Missionary Venus Cote told about two campers who had spent a week at

Arrowhead. She had driven them to camp and had listened to them talking foolishness all the way there. But on the way home they talked about the Lord!

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## **BIBLE CAMPS**

### **20 Years Later...**

20 years later: missionary Phil DuFrene told about how, while representing NCEM at a Missionsfest conference in Vancouver, a Native lady stopped by his display and picked up a camp brochure. “She turned to her three friends and said, ‘There! Steep Rock Bay Bible Camp ... I accepted the Lord there when I was 12 years old.’ ”

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### **CAMP**

Bible camp is a “seed-planting” ministry, and sometimes the results of the sowing of God’s Word are not known for years.

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### **CAMP**

Cabin devotions. Many Native kids come to camp just for the fun, but the Holy Spirit often does serious work in their lives.

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### **CAMP**

Bible camp gets young people away from the daily distractions of life at home.

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### **CAMP**

Pine Ridge Bible Camp (Saskatchewan) and Arrowhead Native Bible Centre (New Brunswick) have developed facilities that make year-round camping possible; (inset) Arrowhead main building under construction in late 1980's.

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### **CAMP**

Family camps best reflect historic Native practice. Shown are campers at Twin Lakes in the early 1960's.

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### **CAMP**

Because teens have been more difficult to reach through resident Bible camps, NCEM has begun developing wilderness camping programs.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

# LIGHT ON THE HORIZON: CHRIST BUILDS HIS CHURCH

Fifty years of missionary effort by NCEM. Fifty years of frontier outreach, opening stations where no other evangelicals were working. Fifty years of teamwork, individuals using their spiritual gifts together in a variety of ministries. Fifty years of prayer.

Fifty years of spreading the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ. What have been the results?

The question could be answered in a brief way with an attempt to give statistics ... the number of reported decisions for Christ ... number of baptisms, church members and adherents ... and the number of Native churches established. But simply giving the numbers certainly wouldn't tell the whole story. There is more to it.

### THE PAST COMES BACK

Commenting on the results of missionary effort among North American Indians in the nineteenth century, historian Ruth A. Tucker writes, "How could so much consecrated effort result in so little fruit? ... Two centuries of aggressive land grabbing, cultural clashes, and slow extermination tell the story."<sup>1</sup> No other population of the world has been both more ardently solicited and more pushed around by government officials, politicians, and church leaders than Native North Americans. Though NCEM's ministry began after most of these injustices occurred, its missionaries would often run up against the resulting barriers of resentment and mistrust.

Sometimes it's been communicated among Christians that the unevangelized are waiting with open arms for the missionary's arrival. "It doesn't work that way," says Martha Tarry, one of NCEM's first missionaries. "We found out there was a lot of prejudice against us before we ever came up there ... We found out we really weren't wanted." The Tarrys tell of visiting homes in the village of Buffalo Narrows where they did get invited in, but the people would immediately go to a back bedroom and leave the missionaries sitting looking at the walls.

Feelings of suspicion towards the new "white missionaries" have been common in many areas. Missionary and former Hudson's Bay worker, Marshall Calverley, wrote about it in the 1950's: "...This is readily understandable. They have been cheated; they have been lied to; we are still breaking our treaties. It is not surprising to read the lines penned by Pauline Johnson, herself a Mohawk Indian, which say of the white man, 'You came with a Book to save us from the sins you brought in your other hand.'"<sup>2</sup>

While NCEM missionaries could not be directly blamed for mistreatment that Native people had experienced, their ministries were affected. Some communities have flatly denied permission for NCEM to establish stations. On others, the degree of acceptance of the new missionary would vary from one Native community to the next.

This resistance to the white missionary and his message wasn't necessarily evidenced by open opposition or ridicule. One missionary, who thought that he was gaining acceptance, one day heard local Native people expressing their real attitude: "We'll accept what the white man has to say, so that he'll leave us alone."

Fortunately, these feelings of resentment have often subsided as Native people find that the missionary is someone who can be trusted. Yet the efforts of NCEMers have continued to take place amid racial barriers, for not all are the result of injustices from the past. Present-day attitudes of prejudice among Canadians keep the walls up. Socially, Native people are considered by some as second-class citizens, at best. Native people see the glaring gap in living standards and employment opportunities. And many of them resent it.

### **MISTREATED BY "CHRISTIANS"**

It hasn't only been mistreatment by government and society. The "Christian" church has also been to blame.

Reports of abuse of Indian children in church-run residential schools have surfaced in recent years. Stories of forced separation from families, denial of the right to speak their Native languages, and other offenses too terrible to describe have been revealed. And while the newer evangelical denominations and mission agencies were not involved in operating these institutions, the result for some Native individuals has been a resentment to anything "Christian."

NCEMer, Arlyn VanEnns, tells of travelling to communities in northeastern Alberta showing the Cree language JESUS film. He noted that, in one particular village, almost all the teens and all the children came out to see the film. Almost all the elderly were there, as well. But to his disappointment, virtually none of the middle-aged people were in attendance. Realizing that it was this generation that had been sent to church-run residential schools, he later wondered, "Had their experience been so bad that they've been turned off to anything that sounds Christian?"

### **CHURCHES JEALOUS OF THEIR TERRITORY**

"Last Saturday an Indian came early to talk," wrote an NCEMer in the 1970's. "Since I was just leaving, he rode along unburdening his soul en route. His heart-rending conversation was, 'I listen to you on the radio every week and I know what you say is right.' Then ... he concluded sadly, 'But what can I do? I'm ... (named his church)' "3

While their grip has slipped in recent years, old-order churches -- both Catholic and Protestant -- have contributed to a resistance to the Gospel. In some areas they have openly opposed NCEM missionaries. And they have held a controlling hand on the people. These churches were the first

to proselytize and they successfully convinced Native people that salvation was obtainable only through them.

They have jealously guarded their territory. NCEMers tell of planning outreach events, only to find that the local mainline church had scheduled something at exactly the same time. In some locations, missionaries told of new church and school buildings that, interestingly, began construction right after the arrival of the NCEMer.

Reports of opposition from old-order church leaders come from several decades ago, but some also from recent years. In the 1980's, in one location, religious leaders had the imaginations of local people running wild as they instigated warnings over a radio broadcast that the arriving NCEMers might actually cut them up! Their ensuing tactic, upon the missionaries' arrival, was to influence the village council to disallow a residence for the NCEMers, thereby forcing them to leave.

It wasn't that NCEMers were moving in to contest these established churches. They came because, despite the presence of these churches, there remained a definite spiritual need. These people did not know of salvation through faith in Christ alone. Many hadn't had the opportunity to read God's Word for themselves.

One missionary report read: "Though some people wanted to know what the Bible said, others were afraid to have it read in their homes. They had been taught that the ordinary person couldn't understand it and they should not let another minister try to explain it to them."<sup>4</sup>

The following report from the 1970's also told of the peoples' spiritual ignorance: "An Indian couple spent several hours with us in earnest conversation. They had been alerted to their need by listening to a Gospel [radio] Broadcast. They were concerned with the failure of their own church to meet their need ... Their inability to grasp the simplest spiritual truth emphasized afresh to me the importance of telling the basic truths repeatedly. I see again my dependency on the Holy Spirit to open their darkened minds."<sup>5</sup>

Even regular main-line church attenders seemed to have little or no Scriptural knowledge. One missionary tells about holding a children's Bible study and asking the kids what they knew about Matthew, Mark, Luke and some other Bible names. The children didn't recognize even one of the names except for Abraham. One little boy blurted out, "I know him! He lives next door!"

## **AT THE "DEVIL'S HOUSE"**

Local religious leaders, wary of these new evangelicals coming into their communities, did their best to keep their people away from them. In 1950 Ed Heal wrote, "The other day I overheard one little girl say to another girl, 'It is over at the devil's house,' referring to something at my house. Today I tried to visit a home that I had tried before, and a little girl poked her head out of the window and swore at me. Such is some of the prejudice here, inspired no doubt by the [church leader]."<sup>6</sup>

And if the NCEMers weren't "devils," then at least they worshipped the devil ... or that's what they had been told. Tim Gradin tells of an incident in the mid-1980's:

*A man came over one night and asked if we had any good videos we could lend him. I said, "Sure we've got some Tribal Trails," and I gave him four hours of the Gospel programs to take home.*

*He came back the next night saying, "That's good. Do you have any more?" I gave him four more hours, and he came back the third night and said, "Boy, that's really good. That's just like [my church]."*

*I was surprised at his response. I could only see the differences between what we were doing and [his church], so I didn't know quite how to answer. Then he said, "I guess you guys don't worship the devil after all."*

*It was obvious to the missionaries that the Native people were being controlled by fear of the church leaders. In the 1960's an NCEMer wrote: "The local [church-operated] school teacher here ... being extremely jealous of his position as a 'big frog in a little pond' has established a totalitarian regime over the Indians forbidding them to visit our home or attend our meetings."7*

The freedom of religion that Canadians presumably enjoyed -- including the freedom to change from one faith to another -- was obviously absent on the Indian reserve where these NCEMers served. In 1963 Dave and Muriel Anderson reported:

*"The attendance at the Sunday school ... had been at its best during December and January, until the last Sunday in January, when it dropped almost to zero. Upon investigation, we found that at least two of our most faithful attenders had been publicly strapped in the [church-run] school, for attending our Sunday School. This did not stop these two from coming, as their father wants them to come, but it did stop most of the others."8*

There are many more stories to illustrate the resistance that other NCEMers similarly faced. Stories of evangelical meetings being broken up by an angry church leader. Stories of people, one day friendly and open to the Gospel, the next day telling the missionary (in very unfriendly ways) to go home. Stories of parents forbidden to allow their children to attend Bible club or Bible camp. Stories of Indians told where to build their houses (presumably so that they would be in full view of the local church leader's house).

Opposition from mainline churches made ministry very difficult and discouraging at times for NCEM missionaries. "To the outward eye it would seem that our twelve years in this settlement have accomplished nothing," wrote one missionary couple.<sup>9</sup> The people in this particular village had continually told the missionary that they would like to come over to visit and to attend meetings, but they couldn't because of fear of their church leader.

This same missionary couple reported that, whenever the local church leader was not around, all the villagers would come to their meetings. In fact, more than once they had said to the



missionary, “We want you to be our preacher.” But when the church leader returned they were again afraid to come around.

NCEMers weren’t ignorant, though, of the possibility that the people were claiming their church’s control over them as an “escape.” Perhaps the Gospel was striking home and, being unwilling to face its implications, the people were hiding behind their alleged fear of church authorities.

## **SPIRITUAL OPPOSITION**

Though it was probably difficult at times to maintain perspective, the NCEMers knew that the old-order church leaders were not the real enemy. This was a spiritual battle. “We do not feel led to seek to combat this situation socially or politically, for our battle is not on that level and our weapons are ‘not carnal, but mighty through God,’ ” wrote one NCEMer as he concluded a report telling of the opposition he had been facing.<sup>10</sup>

Sometimes it seemed that Satan was opposing the work in every possible way. One missionary reported someone yelling at him, “You’re the devil’s angel. Get out of here. You’re bad luck.” Another said, “I’m going to get you off this reserve.” Coming to the missionary’s defense, though, an Indian friend who had heard these threats replied, “If he was bootlegging or selling dope you wouldn’t say anything. But because he’s trying to help us and tell us about God, you don’t want him.”<sup>11</sup>

In the mid-1950’s missionaries Dave and Helen Friesen reported: “Again and again we hear someone say, ‘It is not that we don’t want you here but we have been told to do our best to drive you out.’ ”<sup>12</sup>

Spiritual opposition would not only come to those on the “front lines.” One experienced missionary says that after becoming involved in a public relations ministry with the Mission, he experienced just as much spiritual opposition as he had in the villages. He knows that it is a result of his focus on encouraging people to pray.

## **NOMINALISM**

It was clear to the missionaries from the start that it would be an uphill road in claiming these communities for Christ. And the villages that had seen white men pass through seemed even more openly sinful. But besides the open opposition and immorality, in others it was Christian nominalism that contributed to resistance to the Gospel.

Many people are not aware that in the 1800’s a significant number of Indian people in northwestern Canada were saved. (The book *By Canoe and Dog Train* by Methodist missionary, Egerton Young, is but one of the historical records telling of the blessings of those days.) The spiritual decline in following generations meant that NCEM missionaries were now building on a veneer of Christianity in some communities. (One missionary has called it “going over burned out territory.”) And just as the small dose of a virus effects a resistance to a physical disease, so

it seems a tiny dose of Christianity would prevent individuals and groups from catching the real thing.

## INVISIBLE FORCES

There were forces stronger than “church-iosity” that missionaries had to contend with. After firsthand experience dealing with it, and after discussion with other workers, Bud Elford wrote:

*It first became apparent as an unseen something that opposed missionary work of any kind in almost every village. It later manifested itself in open physical confrontations with the new Christians, especially at the time of their baptisms. There was the spiritual confrontation when missionaries would move into a village to live and the physical confrontation, or power encounter, as Indian Christians would renounce their old ways, burn their idols and be baptized.*

*As missionaries moved into northern Quebec, they experienced what they came to call “the coastal sickness.” This took the form of nausea, headache, dizziness and general depression. This was not just a one-time experience, but it occurred on every occasion one would return to a village from “outside.”*

*In another area the missionaries noticed that when returning to their village, when still about 15 to 20 miles out, they would be smitten with a football of fear in the pits of their stomachs. Some were continually maligned by fear of isolation. Many persistent and negative thoughts bombarded the mind. The thoughts always ended in the same vein. “I must leave this village.” “I’m not cut out for missions.” “I must have a serious illness and should leave.”*

*In one place in the Northwest Territories, a missionary couple had moved into a log cabin in a village. One evening among the visitors coming in was a young girl who sat in a chair and began rocking. Shortly thereafter, the husband became ill and felt like fainting. His wife, a registered nurse, thought perhaps he was having a heart attack. She prayed for him and he recovered. Not long after he again began ill and fainted. After prayer he was revived and again felt fine. When this sequence continued, the man asked the girl rocking in the chair, “Is someone making medicine?” She replied that her tribe had hired [another tribe] to make medicine against the missionary. She was the ground in the missionary’s home that was being used to effect their hex. After prayer and evicting the girl, peace and health were restored.*

*As the experiences just cited and many, many more were shared, a pattern began to emerge. These things only happened to missionaries. Only those who had in them the triumphant Christ were assailed. All experiences ended on the same note: “Leave, go home, quit. It’s no use.” ... No tourist ever felt these things. No anthropologist ever recorded them. These special “treats” of hell were reserved for the saints who, in Jesus’ name, would set the prisoner free.*

Bud noted that spiritual battles faced by new Native Christians were even more intense: One Native said, “I would become a Christian, but ‘they’ won’t let me.” He was referring to attending spirits unseen by the missionary to whom he was speaking. Another had finger marks appear on his throat as he was kneeling to accept Christ. It is also known now why so many in the past days

turned back. Fear of real but unseen presences and threats of injury or death by friends and relatives are formidable foes.

But there was victory! Bud concluded his report by telling how it came: *Then gradually the light began shining in the darkness. Missionaries found that direct resistance in Jesus' name on the basis of Calvary always brought relief, victory and eventual joy. Depression in most cases was defeated, health was restored and fear was changed to expectant faith. The enemy had been uncovered -- now the battle could be joined.*<sup>13</sup>

## **TRADITIONAL RELIGION**

It has been said that one of the errors of the evangelical missionaries who worked among Native Canadians in the 1800's was their failure to deal with Native tribal religion for what it really was. It was called superstition, medicine man trickery, tiresome drum beating and ignorance of the uneducated mind. What was it? And what is it today?

Traditional North American Indian and Inuit religion has since been generally described as a form of animism, a religion where things in nature are believed to have a spirit or a power. Native Cree pastor and Bible teacher, Bill Jackson, writes: "Followers of traditional religion communicate with spirits through ceremonial observances such as the sweat house, pipe, sweet-grass and sometimes through animal spirit mediums...." Other aspects of traditional religion in Canada may include: medicine men (or women), curses, hexes, healings ("good" and "bad medicine").

"We should note," continues Bill Jackson, "that among Natives, beliefs concerning spirits and God are not always the same. While some reject the Word of God, others have included God, as Scripture reveals Him, into their religion." Whatever the case, traditional religion does not give Jesus Christ preeminence. "Certainly He is not honoured the way Scripture says He should be," concludes Bill.<sup>14</sup>

Responding to the deception of traditional religion, another Native Christian leader writes: "I do not pray to any intermediary, any in-between being, when I pray to God ... That means I don't pray to or through an animal, bird, spirit helper, mountain, thunder, etc., but directly to God in the name of Jesus ... I do not worship and serve the creation but the Creator."<sup>15</sup>

Though the government had placed a ban on certain Native religious ceremonies for a number of years, no doubt some were being carried on secretly. When restrictions were lifted, it was found that in some areas the old ways of worship were still alive. Often the Native peoples' Christian formalism was only a facade -- deep inside their traditional beliefs had persisted.

Recent decades have seen a resurgence of traditional religion in Canada. Increasingly promoted through cultural and educational programs, many Native people are embracing it for the first time, hoping to find their true identity, and personal peace and fulfilment. This trend serves as a growing obstacle for evangelical missionaries. "But at least it's easier to deal with now that it's out in the open," notes one veteran worker. And, among Native Canadians, it has weakened the

hold of old-order churches opposed to the Gospel.

## **MISSIONARY MISTAKES?**

When people are not responding to the Gospel, when there are seen and unseen barriers experienced in the work ... one can always blame the Enemy. Certainly Satan had been working to prevent the advancement of God's Kingdom on NCEM fields. But that fact has never exempted missionaries from their responsibility.

NCEMers certainly don't claim to have done everything right. "Personally we all can say, 'I could have done better,' " writes on long-term missionary in retrospect. But if laziness was a problem, it appears that at least the earliest workers couldn't be faulted. In January 1949 their closely monitored activities from the previous year (when there were only a couple dozen workers) were released: 1100 homes visited ... 4000 came to the missionaries' homes to visit ... over 404 services held with an attendance of over 6670 ... over 700 hours spent in language study.<sup>16</sup>

Considering all the outreach that took place that year, though, the response was discouragingly minimal. Even if some of their methods could be questioned, at least their diligence couldn't. They were working hard.

One method practised in some locations was for the missionary to immediately put up a church building and begin holding regular meetings. Some NCEMers would find that, in the long-run, this would be ineffective and even detrimental. They learned too late that often the response from the local people was, "You have your church and I have mine." It hindered Native people from seeing that the Church is really the Body of believers. Buildings were sometimes necessary, but missionaries learned that the acquiring of such should have been an indigenous effort.

This was all part of the greater challenge of contextualization -- helping the Native people to understand that Christianity and the Church needn't be a foreign concept.

One missionary wrote this about it:

*Jimmy listens to the message of Christ, whether in a public meeting or in personal conversation, with rapt attention. After a long conversation concerning the claims of Christ, Jimmy said to me, "Yes, I believe what you are telling me; I believe it's a true and good message; and I don't want to be a sinner ("bad man" in his vernacular); and I want to do what you say. "But," with a sad shake of the head, "I don't see how I can."*

*What Jimmy was saying was, "How can I, an Indian, in an Indian environment, tied to the culturally isolated life of my people, step out and do that which as far as I can see is a good thing for whites but which isn't practical for Indian people?"<sup>17</sup>*

## **METHOD OR NOT**

Missionaries have wished with all their hearts that Christ could have been made more real to their Native friends. They wanted to be better communicators in Native languages, translating Scripture, and learning more about the people's way of thinking. They have recognized that at times they have confused their own cultural values with Biblical principles. In light of all these failed desires, the temptation may be to think that if the missionary had only done it differently, in some locations things would have turned out better.

A working knowledge of missiological and indigenous principles would have been helpful. But if any method is of God, it must pass His test (and that applies even to those whose method is having no method!). Bud Elford wrote this about it during his term as General Director:

"The test of any program, strategy or idea is always, 'Will it work apart from faith?' 'Can it be just as effective by human effort, higher training or natural talents?' If the answer is 'Yes,' then [as in Abraham's plans to have a son] the idea is an 'Egyptian maid.'

"Remember that Hagar had one fatal flaw -- no faith was ever needed for success with her. The flesh is always immediately fruitful while faith must wait. From God's standpoint it was totally unacceptable for the Father of Faith to start in the flesh. Even though the Scriptures: 'Whatever is not of faith is sin' (Rom. 14:23), and 'Without faith it is impossible to please Him' (Heb. 11:6), were not yet written, they were true nevertheless and in operation even then."<sup>18</sup>

Besides methods and besides faith, NCEMers have found that the Scriptural promise "the greatest is love" (I Cor. 13) has always stood true. A genuine love for the people, made possible by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the missionaries, would have the greatest impact ... and would help overcome their mistakes.

## **SOCIALLY UNACCEPTABLE**

An Indian boy came to Jesus Christ and then took one year of Bible school. Upon returning to his village he was seized, tied to a tree, alcohol forced down his throat till he was drunk, then told, "Now you can't be a Christian. You're drunk." Later he told a missionary, "I still believe the same way, but if I tried to live it they would kill me as they promised."<sup>19</sup>

The above account may be an extreme case, but it does tell of the tremendously strong peer pressure that many Native people have faced as they stepped out for Christ. As with any group that lives as a close-knit society, for Native people the influence to conform has been very strong.

Bernie and Clara Koop, who served at La Loche, Saskatchewan, in the early 1950's, told of visitors who, when approaching their home, were always careful to see if they were being watched. They wrote: "We had [someone] come in one night and ask if he might play the organ. Upon receiving permission, he entered the living room and drew all the blinds. He then sat down and started playing. Young and old alike are living in fear but, praise God, some are willing to listen to the Gospel."<sup>20</sup>

Other missionaries told of Native people who seemed to be seeking the Lord. They described them as having "...more boldness when they're alone ... We are sure that many would step out if fear did not hold them."

Reports from missionaries reveal that when Native individuals did make decisions for Christ, the opposition wasn't necessarily so great. But when these new believers decided to be baptized, there were almost always major repercussions. John and Helen Giesbrecht, the first NCEM missionaries to serve in Cumberland House, Saskatchewan, told about the first convert there who made it known that she wanted to be baptized in the river. "Her father told John that he was going to shoot him if he would do that," says Helen. And besides pressure from her family, the local old-order church leader also did his best to change her mind. Helen says he told her, "If you go to John's church and you get baptized, we won't bury you in the graveyard when you die."

Native people have been described as being strongly group oriented -- their existence prior to European contact demanded it. Government welfare dependence in following years has likely contributed to a lack of individual initiative for some. In general, their societies don't support those who do step out, to do what others are not doing. Missionaries have seen those who have taken an initial step of faith in Christ strongly tempted to go back to their old lifestyle. And it has been extremely difficult for converts who have little or no Christian fellowship nearby. Not surprisingly, the flicker of faith, unfed, soon dies.

## **ON THE FENCE**

In spite of the cost, NCEMers began seeing more Native people seeking the Lord. But for those considering becoming Christians, social pressure put them "on the fence." That's how missionaries, Joe and Helen Pope, described it. They wrote the following from Cumberland House in the early 1960's:

*What would you do if a young lady came to you, frightened and all upset? You had known that she had been under conviction of sin for a long time; now she does not know what to do. Her mother had threatened her if she came home; she does not want her to live a Christian life around there. The other young people want her to give up her foolish ideas of becoming a Christian, so she feels miserable and has no one to turn to.*

*She is afraid to become a Christian, as it would separate her from her friends, and she is afraid not to become a Christian. What would you do if you were in our place? Our hearts go out to this girl. We have spent much time with her in the Word and have prayed with her, yet she is still "on the fence."*<sup>21</sup>

There have also been those who told of wanting to serve Christ wholeheartedly, but seemed unable to break free from their chemical addictions. Though their use of alcohol and drugs may have begun as a "cure" for deeper needs, it soon controlled them. Missionary Betty Lumley wrote about one such person:

*The other morning I heard a knock at the door. There stood my new friend, Jessie, an attractive Indian woman in her early twenties. She stalked in, sat down, and told me she had come for help. What kind of help? Well, she needed the Lord's help because she just couldn't give up her liquor. I had already noticed that she had been drinking. Was she sure she was a Christian? Oh, yes, but when her friends came along with money in their pockets she could not resist.*

*So we had reading and prayer together. After dinner she left. Two days later when I was about to retire, she was at the door again, still with liquor on her breath. This time she had no money in her pocket, no food in her stomach, and no room for the night. Provision was made. The next evening she came for service. Had she been drinking? Well, she'd just had a little.<sup>22</sup>*

Are these people hopeless? "Never!" concluded Betty. Her missionary report ended with a prayer request for patience to work with Jessie and others like her.

## **FAMILIES IN CRISIS**

Acknowledged by both missionaries and First Nations leaders, Native family break-down has reached unprecedented levels. Though these situations do provide opportunities for missionaries to minister, they are also an extra challenge in evangelism. In one report, an NCEMer told of the resentment her Native friend expressed because she knew of the missionary's wholesome happy past. This girl had been reared in a home where her parents abused alcohol, and where no love and security existed. She often lamented over the lack of discipline in her growing-up years, for now it was so hard for her to submit to God.

The abuses of the past also make life difficult for many Native people, even if these sins occurred many years previous. Some children have grown up not being able to trust anyone, even their own family members. Sexual abuse has reached epidemic levels in Native communities, with its high rate of occurrence in past decades only surfacing recently.

And besides all the other factors that have contributed to a resistance to the Gospel among Native people, there has been the human tendency to generally resist change. This affects all generations, but it is the older generation that has actually verbalized. "I'm too old. Tell my children, but it's too late for me." That's what NCEMers have heard many older Native people say. These elders have acknowledged the truth of the Gospel. They have even encouraged their children to attend the missionaries' meetings. But somehow Satan has blinded their minds and caused them to think that there is no hope for them.

## **GOD WAS WORKING IN SPITE OF IT ALL**

Opposition ... resistance ... you don't have to be a missionary to experience them, but it sure helps! Sometimes missionaries have felt opposed from every direction -- even from fellow

evangelicals. NCEMers have been told even by their “supporters” that they were wasting their time and “our” money. They have been told that “Indians can’t get saved” or that “they won’t last long.” Every missionary, of course, no matter where in the world his field, will face opposition. How have NCEMers dealt with theirs?

First of all, every ministry was done out in the open -- there was no need to sneak around just because people didn’t approve. As much as possible, public laws were respected. It was common practice for NCEMers to ask Indian agents (and later Band governments) to determine what rights and privileges they had on the reserves. Sometimes local church leaders would be visited so that NCEM’s plans could be explained.

For the most part, NCEMers have ministered on Indian reserves with the freedom provided by judicial interpretation of the Indian Act (“An individual invited onto a reserve for religious services by a resident of the reserve cannot legally be excluded by the Chief and Council”).<sup>23</sup> However, the developing concept of aboriginal rights has posed conflicting standards in some locations.

### **WHEN MEN SAY “NO”**

What would NCEMers do when permission was not granted? To date, there have been more than enough “open” communities in which NCEMers could serve. But closed reserves were not necessarily avoided. One missionary couple told of visiting homes on a reserve where the chief had habitually kicked them off. They believed God would have them continue ministering there and they developed a strategy that worked quite well -- to visit the chief’s home last. (They reasoned, “You don’t have to leave till you’re told to leave, right?”)

But even when the law allowed it, there have been those who didn’t want NCEMers around. During his term as General Director, Bud Elford challenged missionaries not to stop going just because men say “no.”

*...By men I mean the whole world of unregenerate men. I mean political men, military men, religious men. I mean kings, governors, immigration officials, mayors, chiefs and councillors ... Consider the first century Christians. They were opposed by Jews, Romans and pagans ... They entered resistant town after town ... The civil authorities of the day did not invite them to come -- the opposite was true. “Don’t come here”; “Leave our coasts”; “Don’t preach in His name” was heard instead.*

*The passing of time has not changed men’s hearts, nor has the god of this world changed his attitude toward our God or Christ’s message. Worldly governments and civil leaders have not done an about-face and now invite messengers of the Truth to come in and correct their sinful ways. World religions are not requesting saints to correct their doctrines. The Gospel must still hack its way every step against this chorus of “no’s” ever voicing the world’s antagonism to Jesus and His people.*

*When workers go to any place in Canada to visit, preach or live, they do so with God’s approval*



*who said, "Go into 'all' the world and preach the Gospel to 'every' creature." ... To turn back, when we have the only hope for men today, does not please our Lord ... So we will keep going to every place till Jesus comes. We go where we are not wanted and not liked, where it is unpleasant and unsafe ... As Loren Cunningham of Youth With A Mission, once said, "You can enter any country in the world and preach the Gospel -- provided you're not interested in returning!"<sup>24</sup>*

## **DISCOURAGEMENTS...**

Sometimes it was only prayer and encouragement from God's Word that would see NCEMers through when resistance to their work mounted. Just as the Israelites had to deal with Pharaoh before they could leave Egypt, so NCEMers have had to deal with the Enemy through spiritual warfare.

And God's Word always brought comfort and discernment. One missionary wrote: "I have personally found a great blessing in the thought -- if they rejected the Lord of glory, why do we expect them to want us? Christ Himself said to His disciples 'I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.' Do we expect that 'the wolves' will respect us and act as sheep?"<sup>25</sup>

Other Scripture passages have been of special encouragement to missionaries. One worker told of experiencing times of deep discouragement when the verses I Chronicles 11:22 and II Samuel 23:20 spoke to her: "Benaiah the son of Jehoiada ... went down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day."

"This story has been a great help and comfort to me," she wrote. "...[There have been] all sorts of discouragements and difficulties in front of me, disturbing my private prayer time and my language study. One of the hardest discouragements to face is when a Native convert falls back into sin, or when another is drifting away from the Lord. I can name a few difficulties: local opposition to our ministry, a solitary life in the Mission's house; also cultural barriers and antagonistic feelings.

"This is part of the dread that I feel for my 'lion.' I cannot get away. I'd love to go home to my parents, or take a vacation, or move to another place. But I cannot leave. I cannot move. I have got to face it ... If I cling to these great truths I know God can take me through all hard circumstances."<sup>26</sup>

Experienced missionaries came to realize that it was always the first months on the field that were the most discouraging. "We started the work there and had a little Sunday school. We went visiting and ... pretty soon there was opposition," reported Cliff McComb concerning the beginnings of their ministry at The Pas, Manitoba.

"Pretty soon we didn't have anybody, but we kept on. If nobody came, we went over to the church and we prayed ... we talked to the Lord about it ... And you know we were at Big Eddy (The Pas) for about two years before we really felt that we were beginning to be accepted. From that time on we didn't have to be looking for contacts, but rather the contacts were coming to us

... But it was after we had stuck it out, after we had stayed, after we were there for a good period of time that things began to open up and people came to ask questions to inquire of the Lord.”

### **...AND ENCOURAGEMENTS**

First-term workers had to learn to believe that, even though they couldn't see it, God was working. Missionary Jake Klippenstein told of having become quite discouraged over the apparent indifference in one particular village. He had asked his director if he should stop ministering there. “He gave me a very appropriate answer,” says Jake. He said, “Talk to the Lord about it.”

As Jake prayed about it he realized that perhaps God hadn't been working because he hadn't been thanking God in faith for the results. Jake confessed his unthankfulness. Then he says, “I sensed a blessed release and assurance ... worry and anxiety were replaced by faith and hope.”<sup>27</sup> It wasn't long after that that God allowed His invisible workings to become evident.

Another worker was discouraged by the poor attendance of believers at their fellowship's weekly meetings. His field director asked how many were coming, and then pointed out to him that that was about 30 percent more than it was the previous year. In his discouragement the missionary hadn't noticed what God was doing.

One NCEM director was often heard talking about “enough discouragement to keep you praying and enough encouragement to keep you going.” And God did provide encouragements!

Sometimes, to the surprise of the missionaries, Indian Band councils were quite supportive of their efforts. One missionary, who was hoping to secure use of a Band hall for church meetings, reported: “Without any hesitation the councillor informed us that he ... could see no reason why we couldn't use the recreation hall on Sundays ... Both the council and the recreation director told us that if we had any needs we should not hesitate to let them know. Further to that, they would not even consider our offer to pay rent. They have also told us that they are happy with what they have seen us do for their people. All praise be to God!”<sup>28</sup>

There were other encouragements. One missionary couple told of the local old-order church working to hinder their efforts. But even in this God provided ministry openings. In 1958 Ed and Anne Heal wrote: “Every night the bell calls the people to church. Now when it's cold the children come here to wait for the second bell and, at their request, get the story on the flannelboard. Tonight six girls heard the story of God's love. We praise God for these opportunities.”<sup>29</sup>

Another couple told of the encouragement of seeing God begin to work in the lives of individuals. In 1977 Jo-Ann Jewett wrote: “...Then he told me with tears in his eyes, ‘...I would have beat those guys up ... But it's like ... I'm different.’ ...Inasmuch as we have heard very little from their own lips as to what God is doing among the Dogrib people, this was a precious treasure of encouragement. Something to keep us doing this work.”<sup>30</sup>

There was great joy when Native people prayed to receive Christ. Tommy Francis, who served with NCEM for several years, wrote about one in 1961:

*On one of my visitations to The Pas Indian Reserve, I came to an old cabin chinked with mud, and in it was an old lady of about 70 years. After witnessing to her for a time, I asked if she knew Jesus as her Saviour. The expression on her face was dark and her voice heavy when, bowing her head, she said, "For many years I have gone to church and read my Bible and prayed." Then she looked up and said, "I do not have Jesus in my heart."*

*It was with great joy that moment that I expounded the Scriptures to her. Her prayer that afternoon was a repentant one, accepting God's free gift, the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>31</sup>*

As Tommy and others would find, though the old-order churches had often opposed NCEM's ministries, some had, in fact, prepared people to accept the Gospel.

## **THE BARREN DAYS**

The Mission's first years saw very, very few Native people actually stepping out to make firm commitments to Christ. Early missionaries have been heard referring to this time period as the "barren days." Some missionaries remember the Workers' Conference of 1952 when, with about 25 missionaries present, everyone was very excited because two Indians came to know the Lord that year.

Now as the older missionaries sometimes hear the younger ones discouraged about how slow the work is going, they remind them of the barren days. Harold and Esther Roberts tell how the Lord provided something special for them just prior to their retirement from the field: "I believe [our] last years at Buffalo Narrows were just an extra touch of God's blessing, seeing that we retired from there. After many years of seeing no fruit ... that the Lord would allow us to see that ... a basement full of people, sometimes just as many or more on a week night Bible study and prayer ... as on Sunday."

Change seemed to come slowly. But little by little, life by life it would begin. God was working in the lives of individuals, convicting them of their need for Him.

"It is a wonderful experience to watch the Spirit of God do His work in the hearts of men and women. Several people within our contact here are under definite conviction, to the point where we are expecting their conversion any day," wrote one missionary couple in 1956. In fact, one fellow had told them, "As I am working around I think so much on these things that I forget where I leave my axe...."<sup>32</sup>

## **A SEED PLANTED**

Sometimes after the Seed of God's Word was planted it would take years and years to sprout. Sometimes the missionaries didn't realize that the Seed had taken root at all. Some Native people would not testify until many years later about how the missionaries' lives and words had

made an impact that they had never forgotten.

Mervin VanNortwick told of a Native woman who remembered hearing two missionaries singing the Gospel song, "How Beautiful Heaven Must Be." "Ever since the lady standing on the shore heard those words she had been longing for heaven," wrote Mervin in 1980. "For 25 years the Holy Spirit had been using the words of that song to bring her to Christ."<sup>33</sup>

In the early 1980's an old trapper told a Christian reporter of his conversion. As he told of being visited out on his trapline by the missionary, he said, "For months after his visit I would think about the things he had read to me from the Bible and the things he said about Jesus Christ." Then his eyes twinkled and a smile crinkled his face ... "But I never let him know it!"<sup>34</sup>

Missionaries, Ed and Anne Heal, only recently learned of a man who had been touched by their early ministry. The fellow told how he had been working in Stony Rapids for awhile, where the Heals were stationed. He recalls the day he got off the plane at Stony. A shipment of liquor had just come in and he remembers Ed sitting on the beer cartons "giving me the Gospel." He admitted that he hadn't appreciated it at the time ... but that he was saved about three years later.

Ed Heal says that doesn't even remember the man nor the incident. But the Heals do believe that God is still working even in those people who have shown no sign of change. And the Heals are reminding these people that that's what they believe! -- even though it's been many years since they lived in Stony Rapids, they still write personally to many of their northern friends there every year.

Native children touched with the Gospel would not forget its impact even in their adult lives. Martha Tarry tells about meeting an Indian lady in the hospital at Burns Lake, B.C. After staring at Martha's name on the bed headboard, the lady finally got up enough nerve to ask, "Are you the Martha Tarry that used to live at Meadow Lake? ... I remember when you had a Sunday School in that little shack every Sunday. I was one of those girls and I will never forget those stories. I want you to know that that little Indian Sunday school has made a real impact on my life and I want to thank you for that."

## **DISAPPOINTMENTS & BLESSINGS**

New believers brought great joy to the missionaries ... after all, this was the reason why they had come! Unfortunately -- and heart-breaking for the workers -- sometimes the new believers fell spiritually, sometimes never to get up again. Cliff McComb tells of a certain believer in Weagamow Lake, Ontario. Ironically, he was the first one to come to the Lord in what would become a people movement in the community.

"For some time this fellow was a real witness but he afterwards was a great disappointment," says Cliff. "Pretty soon he went for the things of this world ... But I can remember one time I went down to the saw mill where he was working and talked to him. As I was leaving he said, 'Don't leave me! Don't leave me!' He just cried ... he wanted the things of the Lord but wasn't willing to give up the things of the world."

Helen Giesbrecht tells more about the first convert in Cumberland House. “She helped us right from the start in Sunday school. She told stories, she helped us sing, and she was just so happy,” recalls Helen. “But when she came back (after being out of Cumberland for a time) she denied everything ... She said she had never been a Christian.” With sadness Helen says that, as far as she knows, this lady never came back to the Lord. In spite of this, Helen notes that several of her children later became Christians.

One by one, despite their struggles, Native people began making first decisions for the Lord ... and the missionaries rejoiced. It was apparent that many of them would face extreme costs because of their faith in Christ. Some would be ostracized from their families and friends. Some would lose their jobs.

So it was a great encouragement to see them stand for Christ in spite of it all -- even to withstand physical mistreatment. In 1961 Norman and Nellie Taylor wrote from Pickle Lake, Ontario: “We have had a casualty -- injured in body, but not in spirit. He was beaten by his brothers and father because he testified to them about his new life in Christ. I asked him if he wanted to quit the Christian life because of this incident and he said, ‘I surely do not!’” 35

## **WEAGAMOW: BRIGHT SPOT ON THE HORIZON**

Here and there, among the Cree-related people of northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba, individuals began coming to Christ in the late 1940's and early 1950's. It was at this same time that God was about to do something unusual in the village of Weagamow Lake, in northwestern Ontario.

Having visited the area, pilot Marshall Calverley suggested to the Mission's Board that Weagamow be a priority location for placing workers. As a result, in 1952 NCEMers Cliff and Ingeborg McComb and their daughter, Judy, were stationed there.

The community (then more commonly known to outsiders as “Round Lake”) consisted of about 400 people. It was accessible only by plane or by canoe and, like most other northern communities, had no electricity. In fact, Weagamow hadn't become a year-round settlement until the early 1950's. Previous to that, the Saulteaux people in the region had used the area only for a summer respite. The winter months had formerly found the settlement vacant as the people scattered to their traplines.

The McCombs' first months on the field found them busy building their home as well as holding services in the little unused Anglican outpost church. “The reason for our going was to take the Message of Life” says Cliff. “We made the teaching of God's Word our first priority.”

Cliff couldn't understand much of the local language because he had studied Plains Cree at Language School (a dialect related to Saulteaux). But he did manage to communicate well

enough to have a couple of Native men help him build their house. Just as winter arrived they had the place “comfortable.” The day before the lake froze over a plane brought the door for their home, replacing the several boards that were nailed together.

Concerning the language barrier, Cliff admits, “Many times we wondered if the message was getting across.” Fortunately there was one man there who could interpret for them. And just three months after they arrived, the McCombs witnessed their first decision for Christ in the community. And it was soon after this that the fellow’s cousin, a young man by the name of Albert Tait, also became a Christian.

## **ALWAYS READY TO HELP**

Cliff remembers, “When Albert came to us he was an alcoholic at about 21. And he was so scared that he was going to die. The medicine man had told him that he wouldn’t live very long.” But one night Albert’s cousin brought him over to the McComb’s house, where he found the Lord and freedom from his fears. Albert grew in the Lord, became the McCombs’ interpreter, and an important part of the work at Weagamow Lake. He married Rhoda Beardy in 1954. “He was always ready to study the Word and then to tell others,” says Cliff. “And he was always ready to help us with interpreting.”

Cliff remembers one time, though, when Albert became very discouraged. They were just getting ready to hold a series of Bible studies, but Albert was feeling so downcast that he said he was going to leave Weagamow for a while to go trapping. Cliff couldn’t keep from telling Albert how badly he was needed as an interpreter. (Because so many people had been coming to Cliff with questions about the Bible, he still hadn’t had time to do any serious language study.) Albert insisted on leaving. He said that if he made enough money from trapping, he and Rhoda might go to her village for an extended visit.

Albert set his traps that fall, and then after Christmas went out to get them. “All he had caught were one or two weasels ... that’s all,” says Cliff. And to make matters worse, he lost nearly all of his dog team on that trip. Albert took it as a lesson that the Lord didn’t want him to leave. The rest of that winter he spent helping with a short-term Bible school session. From then on Albert spent the rest of his life serving the Lord. Cliff notes that, “He and Rhoda never had much to live on, but they always put the Lord’s work first.”

Albert and his cousin were the first ones to turn to Christ in Weagamow Lake. But soon many others were added to the Family of God there! The May 1953 Northern Lights reported: “Forty souls have been saved and these are mostly all young men. How they love to learn the Word and long for better training to go out to the neighbouring villages and lead other souls to Christ.”<sup>36</sup>

And this turning to the Lord didn’t stop at 40 people! While Cliff doesn’t mention exact numbers, he does talk about “The Lord ... saving most of the village at that time”! Lives were changed dramatically. For one thing, “When they became Christians they quit smoking,” says Cliff. But it wasn’t because the missionaries had told them to. Cliff says, “Officials of Indian Affairs and so on would come in and say, ‘Oh, you’re just doing what the missionary says.’ And

they would answer, 'No, the missionary didn't tell us that, God told us that.' " As it turned out, the Hudson's Bay store had to fly out a whole load of tobacco that wouldn't sell.

## **A BLESSED REVIVAL**

News of what came to be known as the "Round Lake Revival" began to spread. "Revival" was a term that seemed to fit because just a generation earlier these areas had known a moving of God's Spirit through the work of the Methodists. It was observed that, though these people had been living far from God, they still did have great respect for the Scriptures.

Leslie Garrett, then an Anglican minister living at Trout Lake, wrote, "...Except at Round Lake, our outpost 85 miles south, where for over 18 months the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission has laboured. Here a blessed revival started soon after they arrived and is still progressing very favourably, just what I have laboured and prayed for ever since I came ... No one can deny that God is doing things in so changing the lives of the Natives at Round Lake.

"...They have such joy studying the Bible every other night for two hours. They have practically all given up smoking ... There is no dancing, drinking or gambling. And what seems to surprise some of the old folks there most, they say, is that there is no more bad talk. In the old days, they say, there was nothing but bad talk all the time; now you never hear it.

"Just after New year's Day I expected to minister to their spiritual good, as usual, but found most of them anxious to help me."<sup>37</sup>

Along with the revival came a deep respect for God in the community, even from those who remained unbelievers. Cliff remembers standing down by the shore one day speaking with one of the councillors, a man who hadn't shown much interest in the Gospel. "As we talked about the things of God and talked about getting the logs [for a church building], I remember that he took off his cap in reverence because we were talking about the things of God."

NCEM directors and pilots got in on the blessings at Weagamow too. It was normal for them to stay on a station two or three nights when visiting each village. They would discuss ministry matters with the resident missionaries, and visit village homes in the afternoons.

One year, as director Art Tarry tells it, a snowstorm extended their visit in Weagamow Lake to five days. Art remembers staying at the McCombs' home and continually seeing people come to ask questions about the Bible. He remembers leading a man to the Lord there. "About 15 minutes afterwards we looked out the window and here the same man was coming back with his wife and children," says Art. "He said, 'My wife and kids want to know about Jesus too.' "

Art remembers the people's keen interest in the Scriptures. With so many of them wanting a copy of their own, the Bible Society had to reprint the Cree Bible. The new Christians still did not know too much about Scripture, and Art noticed them often referring to hand-copied sheets that served as indexes, telling the page numbers of the Bible books.

Weagamow Christians looked forward to opportunities to tell what God was doing in their lives. In 1955, after Stan Collie, Leslie Garrett and Marshall Calverley had visited there, a Northern Lights report recorded: "We had three testimony meetings, which lasted for over a total of eight hours. There was no speaker to preach but we heard 54 give their personal testimony to what Jesus means to them. There are still a good many who could add their testimony to this number but some are out from the Post at present."<sup>38</sup>

## **BUILDING ON THE BIBLE**

The growing group of believers wanted to study God's Word together every night. Before 1952 was over they had built their own log church building, which was more often referred to as their "Bible school." The Christians had gone out to the bush to cut logs and, after peeling them, had then gone for more to be sawn for lumber for the roof and for the floor. "What a thrill it was to see their enthusiasm while they worked at the mill," remembers Cliff. From the mill they carried all the lumber about 300 or 400 yards to the church building site where they dry-piled it so that it would be ready when it was time to put the roof on.

The McCombs carried on at Weagamow Lake until 1956. By then the very long and demanding hours had begun to take their toll on their health. "During those years we were so busy," says Cliff. "They were coming to our house hour after hour, day after day until, it was in 1956 when the doctors advised that I shouldn't go back into an isolated place for a time."

Other NCEM missionaries would serve at Weagamow in the following years. Besides those who moved to reside there, others would assist with the short-term Bible school sessions. Albert Tait graduated from NCEM's La Ronge Indian Bible School in 1961 and for the next ten years served at Island Lake, Manitoba. Then, in 1971, Albert moved his family back to Weagamow Lake to pastor the growing church of about 250 people.

With the group having outgrown the original log church building, in 1975 a larger structure was completed, built and paid for by the people themselves. Albert pastored until the mid-1980's, when his failing health necessitated others taking over. Despite the challenges of reaching the succeeding generations with the Gospel, the Church at Weagamow continues as a light in the community. It began -- and it grew -- with an emphasis on the teaching of God's Word.

## **BIBLE SCHOOLS: TRAINING NATIVE BELIEVERS**

Resident field missionaries would, of course, be involved in teaching new believers, helping them to grow in their Christian faith and walk. But it was generally felt that in order to train potential pastors and evangelists, more intensive teaching would be needed. "Bible schools" seemed the obvious solution.

A 1954 Northern Lights magazine report read: "We have been receiving several letters from the



workers recently telling how well their converts are growing in grace. Many would like to attend Bible school this winter, and we are looking to the Lord to have an Indian Bible School in the western part of the North. The dialect in this western area is so much different to that of Round Lake district, that it necessitates a second school. Your prayerful interest in this will be appreciated.”<sup>39</sup>

## **ISLAND LAKE SCHOOL**

In answer to those prayers, two years later a Bible school was established at Island Lake (Garden Hill), a station in northeastern Manitoba, where missionaries, Ed and Doris Hunt, were serving. There were already a number of local believers who were interested in attending, and the surrounding region was home to several more potential students. NCEM owned sufficient land on an island across from the main community on which to build a campus that would consist of a couple larger buildings, along with several small cabins.

The Island Lake Bible School would differ in several ways from the many evangelical Bible institutes that had sprung up across western Canada. Besides the cultural and linguistic uniqueness, the school term would last only from mid-June to mid-August each year. This schedule would allow students to work their traplines in the winter, and would enable couples to bring their children with them.

Families came in from communities such as Weagamow Lake, Red Sucker Lake and Pickle Lake. If they couldn't travel by boat, they were flown in by NCEM's planes. Some summers there were as many as 26 students on campus, plus the missionary staff. Missionary John Giesbrecht served as principal of the school from 1959 to 1963. Albert Tait then served for ten years, as both teacher and principal.

All the classes were taught in Cree. Interpreters were used for missionary-teachers who weren't fluent in the language, and also for the benefit of students with dialectic differences. A lot of translation work was done in preparing course texts and outlines.

The School's set-up, with its structured time schedule, was no doubt a new and strange experience for the students, especially for those who had no previous experience in any type of formal education. Through the struggle of it all, students did learn something about organizational skills and about the wise use of time, especially from Principal John Giesbrecht (whom one of the students lovingly nicknamed "Pharaoh"). The goal for the school was much more than to put Bible knowledge into the students' heads. It was to be a training place for Christian outreach.

A 1960 report from John and Helen Giesbrecht said: "The Lord has done great things for us. We have 18 students in Bible school and are enjoying the studies in His Word ... The Word is being faithfully preached every week in outlying settlements and camps by our students and almost every day services are held on the [Island Lake] Reserve. On the last Sunday of July four young people followed the Lord in baptism.”<sup>40</sup>

And a report from Albert Tait in 1966 read: “It is part of our Bible school training that the students go out on evangelistic trips and every weekend we went by canoe to various fishing camps. Two evangelistic trips were also made with the Mission plane to fishing camps which cannot be reached by boat. Students have been doing visitation again this summer and they had the joy of leading two souls to Christ.”<sup>41</sup>

## **BIG RIVER & LA RONGE SCHOOLS**

Because of the language differences and distances involved, a second school was begun at Big River in west-central Saskatchewan in 1956, the same year that the Island Lake School began. Hubert Smith, a Shantyman missionary who was also a lay-member on NCEM’s Board, would serve as acting principal and as a teacher. During the summer months the Smiths had already begun a Bible camp on the same site on Delaronde Lake.

Tommy Francis, a recent graduate of the Mokahum Bible Institute (C&MA) at Cass Lake, Minnesota, would also teach classes at the newly-begun school. Five students were enrolled the first term which began in September and ended in mid-December. Staff and students were looking forward to a second term which was to begin in April, and it was hoped that a few more new students could join. But, in God’s providence, Hubert Smith passed away in March.

After a period of indecision, and with some of the first-term students unable to return, it was decided that the second session should be held at the Mission’s Headquarters in Meadow Lake. Only two students attended.

By October of 1957 the school had been relocated to La Ronge, in north-central Saskatchewan. Following a short term of field service in the Vanderhoof, B.C., area, Nils (and Genevieve) Folkvord was asked to return to La Ronge, his original station, to provide leadership for the new school.

The School’s term would last four to five months each year, usually from the beginning of October to late March. Classes were taught in the English language, with the exception of those taught by staff member, John Unger, who taught some of them in Cree.

The School would experience its share of setbacks, including a logging incident that seriously injured Nils Folkvord in 1960, leaving him unconscious for over six weeks. Then a car accident in 1965 took Nils’ life, and injured a student family coming to begin the school year.

The attendance was often low but, in the long-run, the La Ronge School graduated a significant number of students who went on to very productive Christian lives and ministries. Some of those who joined NCEM included: Albert & Rhoda Tait, Stan & Margaret Williams, Raymond & Janice Sparklingeyes, Alice (Keighley) Schmidt, and Margaret (Budd) Bear.

Following the sudden passing of School principal, Nils Folkvord, missionaries Bill and Mary Friesen joined the La Ronge staff. The Friesens had been serving at NCEM’s Montreal Lake Children’s Home since 1963 and had, in fact, already been thinking about such a transfer. With

Mr. Folkvord's sudden absence, on very short notice Bill was asked to fill his place as principal. But because he felt very unprepared to take on leadership of the School, fellow staff member, Erle Lintott, served as interim principal that year. In the fall of 1966 Bill assumed responsibility for direction of the Bible School, a position similar to that which he would be involved in for many more years.

Enrolment at the La Ronge school never grew much higher, and some years there were only one or two students. In 1970 there were no students at all, but the staff kept busy with ministry opportunities in the La Ronge area. That year Bill travelled extensively leading short-term Bible school classes in places such as Moose Factory and Weagamow Lake, Ontario.

## **KEY-WAY-TIN BIBLE INSTITUTE**

Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute, at Lac La Biche, Alberta, would become NCEM's longest serving Bible training institution, and would see larger enrolments than the other schools. 1972 has often been cited as the year that KBI's ministry started, but its real beginnings were really several years previous.

In fact, as early as 1962 Bible school classes were already being held in the Lac La Biche area, though not officially connected with NCEM. Bill Jackson was one of those involved. Then in October of 1965 the Jacksons, along with the John Ungers, began an NCEM-sponsored Bible school in another location close to Lac La Biche, just northeast of the town.

"We anticipated a small beginning and it is just that," reported a Northern Lights article. "Classes began on the 25th with four students in attendance."<sup>42</sup> John Unger had already suggested naming the School "Key-Way-Tin," which in Cree means "north" and/or having to do with the "blowing home to the North" of the last cold air of late spring.

Bill and John taught the classes in both Cree and English, and fellow staff members, Albert and Ada Arcand, assisted with maintenance duties such as milking cows and supplying wood for heat. Along with a couple of small cabins on site, the Ungers' unfinished home served as classroom, dormitory and kitchen. "This was a trying situation and the need for facilities became a very definite matter of prayer," wrote John.<sup>43</sup>

A fifth student joined for that first year, and construction began on a second staff home. All this was taking place on a piece of land on the south-east shore of Lac La Biche. In the summer of 1965, a local Christian man by the name of Nick Bobocel had been introduced to John Unger at a nearby Bible camp which Bill Jackson had been directing. Soon after, John met again with Nick and they discussed the need for a permanent Bible school in the area.

Nick happened to know of a particular piece of land and, after much prayer, set out to purchase it from the owner, a Swedish immigrant. When Nick had explained what he wanted the land for, the man agreed to sell the 138-acre parcel for \$7,500. Nick's plan was to sell the land to NCEM for one dollar, but to request that a portion be set aside on which to build his own house -- NCEM could have as much of the remaining portion as they wanted.

After considering the needs, the Mission Board decided to take a 19.7-acre waterfront section on the northeast corner of the land, and turned the rest back over to Nick. The main reason for trying to keep the initial land claim under 20 acres was so that NCEM would not have to pay taxes on it.

Nick used his equipment to clear the land and dig basements for the houses, and in other ways was quite active in seeing the Bible school get started. Unfortunately, the following two winters saw even less than a handful of students, and this marked the beginning of a “waiting period” when the School ceased to operate. Interested students were encouraged to attend NCEM’s La Ronge School.

### **“ALL-OUT EMPHASIS”**

A Mission Board decision in early 1972 would see the property at Lac La Biche again used to train Native Christians. The decision would move the La Ronge school to Lac La Biche. (The Island Lake School had recently ceased operation.) While the Mission’s other Bible schools had each sought to meet the needs in their respective regions, this Board resolution was referred to as an “all-out emphasis in the Bible school ministry.”

By this time NCEM was already using the site at Lac La Biche for Bible camps and for the recently begun Northern Missionary Training Camp. Just two homes and some summer camp buildings were situated on the 20-acre campus, and it was obvious that a major building project was needed if it was to be used as a permanent Bible school campus.

There was a sense of urgency, as it was felt that a number of Indian young people were waiting to enter Bible school. A kitchen/dining hall, dormitories, library space and living quarters for staff families were needed. With missionary and volunteer labour, an estimated initial amount of \$20,000 was required.

Bill and Mary Friesen and their four children moved from La Ronge, as Bill had been asked to assume responsibilities as director and principal of the new school. The year 1972-73 was to be spent getting facilities ready, and construction of a three-level building soon began. Designed to be a dormitory, it would have to serve several purposes until other buildings were completed.

Classes were scheduled to begin the fall of 1973 with each term to last from September till April. Bill remembers saying to Mary one day, “I wonder if anybody’s going to come?” All their hard work in preparing the campus and in planning had been done in faith. If there were no facilities, then they couldn’t hold a Bible school. But even with the facilities, there was no guarantee of students.

Not too long after the question had left his lips, Bill remembers someone knocking on their door and there was their first student, Jimmy Keesic from Ontario. One of the first things Jimmy asked was, “How many more are coming?” The reply was, “Just one more.”

Enrolment for the fall of ‘74 climbed to six. The third year it was 13; the fourth year, 23, and the

fifth year it was 30. In the early 1980's it reached a high of 52. Certificates were awarded for satisfactory completion of one of two years of training, and a diploma on completion of the three-year course.

## **A UNIQUE SCHOOL**

Like other Bible schools across the country, KBI's purpose was to ground Christians in the doctrines of the Word and the principles of the Christian life. It was a training place for ministry, whether for full-time or for lay-workers in local churches. Like other schools, there were entrance requirements, classes and exams.

But it was unlike other schools. "KBI is not just another among general Bible schools in Canada," read a communique in the 1970's. "It is an Indian Bible school. It is imperative that we gear our instruction to the students, [their] race and culture. Two of our instructors are Native Christians. Special topics and classes relevant to Indian believers are taught."<sup>44</sup>

"We sought to make it an environment where, as much as possible, they could feel at home with their own people," says Bill Friesen. "[The students] could interact and have fellowship on a level that wouldn't have been possible if they had been the only Native student at [another] school."

"And many of them in those days didn't have the education that would have allowed them to study at other schools," notes Bill. "We didn't turn anybody down even if they had only a Grade 3 or 4 education ... if they were determined and felt God was calling them."

Concerning the curriculum Bill admits that it was "not all that much different from other schools. But we tried to make it as uncomplicated as we could, and tried to keep it applicable to their particular needs." There were classes dealing with traditional Indian religion, the history of Indian missions in North America, and literacy classes for Cree students.

Guest teachers included experienced missionaries who understood Native people and their cultural values, along with Native pastors and leaders. "We would have liked to have more full-time Native staff," says Bill Friesen. Bill Jackson has taught part-time in almost all of KBI's years of operation. James Moses (a NEF pastor) was on staff for a few years, as well as Gary Quequish. But it was difficult finding others like them to join the staff.

Another unique aspect of KBI has been its strong emphasis on outreach. Beginning their first year, students were required to be involved. "Whether in home visitation, or participation in the Bible studies and meetings that we had on the reserves ... outreach was high in our thinking," says Bill. "[It was] to help them become fruitful workers." For many years second- and third-year students participated in "10-Day Ministry," an outreach each year in late winter that took them to widespread locations for involvement with local churches or with missionaries. In the early 1990's it became a requirement for students to spend one summer in Christian work.

## **CULTURE SHOCK**

With handshakes to all the family and friends and a kiss for mother, the young man and his wife move quickly to the waiting aircraft. Their flight will take them to the nearest railway station and from there to Lac La Biche ... In another place a canoe loaded with trunks and suitcases crosses the river to the mainland. These passengers will catch a train that will take them 2000 miles to the same destination.

A missionary had brought several more students, and a mother and father brought their daughter to the School ... A phone call has just informed the staff that a charter plane has just landed with ten students from northern Ontario ... Earlier in the day a truck had brought students from Montana.<sup>45</sup>

The above report was from the opening days of school in the fall of 1977. For these students -- and for those of other years -- Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute would forever become a part of their lives.

Their first few days would include orientation to rules and regulations, gratis assignments, class schedules and special meetings ... new and strange experiences. There would be many new people to meet, as well. And while all the students would have been of Native ancestry, they were of a variety of backgrounds. One year 14 different tribes were represented. Sometimes there were students at KBI who had grown up in non-Native homes, not closely tied to their natural families and cultures.

As could be expected, there would be cultural clashes and conflicts with the rules. But, as the School's staff saw it, with so many people living closely together, it was necessary to have regulations and a structured schedule. "That was a real struggle for us all," says Bill Friesen, "to help them adjust to another environment that was so scheduled. They had come from an orientation of lifestyle that was so different. Many of them came from reserves that were isolated ... [For some] there was a lack of (formal) education ... It's an absolute miracle that so many of them hung in there and did so well."

What was an even bigger struggle for the staff was seeing the students return to their villages following school, knowing the difficulties that some of them would face there. Sometimes there was no local church and little Christian encouragement for them back home.

## **LATER DEVELOPMENTS**

After Bill Friesen had served in the capacity of School Director (both at La Ronge and at KBI) for almost 20 years, the responsibility was turned over to Dave Anderson, who served as director with staff member Russell Mueller taking on the role of principal in 1984. Russ was succeeded by Leigh Wolverton in 1991. Some of the developments at KBI in more recent years have included a switch to the "block system" from a two-semester schedule. This has allowed students to concentrate on just a couple subjects at a time. It has enabled more Native staff to teach on a short-term basis, and has made it easier for students to begin their studies at KBI during the academic year, instead of having to wait for fall.

Unfortunately, enrolment would drop from its peak in the early 1980's. (The average number of graduates, however, would not decrease that much.) Judging by the number of inquiries, there still seemed to be a high level of interest in the School, but finances have often been a difficulty for students. Unless sponsored by their Band, many potential students have considered it impossible to attend. And though the number of single students decreased somewhat, the number of married students with families would rise.

Has all this effort at KBI been worth it? ... the numerous hours of service by missionary staff ... the cost and time of building and maintaining the facilities?

“Yes, it’s been worth it!” says Bill Friesen. “There is just so much that happened in the lives of individuals ... in the families and children on campus ... and in us who served there. I believe that others who were on staff could say the same thing,” says Bill. “[It’s worth it] to see the Native church benefiting by strong church members who are back there now ... some not necessarily in leadership, but very involved.”

And KBI has touched many lives. Not just through the Bible school program itself, but through events such as the annual “North Quest” Native youth retreats and the Bible conferences that have seen hundreds attend. There have been reports of Native young people stopping in on campus to visit their student friends ... and finding the Lord at KBI.

## **BEE: BIBLE EDUCATION BY EXTENSION**

NCEM’s involvement in Bible training would follow several approaches. There were the “short-term Bible schools” such as were initially held at Weagamow Lake, and later in other locations. In these schools, the teacher was often a visiting missionary and the curriculum was usually determined by the needs of the local people at the time. There were no restrictions as to who attended, and classes were held on whatever part of the day or week was convenient for the students. Short-term Bible schools could last anywhere from a week to a month.

A second type were the resident Bible schools that were established at Island Lake, La Ronge and Lac La Biche. Another approach is what has been called Bible Education by Extension, or “B.E.E.”

The idea was not unique on NCEM fields. Around the world it is called “TEE” (Theological Education by Extension). It had its beginnings in Latin America where, after an “evangelism explosion” there were literally thousands of small groups of Christians meeting. Most of the leaders of these groups had little or no Bible education, and so TEE was developed as a church leadership training program.

The principle was simple: train believers within their cultural environment. BEE seemed to be suited for needs on Native Canadian fields. Throughout the country there were converts who, for various reasons, would never make it to a school like KBI. Among them were men with large families, wives with unsaved husbands, and young people with very strong ties to home. Some leaders in local Native churches needed additional training.

By the early 1970's, missionaries Joe and Helen Pope had already been preparing Bible courses geared for Native people. In 1978 they had four courses completed and in use. There was a lot of work involved -- it usually took a year for them to compile one course. Pains were taken to choose words for their simplicity and clarity in communicating to people who used English as a second language. Some of the courses were translated into Cree. The lessons underwent numerous proof-readings, and field testing, before they went to press.

Some of these courses could be used in a correspondence method of teaching. But BEE had a unique dimension. It was composed of three elements: learning materials (books), experience in life, and seminar meetings. The books were usually in the form of programmed instruction (i.e., question and answer) and a qualified seminar leader (often the missionary) would meet with students weekly. The leader did not assume the traditional role of teacher, but of facilitator. Because the students had not left their home environment, emphasis was placed on immediately putting the knowledge gained into life. The courses (usually 10 weeks in length) met Bible school standards, and included tests and assignments. Originally many of the BEE texts used by NCEMers were printed in Africa. (English as a second language, along with tribal similarities, made the texts surprisingly suitable.) NCEM would later revise and reprint some of these.

Missionaries Ted and Grace Haas joined with the Popes for a while in developing the BEE program. Later, it would operate under the umbrella of KBI for several years. Since the BEE ministry was implemented on NCEM fields in the early 1980's, numerous missionaries have used this method. It has been used to a limited extent in training church leaders, but has perhaps seen its greatest effectiveness in discipling new believers. In the mid-1990's, NCEM's Distributing Department (Book Store) would take responsibility for Bible Education by Extension, along with supplying other Bible study courses particularly suited for Native ministry.

## **REACHING THEIR OWN**

“What is needed here is several Indians who will come to the Lord and then witness to their own people. Please pray for this.”<sup>46</sup> So wrote a missionary in 1950. That was the plea of all the missionaries, of course, but especially of those who had seen little response and who were struggling with racial and religious barriers on their fields.

By the mid-1950's, a few of the missionaries had already been privileged to see Native Christians actively sharing their faith. Harold Roberts recalls one particular occasion when he had been ministering with Native believer, Tommy Francis. “I wish that somehow I could picture for you the little cabin, dark with a smoky coal oil lamp,” says Harold. “[There was] Tommy with his Cree Bible open, sharing the Gospel with four rough-tough fellows.”

Harold remembers one of the fellows confessing his sinful past, saying that, “If you two fellows would stay on the reserve and teach us the way you have tonight, I could be different.”



“I don’t know that he ever changed,” reflects Harold, “but to see an Indian sharing with other Indian men the way Tommy did was something I’ve never forgotten.”

Native Christians had the potential of being effective communicators of the Gospel, unhindered by cultural and linguistic barriers. But that would not mean that it would be easy for them. The Gospel message would still offend some, and rejection from one’s own people is always more painful. Sometimes unrealistically high expectations were placed on Native believers. One missionary remembers the gentle rebuke of a Native Christian man who asked, “White people don’t accept you just because you’re white, do they?”

In 1960 Cliff McComb reported on the cold reception that Albert and Rhoda Tait received on a ministry visit to the Chagoness Reserve in Saskatchewan: Albert speaks the same language as these people, but we found them very unresponsive, even to one who speaks their own tongue. They would not converse on spiritual things at all. In two homes they listened, but would make no comment ... The chief was out to Sunday school and Albert talked to him afterwards, but he, too, made no comment ... Albert said it was the hardest place he had ever visited.<sup>47</sup>

## **FIRST NATIVE MISSIONARY SENT OUT**

Missionaries thrilled at the zeal of Native Christians who shared their faith. Cliff McComb remembers especially those who were saved during the revival that swept through Weagamow Lake. He tells of one man in particular, Alex Kenequenash, who felt that the Lord wanted him to go to a neighbouring village where some of his relatives lived. There was no other means of travel then, other than dogteam or walking on snowshoes. Alex chose the latter.

“He walked 90 miles through the bush where there was no road and no trail,” says Cliff. When he returned he told of how, at first, the people didn’t want to listen to him. He had, in fact, faced an intense spiritual battle there. “It was just like some great creature came down upon me and gripped me,” Alex reported. “I just covered my head and pleaded the blood of Jesus.”

Then things changed. There were just a few families staying in the small village at the time, but Alex kept on preaching. And almost 20 people got saved! He came home bringing gifts of tanned hide and money for Bibles.

Alex reported that the villagers had asked him to come back in the spring. So the Christians at Weagamow financed and sent him there for a short-term missionary outreach. “Our first missionary sent out ... just a little over a year after we arrived in Weagamow!” notes Cliff in amazement.

One day, later that spring, the people at Weagamow noticed a large group of canoes coming from across the lake. It was, in fact, a whole village, the one where Alex had ministered. They were moving to Weagamow for the summer so that they could study the Word of God more!

Pilot Marshall Calverley told of other Christians from Weagamow Lake who had a desire to reach beyond their community, especially two men with a particular burden for the village of

Big Beaver House. Marshall flew the two there, dropped them off, and later reported:

“They had a real desire to preach Christ to these Indians they had so often met before in the course of their trapping and hunting trips ... After my departure the Indians invited them to hold a meeting in one of their houses. Many were interested in hearing what these men had to tell them that was important enough to warrant coming by airplane. Saul and Sandy then proceeded to tell the simple story of how Jesus, the Son of God, loved the Indian people as well as the white man, and loved them enough to die for them. For a whole week the Gospel was preached in that village. At the end of that time there were 10 Indians who had definitely and sincerely accepted Christ as Saviour.

“The Indians told Sandy and Saul that they were welcome to come back any time ... Their week’s visit up ... they shouldered their pack-sacks containing blankets, tea-pail, food and an axe, and started the 90-mile walk home across numerous frozen rivers and lakes.”<sup>48</sup>

In other areas, as well, missionaries observed the joyful and uncomplicated willingness of Native Christians to serve the Lord. John Giesbrecht, then principal at the Island Lake Bible School, wrote:

“In the closing days of Bible school, we were confronted with the need of an Indian worker to help in a lonely outpost where a single girl was holding forth the Word of Life herself; and, since some of the Bible school students were in a position, both spiritually and educationally, to fill this place, I approached one of the girls and immediately received an affirmative reply. How simple! The need was mentioned and right there she said, ‘Yes.’ Later others asked to be placed where they could serve their Master also.

“When the day of departure arrived, Mr. Collie flew the willing worker into that hard and isolated spot and she went without an outfit and not knowing whether she would get any support. Friends, it takes courage to advance thus and all that one has experienced in faith needs to be applied. On the night before her departure her mother expressed herself thus, ‘You will pray for my girl, won’t you? You see she is the only girl that I have now, as all the others are dead.’

“We assured her of our prayers and dauntlessly the girl went forth. Not only has she gone forth, but already we have heard of her leading a soul to the Lord.”<sup>49</sup>

## **NATIVE NCEMers**

In NCEM’s 50-year history, close to 40 Native workers would become involved in full-time ministry, some for short-term service of a couple years, and some for longer term. Many of these were trained in the Mission’s Bible schools. (Some of them came to Christ through ministries other than NCEM, and a few have taking their Bible training in other schools.) Several of the workers would, in addition to their NCEM membership, also serve with the Native Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (NEFC). (A number of these are featured in “display boxes” in this chapter.)

Some Native workers have ministered primarily among their own people, while others have served cross-culturally, to those of a different tribal background. Missionary Sarah Sahanatien served away from home for a few years before returning to her own Mohawk people. The following article (written by Sarah) tells the history of her reserve and how God led her to serve there:

A few hundred years ago the Mohawk Indians lived in the area of Montreal. However, as the area began to build up, the Indians moved away. Some moved across the St. Lawrence River ... others moved to the Cornwall area (Akwasasne) ... the rest of the people went to settle about 30 miles northwest of Montreal. Their village is known as Oka.

[At Oka] in the year 1879, Chief Fleecy Lowi Sahanatien (my father's grandfather), obtained a French Bible from a man selling them. The chief was given a Bible on the condition that he read it ... Soon they came to John 14:6. God opened their eyes to the truth and many became Christians. Arrangements were made that a Methodist preacher should come and be their minister. The Christians organized to build a church, but the opposition tore it down.

After a long time the chief told his people that he had decided to move to another place. He and two other men went to Ottawa. They were given a choice of three locations. They chose the place now called Gibson, about 100 miles north of Toronto. About 25 families, mostly young couples and children, signed up to make the move. It was in October, 1881, when they departed from their families. There was much weeping.

God truly led them to a country of plenty and blessing. The land was rich with timber, lakes, rivers and bushes. The land was rocky, though, but there was enough for each family to have a small farm ... At first they stayed in tents. But by the time winter set in, they were all in log shanties.

In a few years each family had located and had pigs, cattle, chickens, etc. The domestic animals were brought from a French community nearby ... A log church was built. The chief as well as others took charge of the services. Three Sunday services as well as midweek prayer meetings were conducted regularly. They helped each other in the work that had to be done by having work bees. Often the work day ended with a prayer meeting. They would sing their Indian hymns, mothers would read the Bible to their family and they would pray ... Soon they also had a day-school for the children. And so they lived in peace, one with another, like one large family.<sup>50</sup>

In 1981 Sarah reported on the 100th anniversary of her people's move to a new land. Though special services were held "to honour God," Sarah had, for several years, been watching a spiritual decline among the succeeding generations at Gibson. "Materialism crept to the forefront," she observed, "and spiritual things took second place."

And that is why Sarah felt God calling her to serve at home. She joined NCEM in 1954 and, after a few short-term assignments in northern Ontario, moved back to Gibson, then a community of about a thousand. For many years she taught Sunday school and assisted in

various ways in the local church. She often requested prayer for those who had strayed from their Christian heritage.

Sarah went to be with the Lord in 1994 at the age of 82. She had kept active in ministry even in her old age. (Reportedly, she was still out tenting in her summer Bible camp work at age 80.) Sarah served with a strong burden for children and young people, the third and fourth generations since the move to Gibson.

## **MY PEOPLE NEED THE LORD**

In 1840 a young Dene (Chipewyan) man transferred to work at Norway House, Manitoba. He had been born in Athabasca country, but his family had been convinced that he should have some formal schooling, which he took at Red River Settlement (present-day Winnipeg). From there he entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Through James Evans, Methodist missionary at Norway House, Thomas Hassel was touched by the spirit of Christ. He became fast friends with Evans, and became his personal guide and interpreter, speaking several languages. Because of his education Thomas was able to read the Bible, and quickly grew in his faith.

He often spoke with Evans about the plight of his own people far off to the northwest. On one excursion he had taken a side-trip to visit his family. He returned to Norway House with an even stronger burden. "No one is in greater need than my people. We must go to them soon," he had said to Evans.<sup>51</sup>

The next summer such a trip was planned. The door to the Dene people that seemed ajar with Hassel's conversion, was about to be entered. The people were curious about Thomas's new beliefs, his freedom from fetishes and fears, and they would listen.

An incident on that trip, however, would change the course of history in one moment. While on the Churchill River, a rifle was handed from the stern of the canoe to Evans, in order to shoot some ducks. But the unguarded trigger caught on the canoe cross-bar. The gun fired and tore cruelly into the back of the head of Thomas Hassel, the only Christian in the whole northwest who spoke the Dene language. The door of opportunity to the Dene tribe went crashing shut.

Pondering such a tragic accident could lead to despair, were it not for one eternal fact: the One who allowed that door to swing shut in 1843 and remain closed for many years, could also open it and keep it open.

NCEMer Gilbert Bekkatla would shy away from likening himself to Thomas Hassel, but he does serve the Lord with a similar burden for his own Dene people. Gilbert is, in fact, the first Dene man to enter full-time evangelical ministry.

Gilbert was raised in the Buffalo Narrows area in northwest Saskatchewan, the son of a commercial fisherman. It wasn't until he had done some hard living and hard drinking that he

gave his life to the Lord. By this time he was married with children, and living in the town of Meadow Lake. After moving back north Gilbert grew in his faith as he fellowshiped with the believers at Buffalo Narrows. He began accompanying missionary Harold Roberts on his regular trips to the village of St. George's Hill, where Bible studies were held with Gilbert's family, who by this time also had accepted the Lord.

A few years later Gilbert felt the Lord calling him to full-time missionary work. Along with his wife, Laura, and their four children, the Bekkatlas packed up to attend Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute, leaving behind a good paying job. Following Gilbert's graduation in 1988, they joined NCEM, serving first in Tadoule Lake, Manitoba. Later they moved to reside in Prince Albert, which has been base for a ministry that has taken Gilbert to all of the 30-some Dene communities.

But even for Gilbert, the doors to ministry have certainly not been wide open in these villages, or among the Dene people who have moved to the cities. But one by one, life by life, Gilbert has been faithfully witnessing. Whether in outdoor crusade meetings, jail visitation and Bible studies, or in distributing the Dene JESUS video, Gilbert is still just one of the very few serving the Lord from among his people ... the same people Thomas Hassel was hoping to reach when his life was prematurely snuffed out.

## **ESTABLISHING NATIVE CHURCHES**

The reason for NCEM's existence was found in Matthew 28:19-20a, where Christ commanded: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...(NIV)."

While making disciples was the goal, there seemingly was an understanding from the start that the Great Commission didn't include only a command, but also a strategy. Established local churches would be the key to reaching Native Canadians for Christ.

NCEM's first General Director, Stan Collie, wrote: "We are fully committed to the indigenous principle in our missionary endeavour. Our goal is a Native evangelical Church, entirely self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting ... To this end, our every effort is being directed.<sup>52</sup>

As God blessed their efforts, missionaries eventually saw churches established on a number of stations. In the late 1980's the Northern Lights magazine reported that, to date, 20 churches had been turned over to other groups, there were presently eleven churches registered with the Mission (for the purpose of issuing income tax receipts), and over 16 fellowship groups meeting.<sup>53</sup>

Of course, in a strict Scriptural sense, a church wouldn't need to be large or even organized to be

a church. There would be many obstacles encountered in the growth of such fellowship groups. Even in locations where several had turned to Christ, it has been difficult getting Christians to fellowship together regularly. Social lines drawn by family ties, as well as generational gaps, have been factors.

Another drawback has been the notion that there must be a “white” missionary around or else the church can’t operate (both missionaries and Native believers have been guilty of this misconception). And while it’s true that missionaries around the world -- and in NCEM -- have been accused of being slow in turning over responsibilities, even those who have tried their hardest know that it hasn’t always been so easy to find those willing to stand up and say, “Okay, I’ll do that.”

## **WHOSE CHURCH?**

In some locations the work has flourished after the missionary has left. In others, things have fallen apart ... literally. Missionary Carroll Hill tells of his experience -- and a lesson learned:

*While we were gone, northern Alberta had a succession of heavy snows and the roof of our church at Gift Lake caved in. The storekeeper, who was a friend of ours, kept telling the people they had to get the snow off the roof.*

*“That building’s forty feet long,” he said, “and the snow’s heavy. If you don’t get it off there, it’s going to break in.”*

*They shrugged indifferently. “That isn’t our church. It belongs to Hill.”*

*Because they had little part in paying for the church or working on it, they didn’t feel any obligation to help take care of it. Another nine inches of snow fell and the roof caved in.*

*I had tried to make them understand that the church wasn’t mine, that it belonged to them but they didn’t see it that way. When we got home I told them I would give them a week to come and help tear it down or fix it or whatever they planned to do with it. If they didn’t come I was going to tear it down and sell the lumber.*

*I don’t know if they believed me or not, but nobody showed up so I took it down, board by board, pulled out the nails and piled the lumber and shingles. One fellow came and helped me. When the work was done they all came to see me, thinking I was going to give them the lumber they wanted. But that wasn’t my plan.*

*Having bought the lumber from Bissel Bros. at a cheaper rate, I was able to sell it at normal cost and retrieve the amount that was donated to it. I gave all the money back to those who had donated. Everything worked out very well. Had the church not been ruined by the snow it would always have been Hill’s church.*

*I learned that they had to do the building themselves, and put up a good share of the money*

*themselves if they were to claim the building as their own and take care of it. It took awhile, but now they have their own church and are responsible for its upkeep. They now have their own pastor, for which we thank the Lord.*<sup>54</sup>

Besides the building aspect, there were other important reasons for NCEMers to focus on establishing indigenous churches. General Director, Bud Elford, noted this lesson from early missions history in northern Canada:

*Most North American Christians today do not know that between 1840 and 1890 there were thousands of Indian believers in northwestern Canada. These believers had the entire Bible in their own language, and they had regular morning and evening devotions in their homes. They also tithed their fur catches, game and fish, kept Sundays and walked on snowshoes up to 250 miles to attend the yearly love feasts ... But by the 1920's, there was scarcely a trace of this blessedness remaining...*

*There were ... reasons for the death of the Indian church of the 1800's. First was the failure of the missionaries of that day to organize indigenous local Indian churches. This meant that when liberal theology began to permeate the southern white denominations, it was only a matter of time until liberal ministers, sent north to be the "praying masters," froze the life out of the dependent village churches. Very early NCEM determined not to repeat this error.*<sup>55</sup>

The challenge hasn't been easy, but it has been clear. If NCEM was to effectively evangelize among Native Canadians, indigenous churches would have to be established that had sound Bible teaching, a vision to reach the lost (in their own communities and beyond) ... and one more critical aspect. Parents would need to teach the things of God to their children, otherwise the church could be snuffed out in just one generation.

## **A FELLOWSHIP OF INDIGENOUS CHURCHES FORMED**

It hasn't taken NCEM 50 years to realize that it would not be the only answer to the evangelization of unreached Native Canadians. Other evangelical mission societies and denominations would become involved. Evangelistically-minded churches situated close to reserves have had a part in it, as have Christian professionals employed in Native communities. And, very significantly, the 1950's would see the beginnings of a truly indigenous fellowship of churches with an evangelistic mandate.

Not long after NCEM's Indian Bible School at Island Lake began, its campus became the setting for an annual summer gathering of Native believers. NCEMer Bill Jackson was one of those who attended these conferences that continued throughout the 1960's. His report from 1967 gives insight as to what took place:

*It was time of meeting others who know the Saviour and are making Him known to those who are still outside ... Brethren attended the conference from Oxford House, Thicket Portage, Red Sucker Lake, Round Lake, Wesekamak, Island Lake, Sucker River and Prince Albert.*

*Sometimes we spoke through an interpreter and sometimes in Cree. However, when speaking in Cree, many things had to be repeated for better understanding as there were three dialects of Cree spoken by those present.*

*In the reports given there was much for which to praise the Lord; we heard of souls who had been saved and others who had been helped. Since this is a battle, there were also items of special concern and we had prayer at the conclusion of each report, remembering especially the needs as they had been presented to us.*

*Among subjects discussed were: the Indigenous Church -- its pastors, self support; Bible school; baptism and other questions from Scripture and questions from the field ... The Conference was an uplift to those who came and, we believe it was very profitable.<sup>56</sup>*

## **A FELLOWSHIP WITH A MANDATE**

The conferences at Island Lake were an outcome of the desire for a loosely knit fellowship of Indian Christians from across Canada. The late 1960's saw discussion take place regarding an organizational framework for the fellowship. In 1968 Tommy Francis reported:

*The Native Leaders Conference was held at Island Lake, Manitoba, right after the closing of the Bible school ... This year we had some 20 leaders attending coming from 12 fields from Ontario to Alberta ... During this conference much time was devoted to the organization of the Native Evangelical Church of Canada ... The constitution for the church was also checked and adopted.*

*For the conference next year we hope to have a good representation of delegates at which time a Board of Directors will be elected. We feel definitely that the Lord is doing a great work but there is still much ground work to be done and local churches organized. We are anticipating great things from the Lord ... As it grows, we hope to see the church fully supporting itself and contributing to the work of the Lord elsewhere.<sup>57</sup>*

The name chosen for the organization was Native Evangelical Fellowship, but its reason for being formed went beyond Christian "fellowship." These Native workers were well aware of the spiritual needs among their people, not only on their own reserves, but across the Dominion of Canada. It was their hope that NEF would also serve as a missionary sending agency. An NEF informational brochure stated, "The Native Evangelical Fellowship exists for the purpose of bringing lost souls to the saving knowledge of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."

NCEMer Bud Elford was one of the missionaries invited to attend the 1969 Native leaders' conference where NEF's official organizing took place, June 26-29, at Island Lake. He reported:

*It was well attended with 20 Indian delegates from 17 different villages. Present also were 12 white observers, which included missionaries from: The Northern Lights Gospel Mission, Continental Interior Mission, NCEM and a few independent missionaries. Five aircraft were in service, provided by the above mentioned missions, which logged many hours bringing and returning personnel, as well as needed supplies.*



*The Conference got under way Thursday morning with a 7 a.m. prayer meeting. After breakfast the entire morning was given to prayer and seeking God for His direction in the business to be carried on during the days ahead. Each evening there was an open service which was well attended by the local people. There were two speakers each evening. Albert Tait did a commendable job in interpreting for those who could not speak the Native languages. Four languages were constantly in use; these were Cree, Saulteaux, Ojibway and English. There were special numbers in song as well. One very delightful combination was Saul Keeyash and Jack Barkman singing duets in Cree...*

*During this year's session a Board was set up. For the time being this Board will consist of five men: Stan Williams (Ojibway), West Bay, Ont., President; Bill Jackson (Cree), Lac La Biche, Alta., Vice-President; Tom Francis (Cree), Prince Albert, Sask., Secretary-Treasurer; Albert Tait (Saulteaux), Island Lake, Man., and Saul Keeyash (Saulteaux), Round Lake, Ont., board members. The terms of office are to be 3 years and elections are to take place on alternate years...*

*Without a doubt the highlight of the Conference was the Sunday afternoon service .... the Native leaders called upon their brothers in Christ, the white missionaries, to come forward and dedicate the newly chosen executive to the work to which the Holy Spirit was calling them. Five missionaries stood with them on the platform and, while holding hands, each prayed for God's blessing and direction for the leaders ... This was indeed a historic occasion; a milestone reached in Indian missions.*

*The hand of God appeared to be with these men as they deliberated and certainly the presence of His Holy Spirit was evidenced in meetings by testimony, song and spoken word. Many Native pastors and leaders are returning to their villages with a renewed zeal and dedication, persuaded that God surely is building His Church. Missionaries also were touched and refreshed during these days.<sup>58</sup>*

The annual conferences have continued to be a highlight for NEF, for pastors and Native church members. 1969 was the last year the conference was held at Island Lake. With a number of delegates coming from other provinces, and with the cost of flying them in, it was decided that the 1970 conference should be held in Winnipeg. After a few years there, these "general" conferences were moved to Caronport, Saskatchewan, where they have been held each July since the early 1980's. Annual pastors' and workers' conferences, usually held in the fall, have become a highlight for NEFers as well.

## **UNIQUELY INDIGENOUS**

To God's glory, the past decades have seen numerous Native people find Christ and become church members in various evangelical denominations across Canada including Pentecostal, Baptist, Mennonite, Salvation Army and Alliance. Among them, NEF is unique. It received its Dominion Charter in 1970 as a nonprofit religious organization, the first in Canadian history for a truly independent and indigenous Native church society.

With God's blessing NEF would grow, and by the mid-1990's it consisted of over 20 member churches scattered from British Columbia to Quebec. The past 25 years have included struggles common to any new organization, while also grappling with issues unique to indigenous associations. One of the challenges has been for pastors and missionaries to find adequate financial support. Some of the NEF churches are small and are located in communities with high unemployment. Some Native Christians have admittedly been slow in taking responsibility for supporting their own church and pastor.

Another issue NEF has wrestled with has been that of ethnic exclusiveness. It wasn't until 1995 that it changed its policy to accept up to 25 percent non-Native staff, and welcomed its first non-Native missionary couple. For many years previous to this, though, NEF had worked alongside non-Native outreaches -- NEF was a founding member of IMCO, a cooperative effort of evangelical missions with a similar mandate of reaching Native Canadians.

## **SOWING AND REAPING AT OXFORD HOUSE**

Every mission-minded Christian is familiar with these words of Jesus to His disciples: "They (the fields in Samaria) are ripe for harvest" (Jn. 4:35b). What many don't notice, though, is that Jesus' statement is immediately followed with the cause of such a prepared field -- "One sows and another reaps" (4:37).

The world is the field, but it is not just a harvest field. It is a land for sowing, and watering, and waiting and gathering. "We are looking for something for nothing when we are willing only to reap," writes one missionary author. "Sowing always precedes the harvest."<sup>59</sup>

While at places such as Weagamow Lake, Island Lake, and Moose Factory, NCEMers did not have to wait too many years for a harvest, in some locations missionaries have seen very few firm decisions for Christ, or none at all. In other areas there had been a limited harvest but, despite continued missionary effort, things seemed to be going backwards instead of forward.

The village of Oxford House was an example of the latter. In the early 1990's, however, all the cultivating, sowing, and waiting that had been carried on since the 1950's would come to a head! NCEMers Carl and Naomi Epp were serving there when it happened.

When the Epps moved to Oxford House in 1983, they were greeted by an almost-empty Mission-owned church building. In this isolated northeastern Manitoba community of 1400 Cree people there were just two Christian couples and a few individuals coming out for fellowship. (Other established churches in the village were not characterized by orthodox doctrine and/or practice.)

Though so few were coming out to church, many of the local people had certain expectations of Carl and Naomi. So the young missionary couple got busy fulfilling them. They held weekly children's meetings, and three weekly church services. The necessary preparation for these, along with visitation of people in their homes and around town, kept them well occupied.

## **LEFT IN GOD'S HANDS**

Carl says their goal, at the time, was to see the church established in Oxford House. To prioritize their efforts, the Epps had thought about dropping their ministry to children and concentrating only on adults. However, Ed Hickey, their field director at the time, encouraged Carl and Naomi to reach out to whole families as much as possible, along with outreach to children and teens. And that is what they did. Though they would still lead church meetings, the establishing of the church would be left in God's hands.

The Epps visited homes in the community as much as possible, and had families over to their place. As they got to know more people (both believers and nonbelievers), a sense of trust was established. And as they got to know the community, Carl and Naomi began to notice the positive effects of previous evangelical ministry. Some people had made commitments in years past, but were now not living for the Lord. However, even with these, there was still an openness to the Gospel, says Carl.

The Epps heard the people talk about the Larsons, the Stewards, the Monkmans, the Bankerts, the Glasses ... all NCEMers who had served in Oxford House in years previous. The Albert Harpers were associate Native workers who had also served there. Brad Steward and David Haynes were single workers stationed in Oxford House just prior to the Epps' arrival. Joan Wright and Annie (Penner) Anderson had served there for a short term in 1987 while the Epps were in the neighboring reserve of Gods Lake Narrows. Summer workers (with the Mission's NMTC program), Christian school teachers and nurses had also had an influence on local individuals and families. Some local people were too young to remember most of the past NCEMers, but their parents knew them and it made a difference in their openness.

Of course the Epps weren't just socializing during their "visiting" of families. In many homes they found opportunities to teach the Scriptures. Usually there was no structured plan in their teaching, says Carl, except to teach as much of the Bible as possible, and to serve as living examples of what Christ could do in a life.

## **WHAT ABOUT PLANTING A CHURCH?**

During this period in their ministry in Oxford House the Epps were sensing a new freedom to serve. There was no burden hanging over them constantly telling them that they should be "planting a church." In fact, Carl says that by this time he had realized that, "There's no instruction in the Bible that says go plant churches. It says go and make disciples."

The Epps knew, though, that true biblical disciples would be those who "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). And though they were faithfully ministering to families in their homes, no doubt at times Carl and Naomi still wondered how God was going to begin bringing people together ... How would He establish the local church to be a strong and unified testimony in the community?

Things began happening when, in the late 1980's, a Christian lady expressed her desire to start a choir. Soon after, two couples joined the singing group simply because of their appreciation for music. By 1989 all four had made decisions for Christ and were baptized that same year.

Then things began to mushroom. As a result of seeing these two couples get saved, a man who had previously made a decision for the Lord rededicated his life. “He was a different person,” say the Epps. Then some of the other older Christians were encouraged and motivated to go on with the Lord.

Christians began to see the need to come to church more regularly. Previously the attendance was up and down, peaking at around 30, including children. Now, not only were many more people attending, but they were getting involved. One fellow started playing his guitar and leading singing. People helped take up the offering and some people sang special numbers. There were now testimonies in church, and even sermons from some.

It didn’t end there. Non-Christians started coming to church meetings and some were saved. An older couple gave their lives to the Lord and were baptized after they’d seen their grown children do so. A new church building to accommodate the higher attendance was planned and completed, an idea that came from the Native people themselves. And it was a local believer who suggested that the church host a Billy Graham Association crusade.

## **WHY OXFORD HOUSE?**

Many NCEMers have laboured on stations with results far less encouraging. Why these blessings at Oxford House?

“I’m asking God the same question!” says Carl, and then adds, “God just has his own timing.” Besides the sowing that took place there in previous years, Naomi notes another contributing factor. “We saw both husbands and wives coming to the Lord at the same time.” This was crucial for new believers and for recommitted believers in having a support at home.

Looking back, Carl says that there are things he would have done differently in the ministry at Oxford House, but doesn’t believe that they would have necessarily speeded things up. “God was trying to teach me more than just what I could do for Him ... but what He could do in me.”

He notes that likely every mission station is different. And when it comes to the matter of training church leaders, Carl has learned that it’s best to let God direct. Those men who would appear to be influential and gifted are not necessarily the ones that God would choose.

In 1995 the Epps felt the Lord moving them on to another location. Though still not an “organized” church with appointed elders (as this book goes to press), the believers at the Oxford House Bible Chapel are carrying on. The group has its recognized leaders, but feels it is still in need of a pastor/missionary, someone who can lead them in further stages of growth. For NCEM there remains the challenge of encouraging these believers at Oxford House. It is often very difficult for local men to step out to take church leadership in their home communities.

The story of the church at Oxford House is, most of all, one that illustrates the great blessings of God. And it is the story of those who were willing to pay the price necessary to cultivate and sow and wait. But as a result of their labour, they are able to rejoice together with the Epps, who have

seen a harvest.

## BEGINNING AT THE END

Someone has said that, when writing a biography, it would be best to start by telling how a person's life ended, rather than how it began. Sadly, even among missions and missionaries, there have been those that started out well but did not end well.

This book began by describing NCEM's beginnings ... by prayer and by faith. And though we are not called to defend institutions and programs, NCEM's desire is that, unless God chooses to end it another way, it will still be on course when Christ returns for His Church -- still depending on the Lord.

Obviously the role of the Mission must change with the growth and development of the indigenous church. There are, however, other NCEM fields that have not yet become harvest fields. Among them are the Athabaskan tribes of the northwest, those in the Maritimes, and the overlooked among the Cree-related peoples. There also remains the unique challenge among the Arctic Inuit.

God's Word assures us that it is His purpose to gather His Church from every nation of the earth. NCEM must continue to sow in hope, with patience and endurance, even in places where the resistance is great. We must remember the wise man's warning: "He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap" (Eccles. 11:4). Though we face setbacks and discouragements, we must keep serving with our eyes "not on what is seen, but on what is unseen" (II Cor. 4:18a). Because with God, there is always Light on the Horizon.

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NOTES: 1--From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: Zondervan; 2--Northern Lights magazine, issue #153; 3--NLs #293; 4--NLs #368; 5--NLs #293; 6--NLs; 7--NLs #227; 8--NLs #191; 9--NLs #225; 10--NLs #227; 11--NLs #368; 12--NLs #101; 13--NLs #361, originally published in Good News Broadcaster magazine; 14--Scripture and Traditional Religion: published by NCEM; 15--Adrian Jacobs, in Indian Life Magazine, June-July 1992; 16--NLs #32; 17--NLs; 18--NLs #415; 19--NLs #361; 20--NLs; 21--NLs #176; 22--NLs #168; 23--Excerpt from January 1985 letter from Law and Government Division, Research Branch, Ottawa; 24--NLs #408; 25--NLs #101; 26--NLs #362; 27--NLs #398; 28--NLs #382; 29--NLs #152; 30--NLs #348; 31--NLs #168; 32--NLs #120; 33--NLs #365; 34--NLs #381; 35--NLs #168; 36--NLs #84; 37--NLs; 38--NLs #107; 39--NLs #97; 40--NLs #172; 41--NLs #233; 42--NLs #225; 43--NLs #296; 44--NLs #349; 45--NLs #349; 46--NLs; 47--NLs #168; 48--NLs #120; 49--NLs #169; 50--NLs #298; 51--NLs #318 / James Evans by John McLean (Toronto: Methodist Mission Rooms, 1890); 52--NLs #133; 53--NLs #414; 54--North and Beyond: published by NCEM; 55--NLs #361; 56--NLs #244; 57--NLs #257; 58--NLs #267; 59--For Missionaries Only, Joseph Cannon: Baker.

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*The original printing of Light on the Horizon included photos with captions, and text boxes. Here is text from some of them:*

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## OPPOSITION

## **Is it hard...?**

“Yes, I suppose it is, for one is often misunderstood. I’ve been called a false prophet, antichrist, a JW, and a devil woman. One man ... threatened to shoot me for changing his sister’s religion. New believers are persecuted, too.”

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## **OPPOSITION**

### **Racial Barriers...**

“Racial feelings are sometimes strong; then nasty words are spoken and unkind acts performed. One, whom I had led to the Lord and sought to help through the years, recently while in a bad mood said, ‘One of these days we’ll put you out of the settlement...’ ”

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## **A FEW BELIEVERS**

Highlights at the Workers’ Conferences during the “barren years” were the Native testimonies.

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## **BIBLE SCHOOL**

KBI would draw students from widespread areas. James Justin (right), who graduated in 1996, is from Kyuquot, off the west coast of Vancouver Island.

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## **KEY-WAY-TIN**

The 1979-80 Key-Way-Tin Kings hockey team dominated local league play, and held its own playing Bible colleges much larger than KBI.

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## **KBI**

### **FACILITIES, FACILITIES, FACILITIES...**

The focus of NCEM’s Bible school ministry is, of course, the students. But its effectiveness would very much depend on facilities. Students and staff have often had to be patient and willing to put up inadequate conditions. This excerpt from an early Key-Way-Tin report tells what it was like:

“The dining room can now be used for its primary purpose, and tables can be set on time ... Classes going overtime at noon, counselling or asking questions, a student puzzled about a difficult point on the exam paper will not hold up preparation for the noon meal ... Teachers and students won’t need to be conscious of the mix-master next door, the typewriter, telephone, or visitors coming to the office ... Oh yes, I almost forgot. We won’t need the laundry room for class tomorrow morning!”

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## **KBI**

In 1982 the KBI chapel/gym/classroom structure was completed. In 1985 an adjoining 35-acre parcel of land was purchased for \$155,000 on which staff and student homes were located. Then in the early 1990's additions and improvements were begun to accommodate the increasing number of married students with families. Including buildings large and small, that meant 30 furnaces to maintain!

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## **NATIVES OVERSEAS**

This team, made up mostly of Key-Way-Tin students, served overseas in 1986. "The Venture Teams (VTI) staff, the Filipino Christians, and people we met on the way believed in us," wrote team member Donna (Anderson) Lakey. "We started to believe that as Native people we had much to contribute."

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## **NATIVE CHURCHES**

### **A Light is Needed**

Not long ago one of our single ladies was teaching a class of Native children. Her topic was the greatness and goodness of God. She explained that this great, good, kind God is everywhere. She then asked the question, "Can you think of any place where God isn't present?"

Everyone said "no" except one little boy who put up his hand and said, "I know one place where God isn't. He is not in my home or in our house, and he's not on my reserve."

That is just one of the places void of God or a child of God. Heartbreaking, isn't it, that so near to places where God moves freely in the midst of saints, that someone must say, "He is not in our house." (from Northern Lights)

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## **NATIVE CHURCHES**

Missionary John Giesbrecht (far left) and believers who met at the Island Lake Bible School (the School operated only during the summer months). The church later built its own facility across the lake at Garden Hill.

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## **NATIVE CHURCHES**

Missionary Doug Taylor (4th from left) is invited back to Moose Factory, Ontario, for the dedication of the church's new facility. The Taylors served there from 1960 to 1973. James Moses (3rd from left) pastored the fellowship for several years, followed by Mervyn Cheechoo (2nd from left). (NEF photo)

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## **NEF**

Native church leaders conferences held at Island Lake each summer gave birth to an association of churches.

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## **NEF**

NEF co-founders and first Board (l. to r.): Bill Jackson (Cree), Saul Keeyash (Saulteaux), Stan Williams (Ojibway), Albert Tait (Saulteaux), Tom Francis (Cree).

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### **Tommy Francis: A Vision for Native Churches**

Though originally from southern Saskatchewan, it was while working for the government at La Loche that Tommy Francis came to the Lord through the ministry of NCEM missionaries, Art and Dorothy Wellwood. Sensing God's call to full-time Christian service, Tommy and his wife, Helen, soon after moved to Cass Lake, Minnesota, where they attended the Mokahum Bible Institute.

Tommy served with NCEM from 1956 to 1967, most of those years in itinerant field evangelism while based at The Pas, Manitoba, and at Prince Albert. Some winters his extended trips by plane to northern communities lasted up to eight weeks.

Though Tommy's evangelistic ministry saw unprecedented numbers of Native northerners make decisions for Christ, he would become better known for his role in founding and leading the Native Evangelical Fellowship (NEF). Tommy taught and promoted the idea of the indigenous church and carried the vision for a national association of Native churches.

Tommy served full-time in the administration of NEF until his retirement in the early 1980's, and has since continued in a Bible teaching and preaching ministry.

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### **Albert Tait: Trusting the Lord**

The Lord had changed my life from a drunkard, a fighter, and gambler and a thief. I was happy. But other people would be happy, too, if they only knew that there was a God who could change their lives...

In 1957, Tommy Francis and some others came back [to Weagamow Lake] to hold meetings ... One day, Tommy drew me to the side. "Albert, would you like to go to Bible school and learn more about the Word of God?" he asked.

"Yeah," I said. "I want to go alright, but I don't have enough money to feed my family while I'm in Bible school."

"This may be the time that you'll have to trust the Lord to look after you. The Bible says He will supply all our needs," Tommy said...

[Later] I went back to Tommy. "Yes," I said. "I will quit my job at The Hudson's Bay Store and go to Bible school."

"You won't be sorry," Tommy told me. (--from the book *The Lonely Search*, the life story of Albert Tait written by Owen Salway; published by Indian Life Books.)

Albert's life was one of service for Christ. After graduation from NCEM's La Ronge Bible School he joined the Mission and became teacher and principal of the Island Lake School. A founding member of



NEF, Albert pastored the Weagamow Evangelical Fellowship for many years. Following a five-year battle with cancer, Albert went to his eternal reward in 1988, survived by his wife, Rhoda, and their 10 children.

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### **Stan Williams: Working Hard and Long for the Lord**

It was at a Billy Graham crusade in Toronto in 1955 that Stan made a decision to follow Christ wholeheartedly. Following graduation from NCEM's Bible school at La Ronge, Stan and his wife, Margaret, joined the Mission. "I promised God that I would work twice as hard for Him as I had worked for the devil," says Stan.

And he certainly has worked hard and long. In 1961 Stan originated a weekly Gospel radio program that has been broadcasted on up to seven stations in Ontario. "Through radio, we are reaching most of the densely populated Ojibway-speaking area of Ontario," wrote Stan in 1995. "As far as I know, we are one of only two Ojibway-speaking radio programs going."

Stan was a founding member of the Native Evangelical Fellowship, becoming its first Board President, a position he held until 1985. Besides NEF, Stan has helped form two other organizations that have encouraged Indian pastors and workers to serve together for the advancement of the Gospel in Ontario. All the while he has served as pastor in his home community of West Bay, on Manitoulin Island.

"God is so good and it is a privilege to work for Him," says Stan.

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### **Bill Jackson**

After growing up on the Whitefish Lake Reserve in north-central Alberta, Bill was pointed to the Lord by a Prairie Bible Institute student who had spent the summer doing evangelism in the area, and who had helped Bill and his brother-in-law with haying one day.

Following graduation from Berean Bible Institute in Calgary, Christian ministry would eventually lead Bill and his wife, Shirley, to join NCEM in 1964. Fields of service have included North Battleford and Cochin (Sask.), Lac La Biche, Little Buffalo, and Goodfish Lake (Alta.).

Bill has taught part-time at Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute since the 1970's, while pastoring the NEF church at nearby Kikino. He was a founding member of the Native Evangelical Fellowship, and has served on its board.

Music was a part of Bill's life even before he was saved, and would have a big part in his family. The Jackson's children have used music extensively in full-time ministry. Bill's Bible teaching -- explaining God's eternal truths in down-to-earth terms -- is his ministry that has proven most influential, through avenues at KBI, itinerant outreach, radio and television.

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### **Gary Quequish ... as remembered by his Bible school principal**

I remember one year when I taught [at a short-term Bible school] at Weagamow Lake. Gary was one of the village rebels who was running around at night looking through the windows and disturbing the class.

It was maybe a couple of years after that that he was saved through Albert Tait's ministry.

Gary came to Key-Way-Tin very shy. He was so shy and withdrawn that when you talked to him he would hardly lift his head. But such a transformation! ... As the Word of God took effect in his life it was like a flower that blossomed. It was interesting in Homiletics class to see him learning to develop a devotional, and then a sermon. It was obvious that there was an obvious gift, and the Holy Spirit kept stirring it up. (--Bill Friesen)

Following Bible school Gary first served as a missionary in Kenora, Ontario, then as a teacher at KBI. In 1982 he married a former classmate, Christy Buck, and they served short-term at Carmacks, Yukon, before teaching again at KBI. Gary then returned to pastor his home church at Weagamow Lake. Presently he is involved in a church-planting ministry at Sioux Lookout, Ontario, and is NEF's Board Chairman.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

# THE PEOPLE OF NCEM

### A

Erv & Sandra ABBOTT (1996-p) associate service: public relations resource personnel: Prairie Bible Institute, Three Hills (AB); associate aviation service.

Arthur & Dorothy ACTON (1949-66) field service: Deschambault Lake (SK), Round Lake (ON), Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK), The Pas (MB), South Indian Lake (MB); Dorothy deceased (1992); (Art) associate service (1994-p).

Arthur & Marjorie (MARKEL) ACTON (1994-p) associate service: Meadow Lake (SK); see Marjorie (Leroy) MARKEL.

Don & Charlotte AFFLECK (1964-68 / 1967-68) field service: Island Lake (MB), West Bay (ON).

Grant & Jean ALFORD (1982-87) associate service: public relations resource personnel: Prairie Bible Institute, Three Hills (AB).

Ron & Elsie ALLISON (1955-60) field service: Ft. Chipewyan (AB); short-term service: Island Lake (MB); Ron deceased (1960); Elsie deceased (1963).

Annie (PENNER) ANDERSON (1985-87) field service: Norway House (MB), Oxford House (MB); staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

David & Muriel ANDERSON (1957-p) field service: Fraser Lake (BC), Vanderhoof (BC), Ft. St. James (BC), administrative, field service: Whitehorse (YT); staff, administrative service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); public relations (mid-west region).

Dennis & Amanda ANDERSON (1972-p / 1977-p) (Dennis) short-term field service: The Pas (MB), Grand Rapids (MB), Oxford House (MB), Ft. Liard (NWT); (Dennis & Amanda) field service: The Pas (MB).

Donna ANDERSON (see Terry & Donna LAKEY)

Lyle & Rita ANDERSON (1978-86 / 1978-86; 1988-p) Bible camp administrative service: Prince Albert (SK); staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB), administrative/staff service: TV Dept., Prince Albert (SK); Rita: assoc. service (1988-p).

Dean & Joan ANNIS (1963-85) field service: Yellowknife (NWT), Lac La Martre (NWT), Ft.

Rae (NWT), Millville (NB), Burt's Corner (NB); associate service (1984-85).

Ruth ARMSTRONG (1981-p) field service: Puvirnituk (PQ); staff service: TV Dept., Prince Albert (SK).

Vernon & Edith ARMSTRONG (1990-p / 1990-1993) associate construction service: Headquarters (Prince Albert, SK); Arrowhead Native Bible Center (NB), Pine Ridge Bible Camp (SK); Timber Bay Bible Centre (SK); Edith deceased (1993).

Vernon & Cynthia (MERRIMAN) ARMSTRONG (1990-p / 1988-p) (Cynthia) staff service: Bookstore (Prince Albert, SK); associate field service: Buffalo Narrows, SK (1992-94); (Vernon & Cynthia) associate staff service: Timber Bay Bible Centre (SK).

Mark & Christy (MILLER) ARNOLD (1981-93) (Mark) short-term itinerant field service: Manitoba; (Christy) short-term field service: Rae Lakes, (NWT); (Mark & Christy) field service: Garden Hill (MB), Cumberland House (SK), Rae Lakes (NWT).

Mervyn & Lorraine ARNOLD (1986-94) associate field service: Hobbema (AB).

Eleanor (KENNEDY) ASLIN (1946) field service: Buffalo Narrows (SK), La Loche (SK).

## **B**

Al & Marilyn BAILEY (1980-p) field service: Telegraph Creek (BC), Halfway River Reserve (BC), Ft. St. John (BC).

Dan & Darleen BANKERT (1972-79) aviation, field service: Grand Rapids (MB), Oxford House (MB); Dan deceased (1988).

Jake & Mary (KEHLER) BARTEL (1951-56 / 1948-56) (Mary) short-term field service: Camsell Portage (SK); field service: Molonosa (SK), Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); (Jake & Mary) field service: Gods Lake Narrows (MB).

Lucille (JACKSON) BARTLETT (1957-60) field service: La Loche (SK).

Bert & Lois BASKIN (1982-1987) associate service: public relations resource personnel: Peace River Bible Institute, Sexsmith (AB); administrative, office service: Headquarters (Prince Albert, SK).

Madeline BEAR (1994) short-term associate staff service: Printing Dept., Prince Albert (SK).

Margaret (BUDD) BEAR (1970-72; 1976-89) staff service: Cree literature, Prince Albert (SK); staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); associate service (1984-88).

Phil BECKER (1988-94) staff service: Printing Dept., Headquarters: Prince Albert (SK).

Gilbert & Laura BEKKATLA (1988-p) field service: Tadoule Lake (MB); field, linguistic service: Prince Albert (SK), Central-Field areas (SK, MB).

Gwen BELL (1961-62) staff service: Headquarters Office (Meadow Lake, SK).

Lillian BELLOWS (1953-63) field service: South Indian Lake (MB).

Eric & Joy BJORN (1974-76) staff service: Pine Ridge Bible Camp (Beauval, SK).

Tony & Lugene BLAIR (1984-p) field service: Conne River Indian Reserve (NF), Arrowhead Native Bible Center (NB).

Chuck BLOOMQUIST (1972-93) short-term field service: Ft. McPherson (NWT); field service: Ft. Franklin (NWT).

David & Joanna BOUCK (1992-p / 1987-p) (David) field service: Salluit (PQ); (Joanna) staff service: Central-Field Office (Prince Albert, SK); field service: Winnipeg (MB); field service: Salluit (PQ).

Ron & Gayle BOWMAN (1963-69) field service: Deschambault Lake (SK); staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK).

Ray & Cathy BRADFORD (1946-96 / 1946-p) field service: Camsell Portage (SK), Uranium City (SK); administrative, public relations service: Meadow Lake (SK), Prince Albert (SK); made honorary members (1983); Ray deceased (1996).

Annie BRADLEY (see Annie REED)

Renee BRADLEY (see Renee HERMAN)

Annie BRANDT (see Annie PLETT)

Edwin & Marjorie BRANDT (1948-57) field service: Grand Rapids (MB); Marjorie deceased (1963).

Chuck & Heather (UNGER) BRAUN (1987-89 / 1986-89) (Heather) field service: Norway House (MB), Dalhousie (NB).

Frank & Mary BRAUN (1988-p) associate field service (on loan from Evangelical Mennonite Conference): Kamsack (SK).

Len & Lorryne BREEN (1986-p) staff service: Printing Dept. (Prince Albert, SK); administrative service: Central-Field Bible Camps, Timber Bay Bible Centre (SK).

Stuart & Martha BREKER (1991-p) associate service: Big River Bible Camp (SK).

Diane BROESKY (see Roy & Diane KOOP)

David & Beth BROOKS (1989) short-term field service: La Loche (SK).

Helene BROSSARD (1985-87) associate field service: Great Whale River (PQ).

Bert & Doris BROWN (1954-59; 1963-74 / 1963-74) (Bert) field service: Gods Lake (MB), York Factory (MB), Round Lake (ON), Island Lake (MB), Meadow Lake (SK), God's Lake (MB), Ft. Chipewyan (AB); (Bert & Doris) field service: Ft. Chipewyan (AB), Shamattawa (MB), Round Lake (ON), Brochet (MB).

Gary & Wanda BROWN (1976-p) short-term field service: The Pas (MB); aviation, administrative service: The Pas (MB), Nipawin (SK); staff service: Printing Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Wilbur & Fern BROWN (1984-86) associate service: public relations (eastern region).

Nancy BUCK (see Robert & Nancy McMAHON)

Robert & Marla (PRIEBE) BUCK (1982-83; 1984-85 / 1982-85) (Robert) staff service: Central-Field Bible camps; staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK); (Marla) staff service: TV Dept., Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK).

Rose BUCK (1990-p) associate field service: Central-Field (MB); staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK); field service: Winnipeg (MB).

Margaret BUDD (see Margaret BEAR)

John & Mary BUHLER (1956-60) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); John deceased (1964).

Evelyn BUTLER (see Charles & Evelyn MATTHEWS)

## C

Marshall & Erika CALVERLEY (1952-65) field, aviation service: Buffalo Narrows (SK), Meadow Lake (SK); U.S. Office, public relations service (Omaha, NE); Dore Lake (SK).

Les & Betty CARTER (1986-p) field service: Big River Bible Camp (SK), Canwood (SK).

Thelma CARTER (see Thelma KOOP)

Jan CASH (1987-90) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Bertha (WILSON) CIRANKOWITZ (1953-54) field service: Uranium City (SK).

Tom & Donna CNOSSEN (1987-p) short-term field service: Red Sucker Lake (MB), Great Whale River (PQ); field service: Cormorant (MB), Timber Bay (SK).

Bryan & Heather COLLETTE (1995-p) appointed to Central-Field service.

Stan & Evelyn COLLIE (1946-65; 1980-p) administrative, field service: Buffalo Narrows (SK); aviation, administrative service: Meadow Lake (SK), The Pas (MB); assoc. service: publications (1980-95).

Elvira COTE (1992-93; 94-p) associate (full-time) field service: Kamsack (SK); associate (full-time) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Venus COTE (1989-p) field, Bible camp service: Eastern-Field: Campbellton (NB), Sydney (NS), Arrowhead Native Bible Center (NB), Truro (NS).

Jack & Darlene COY (1986-p) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Matt & Darlene CRANE (1981-p) field service: La Loche (SK), Janvier (AB); associate service (1989-p).

Ken & Mildred CROOKER (1979-p) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

## **D**

Ken & Vi DAFOE (1990-p) associate (full-time) field service: Ft. McPherson (NWT); Gleichen (AB).

Mark & Ruth Anna (PATTERSON) DANA (1981-p) (Ruth Anna) short-term field service: Grand Rapids (MB), Carmacks (YT); (Mark & Ruth Anna) field service: Burnt Church Indian Reserve (NB), Becancour (PQ).

Carol DAVIS (1954-63) field service: Island Lake (MB), South Indian Lake (MB).

Jim & Marian DAVIS (1995-p) staff service: Headquarters (Prince Albert, SK).

Doug & Esther DAY (1957-68) field service: La Loche (SK), Brochet (MB).

Mary (SOMERS) DAY (1957-60) field service: Moosonee (ON), Moose River Crossing (ON).

Anita (VanBOVEN) DeBRUIN (1990-92) associate short-term service: Pine Ridge Bible Camp

(SK); associate short-term service: Printing Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Tom & Sharon (McGINNIS) DICE (1981-p / 1960-p) (Sharon) field service: Uranium City (SK), La Loche (SK), Stony Rapids (SK), South Nahanni (NWT); staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK); (Tom) Governing Board member (1981-87); (Tom & Sharon) associate service (1982-p).

Gordon & Lillian DIGGINS (1983-91) associate service: public relations resource personnel: Briercrest Bible College (Caronport, SK).

Ken & Heidi DITCHBURN (1987-92 / 1988-92) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Dave DOHERTY (1991-p) associate service: public relations resource personnel: New Brunswick Bible Institute (Hartland, NB).

Alton & Corry DOWNIE (1990-92) associate service: public relations resource personnel: Briercrest Bible College (Caronport, SK).

Phil & Debbie DuFRENE (1984-p) field, NMTC, media service: La Ronge (SK); associate service (1991-p).

George & Delores DUNN (1984-p) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); field service: High Prairie (AB).

Bill & Doris DYCK (1984-89) (Bill) administrative service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK); (Doris) staff service: Printing Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Helen DYCK (see Joe & Helen POPE)

Ralph Dyck (1993-p) staff service: Printing Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

## **E**

Kim EAGLES (1984-87) field service: Waskaganish (PQ).

Mary EDWARDS (see Mary SOUTER)

Marilyn EERDMANS (1973-76) field service: Hay River (NWT); on leave (1975-76).

Kit & Debbie ELFORD (1976-p) staff, administrative service: Printing Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

L.W. (Bud) & Marge ELFORD (1952-p) field service: Buffalo Narrows (SK), Churchill (MB),



Brochet (MB), Ft. McPherson (NWT); linguistic, radio, administrative service: Cold Lake (AB); administrative service: Prince Albert (SK); itinerant public relations service, NMTC, Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute assistance; made honorary members (1992); part-time service: C.H.I.E.F. (AZ, USA) (1992-p).

Roan & Pat ELFORD (1973-p) short-term field service: La Loche (SK), Anzac (AB); field service: Stony Rapids (SK); linguistics service: Wetaskiwin (AB); staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Doris ELLIOT (see Doris GROSE)

Tony & Janet ENS (1991-p) field service: Pelly Crossing (YT).

Carl & Naomi EPP (1982-p / 1983-p) short-term field service: Gods Lake Narrows (MB); field service: Oxford House (MB); staff service: Pine Ridge Bible Camp.

Elma EPP (1954-77) field service: Red Sucker Lake (MB); staff service: Island Lake Indian Bible School (MB), La Ronge Indian Bible School (SK); field service: Shamattawa (MB).

Doris ERICKSON (1980-p) (on loan to NCEM) field service: Carmacks (YT), Carcross (YT), Chilliwack (BC).

Harvey & Evelyn EVERETT (1982-p) public relations service (prairie region); short-term field service, Bible camp service: Central-Field; administrative service: Central-Field.

## **F**

Mr. & Mrs. Carl FAST (1952-53) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK).

Reinhold & Helen FAST (1973-p) field service: Hobbema (AB).

Bill & Judy FAULKNER (1965-78) field service: Chagoness (SK); short-term field service: Manitoulin Island (ON); staff, administrative service: Printing Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Wayne & Lorena (GERBRANDT) FAVEL (1985-86; 91-95 / 1980-86; 91-95) (Lorena) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB), TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK); (Wayne) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK); (Wayne & Lorena) associate service: KBI (1991-95).

Dave & Teresa FEHR (1994-p) field service: Sturgeon Landing (SK).

Lois FEHR (see Lois MILLSAP)

Viola FEHR (1980-95) short-term field service: Thicket Portage (MB); field service: Cumberland House (SK), Dalhousie/Campbellton (NB) area; administrative service: Bible

Education by Extension Dept., Lac La Biche (AB), Prince Albert (SK).

Richard & Carol FERGUSON (1960-69) field service: La Ronge (SK), Ft. Chipewyan (AB).

Art FLOTRE (1959-62) Governing Board member.

Nils & Genevieve FOLKVORD (1951-65 / 1951-p) field service: La Ronge (SK); field service: Vanderhoof (BC); Bible school service: La Ronge (SK); Nils deceased (1965); Genevieve made honorary member (1972).

Paul & Laura FORD (1977-80) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Phil & Carol (MULLIN) FORD (1985-86; 1993-p / 1983-86; 1993-p) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); field service: Grouard Mission (AB).

Tom & Helen FRANCIS (1956-67) short-term Bible school service: Big River (SK); short-term field service: Weagamow (ON); itinerant field evangelism, administrative service based at: The Pas (MB), Prince Albert (SK).

Allan & Doris FRANZ (1957-68) field service: Ft. McPherson (NWT); linguistic service: Cold Lake (AB), Alexis Creek (BC), Sioux Lookout (ON); public relations service: Three Hills (AB); Allan deceased (1973).

Bernard & Martha (JANZEN) FREDLUND (1948-54 / 1949-54) (Martha) short-term field service: Grand Rapids (MB), Thicket Portage (MB); (Bernard & Martha) field service: Padlei (NWT).

Randy & Kari (HILL) FREEMAN (1991-93) associate itinerant evangelism service (Singing Hills Ministries).

Bill & Mary FRIESEN (1963-85) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); short-term Bible school service: Round Lake (ON), Island Lake (ON); staff, administrative service: La Ronge Indian Bible School (SK), Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Cornelius & Helen FRIESEN (1954-56) field service: Ft. Chipewyan (AB).

David & Helen FRIESEN (1953-62) field service: York Factory (MB); staff service: La Ronge Indian Bible School (SK).

Wayne & Chris FRIESEN (1978-81; 1983-p) field service: Ft. Liard (NWT), Halfway River Indian Reserve (BC); public relations service (western region).

Dave (& Anne) FROESE (1978-p) Governing Board member.

Henry & Kathy FROESE (1965-67) field service: La Loche (SK).

Gary & Elaine FULLERTON (1982-p) field service: Eskasoni, Cape Breton Island (NS); staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); field service: Kikino (AB).

## G

Ralph & Dorothy GABLE (1988-90) associate (full-time) field service: Gods Lake Narrows (MB).

Helen (LABADIE) GARRETT (1966-69) Cold Lake (AB); staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK).

Leslie & Christina GARRETT (1954-89 / 54-95) field service: Trout Lake (ON), Loon Lake (SK); short-term field service: Weagamow (ON), Churchill (MB), Red Sucker Lake (MB), Ft. Chipewyan (AB), Brochet (MB), Shamattawa (MB); made honorary members (1973); Leslie deceased (1989); Christina deceased (1995).

Deone GEIGER (see Gordon & Deone GRUCHY)

Lorena GERBRANDT (see Wayne & Lorena FAVEL)

Shelley GERBRANDT (see Gregg & Shelley MacKENZIE)

Allan & Esther GIESBRECHT (1988-p) field service: Salluit (PQ); aviation service: Timmins (ON).

John & Helen GIESBRECHT (1949-64; 1985-88 / 1949-64; 1985-p) field service: Cumberland House (SK), Island Lake Bible School (MB); associate public relations service (western region); John deceased (1988).

Karen GIESBRECHT (see Ed & Karen PETERS)

Milton & Lenore GIESBRECHT (1965-69) associate (full-time) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK) (on loan from Mennonite Central Committee); Lenore deceased (1969).

Colin GILCHRIST (1982-84) staff service: Central-Field Bible camps.

Paul & Pat GILES (1992-p) associate field service: Dore Lake (SK); short-term associate field service: Brabant Lake (SK), Buffalo Narrows (SK); associate (full-time) field service: Stanley Mission (SK).

Darlene (KOOP) GINGERICH (1975-79) staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK).

John (& Karen) GINTER (1982-p) Governing Board member.

Dan & Gladys GLASS (1972-80) field service: Grand Rapids (MB), Oxford House (MB); administrative service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK).

Frank & Sabine GODON (1994-p) associate short-term staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Lorena GOOSEN (see Lorena WAHL)

Dale & Peggy GORDON (1982-88) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Jack & Florida GORDON (1958-92) field service: Little Current (Manitoulin Island, ON), Hobbema (AB), Lac La Biche (AB); staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); public relations service (Ontario region).

John & Jacqueline GORDON (1985-88 / 87-88) Bible camp administrative service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Sadie (THIESSEN) GOTTWALD (1972-76) short-term field service: Thicket Portage (MB), Waskaganish (PQ), Winnipeg (MB).

Brad & Terri-Lynne GOUDY (1994-p) associate field service: Kinistino (SK).

Tim & Ginny GRADIN (1980-p) staff service: Pine Ridge Bible Camp (Beauval, SK); field service: Stony Rapids (SK), La Loche (SK), Buffalo Narrows (SK); staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK).

Vernon & Py GRANT (1986-96) field service: Cormorant (MB), Edmonton (AB); associate service (1994-96).

Keith GRAY (1991-94) associate public relations service (Nova Scotia region).

Doris (ELLIOT) GROSE (1947-56) field, office, printshop service: Buffalo Narrows (SK); short-term field service: Thicket Portage (MB), Cumberland House (SK), Deschambault Lake (SK), Grand Rapids (MB), La Ronge (SK).

Gordon & Deone (GEIGER) GRUCHY (1955-p / 1954-p) (Deone) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); (Gordon) field service: Grand Rapids (MB); (Gordon & Deone) field service: Grand Rapids (MB), Watson Lake (YT); staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK); made honorary members (1995).

August & Helen GRYMALOSKI (1956-59) field service: Shamattawa (MB).

Jake & Margaret GUENTHER (1959-60) associate field service: Burns Lake (BC).

## H

Ted & Grace HAAS (1965-81) field service: South Nahanni (NWT), Ft. McPherson (NWT); administrative service: Bible Education by Extension (Nipawin, SK).

Paul & Lynn HANTHORN (1995-p) associate field service: Ft. McPherson (NWT).

Agatha HARDER (1964-p) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); field service: Thicket Portage (MB), Shamattawa (MB); staff service: La Ronge Bible School (SK), Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); Headquarters hostess (Prince Albert, SK); single ladies ministries coordinator (Prince Albert, SK); field service: Deschambault Lake (SK).

Bert (& Darlene) HARMAN (1990-p) Governing Board member.

Albert & Georgina HARPER (1959-72) associate service: Shamattawa (MB), Oxford House (MB), Island Lake Bible School (MB).

Allan B. & Ethel HARPER (late 1950's to mid-60's) associate service: Red Sucker Lake (MB), Island Lake Bible School (MB); Ethel deceased (1992).

Paul & Effie HARPER (late 1950's to mid-60's) associate staff service: Island Lake Bible School (MB).

Frances HARTOG (1985-p) short-term field service: Dalhousie (NB); field service: Peguis, Fisher River Reserves (Koostatak, MB).

Jim & May HARVEY (1973-81) associate aviation service: Thompson (MB); Jim deceased (1987).

David HAYNES (1980-94) short-term field service: Oxford House (MB), Meadow Lake (SK), Big River Bible Camp (SK); associate service (on loan to Timber Bay Children's Home).

Albert & Barb HEAL (1983-p) field, aviation service: Ft. Nelson, B.C.

Edwin & Anne (KOOP) HEAL (1949-p / 1946-p) (Anne) short-term field service: Waterhen Reserve (SK); field service: La Loche (SK), Molanosa (SK); (Ed) field service: Stony Rapids (SK); (Ed & Anne) field service: Stony Rapids (SK), Buffalo Narrows (SK); made honorary members (1983).

Georgina HEAL (see Georgina HILL)

Grace HEAL (see Walter & Grace POPE)

Clint & Janet HEIGH (1977-78) staff service: Pine Ridge Bible Camp (Beauval, SK).

Sandra HEIKKILA (see Sandra PACK)

Abe & Marjorie HEPPNER (1954-81 / 1958-81) staff service: Printing Dept., Radio Dept. (Meadow Lake, SK); Abe deceased (1993).

Evelyn HEPPNER (see Jon & Evelyn SIEBERT)

Martha HEPPNER (see Mervin & Martha VAN NORTWICK)

Renee (BRADLEY) HERMANN (1979-86) staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK); field service: Thicket Portage (MB), South Indian Lake (MB), Norway House (MB).

George & Ulli HERTWIG (1983-p) field service: Ft. Liard (NWT); short-term field service: Hanceville (BC); field service: Longview (AB).

Florence HEWEY (see Owen & Florence SALWAY)

Ron & Sheila HICK (1988-92) field service: Ft. Rae (NWT); associate staff service (1989-92): Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Edwin & Marion HICKEY (1957-p) field service: Buffalo Narrows (SK); aviation, Central-Field administrative service: The Pas (MB); made honorary members (1992).

Noel & Gladys HICKEY (1956-58) aviation service: Meadow Lake (SK).

Barb (WIEBE) HICKS (1980-86; 87-89) staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK); short-term Eastern-Field service; staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Carroll & Cathy HILL (1961-p) field service: Canwood (SK), Atikameg/Gift Lake (AB), Pierceland (SK), Newcastle (NB); administrative service: Eastern-Field; administrative service: Headquarters (Prince Albert, SK).

Georgina (HEAL) HILL (1979-84) staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK).

Roger & Janeice HILL (1987-p) short-term staff service: Headquarters (Prince Albert, SK); field, public relations service: Arrowhead Native Bible Center (Grand Lake, NB); field service: Georgetown (PEI).

Roger & Pat HILL (1983-93) itinerant music evangelism service: (Singing Hills Ministries: full-time and associate service): Rosthern (SK), Nipawin (SK).

Vincent & Anne HILL (1983-p / 1983-94) field service: Yellowknife (NWT); associate service (1987-p): Joseph Bighead Reserve (Pierceland, SK).

Dr. Art (& Mary) HINDMARSH (1979-p) Governing Board member (Board chairman 1985-87;

95-p).

Jack & Mellanie HINRICHS (1982-91) maintenance, aviation service: Headquarters (Prince Albert, SK); associate service (1987-91).

Derrick & Jean HISCOX (1979-1985; 1989-p) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Helen HISEY (see Ted & Helen LESCHIED)

Classie HOBBS (see Classie NEHRKE)

Jeanne HOBBS (1961-74) field service: Uranium City (SK), Lac La Biche (AB); linguistics service: Cold Lake (AB); field service: La Loche (SK), Stony Rapids (SK), Hay River (NWT).

Rollie & Denise (LOEWEN) HODGMAN (1980-p) (Denise) short-term field service: Turnor Lake (SK), Carmacks (YT), Cumberland House (SK), Prince Albert (SK); (Rollie) staff service: Printing Dept., Headquarters publications (Prince Albert, SK).

Bob & Donna HOEPPNER (1959-65) field service: Deschambault Lake (SK).

Tim HOFFMAN (1987-88) field service: Norway House (MB).

Allan & June HOWSE (1994-p) associate (full-time) itinerant music evangelism service.

Phil & Margaret HOWARD (1960-p) field, linguistic service: Hay River (NWT), South Nahanni (NWT), Yellowknife (NWT); administrative service; associate service (1978-p).

Terry (TAYLOR) HOWARD (1980-84) associate service: Rae-Edzo (NWT).

Edgar & Doris HUNT (1949-59) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); field, Bible school service: Island Lake (MB); Ed deceased (1991).

## I

David & Brenda ISAAK (1989-94) field service: Deschambault Lake (SK); aviation service: Nipawin (SK).

John IVES (1982-p) field service: Eel Ground, Red Bank Reserves (NB); staff service: Headquarters (Prince Albert, SK), staff service: Timber Bay Bible Centre (SK).

David & Kathy IVES (1984-86) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Bonita (ROBERTSON) ICETON (1953-61) field service: Thicket Portage (MB), Uranium City (SK), Cold Lake (AB), Ft. Chipewyan (AB), Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK).

## **J**

Bill & Shirley JACKSON (1964-p) field service: North Battleford (SK), Cochin (SK), Lac La Biche (AB), Little Buffalo (AB); staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); field service, Kikino (AB); itinerant service; Native Evangelical Fellowship member.

Kene & Milly JACKSON (1987-90) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Lucille JACKSON (see Lucille BARTLETT)

Judy JANZEN (1983-1991) field service: Norway House (MB), Winnipeg (MB).

Martha JANZEN (see Bernard & Martha FREDLUND)

Clarence & Ruth JAYCOX (1993-p) associate (full-time) field service: Peerless Lake (AB); Trout Lake (NWT).

Larry & Bernice JAYCOX (1987-p) associate (full-time) field service: Gift Lake (AB); staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); field service: Jousard (AB).

Carolyn (OADES) JESPERSON (1972-75) associate field service: Ft. Chipewyan (AB), Pine Ridge Bible Camp (Beauval, SK).

Tim & Jo-Ann JEWETT (1973-1986) field service: Ft. Rae (NWT); administrative service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK).

Louise (OLSON) JONES (1984-1985) associate service: Printing Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Roger & Inga JONES (1994-p) associate station fill-in service: Central-Field; associate short-term field service (1994-95): Deschambault Lake (SK).

Keith JOSEPH (1989-p) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

## **K**

John & Luella KEHLER (1949-52; 1960-61) field service: Ft. Chipewyan (AB); staff service: La Ronge Bible School (SK); John deceased.

Mary KEHLER (see Jake & Mary BARTEL)

Alice KEIGHLY (see Alice SCHMIDT)

Dan & Mary Jo KELLER (1990-p) associate service.



Alex & Julia KENEQUENASH (late 1950's thru 1960's) associate service: Weagamow (ON), Island Lake Indian Bible School (MB).

Eleanor KENNEDY (see Eleanor ASLIN)

Ray & Lois KENNEDY (1963-68) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); field service: Pickle Lake (ON), Dore Lake (SK).

Brian & Rosalie KENT (1993-p) appointed to Eastern-Field ministries (Maritimes).

Doris KIDD (1962-64) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK).

Quindel & Marilyn KING (1962-p) field, linguistic service: Alexis Creek (BC); staff service: Headquarters, Bookstore (Prince Albert, SK).

Jake & Irene KLIPPENSTEIN (1972-p) field service: Turnor Lake (SK), La Loche (SK), Buffalo Narrows (SK); administrative / office service: Headquarters (Prince Albert, SK); field service: Beauval (SK), La Loche (SK).

Susan KNELSON (see Susan NIELSEN)

Philip & Bonnie KNIGHT (1983-p) public relations service (Ontario and eastern region); short-term field service: Waskaganish (PQ); administrative / office service: Headquarters (Prince Albert, SK).

Mark & Carolyn KNIGHTLY (1985-88) short-term field service: Trout Lake (NWT); staff service: Pine Ridge Bible Camp (Beauval, SK).

Ron & Marjorie KNIGHTLY (1960-p) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); field service: Nahanni (NWT), Ft. Wrigley (NWT), Ft. Liard (NWT); aviation, administrative service: Ft. Nelson (BC).

Anne KOOP (see Ed & Anne HEAL)

Bernard & Clara KOOP (1951-54) field service: Big Trout Lake (ON), Bearskin Lake (ON), La Loche (SK).

Darlene KOOP (see Darlene GINGERICH)

Roy & Diane (BROESKY) KOOP (1964-78) (Diane) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); (Roy) field service: Brochet (MB), Stony Rapids (SK); (Roy & Diane) field service: La Loche (SK).

Thelma (CARTER) KOOP (1972-75) staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK); staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Kathy KRAHN (1981-82) associate service: public relations resource personnel: Peace River Bible Institute (Sexsmith, AB).

Susan KRAMER (1987-p) field service: Great Whale River (PQ); staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Dennis (& Hanna) KROEKER (1993-p) Governing Board member.

Gail KROSSA (1972-79) staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK); field service: La Loche (SK), Buffalo Narrows (SK).

## L

Helen LABADIE (see Helen GARRETT)

Terry & Donna (ANDERSON) LAKEY (1987-91 / 1982-91) (Donna) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK); (Terry & Donna) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Clifford & Mae LAMMERS (1960-1977) associate service: U.S. Office (Omaha, NE); Clifford deceased (1977).

Doris LANE (1960) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK).

Brian LANGENDOEN (1991-p) field service: Cormorant (MB), Arrowhead Native Bible Center (NB), Kinistino (SK).

Joanne LANGFORD (1982-85) associate service: public relations resource personnel: Millar College of the Bible (Pambrun, SK); associate service: NCEM Missionary Training Camp Seminar Week (Lac La Biche, AB).

Chuck & Ruth LANGLAND (1992-p) associate field service: Ft. Liard (NWT).

Wilma LAROQUE (see Wilma REUBEN)

Ray & Esther LARSON (1954-81) field service: Oxford House (MB), Mont Nebo (SK), Brochet (MB), Island Lake (MB); construction service (based at): Three Hills (AB), Lac La Biche (AB), Nipawin (SK).

Vern & Gladys LARSON (1994-p) associate field service: Central-Field Bible camps, station fill-in, Kinistino (SK).

MiLin LAU (1990-p) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Gleason & Kathryn LEDYARD (1946-50) field service: Eskimo Point (NWT), Maguse River

(NWT).

Ernest & Mary LESCHIED (1959-63 / 1960-63) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); field, aviation service: La Ronge (SK), Island Lake (MB), Weagamow (ON).

Ted & Martha LESCHIED (1961-p / 1961-76) field service: Fort George (PQ), Waskaganish (PQ); Martha deceased (1976).

Ted & Helen (HISEY) LESCHIED (1961-p / 1959-p) (Helen) medical, field, linguistic service: Shamattawa (MB), Eastmain (PQ), Moose Factory (ON); (Ted & Helen) associate service: Red Lake (ON) (1978-p).

Larry & Peggy LINTON (1959-66) (Peggy) short-term field service: Moosonee (ON); (Larry & Peggy) field service: Oxford House (MB), Waskaganish (PQ).

Erle & Nellie LINTOTT (1960-p) staff service: La Ronge Bible School (SK); made honorary members (1969).

Denise LOEWEN (see Rollie & Denise HODGMAN)

Eugene (& Mary) LOEWEN (1980-95) Governing Board member (Board chairman 1987-95).

David & Paula LOOPS (1985-96) short-term field service: Puvirnituk (PQ); field, linguistic service: Wollaston Lake (SK).

Lorentz & Mary Lou LORENTZEN (1990-p) associate (full-time) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Vicky LUKASEWICH (1980-p) field service: Carmacks (YT), Carcross (YT), Chilliwack (BC).

Betty LUMLEY (1953-p) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK), La Ronge Bible School (SK); short-term field assignments: Sioux Lookout (ON), Oxford House (MB), Grand Rapids (MB), Moose Factory (ON), The Pas (MB), Cumberland House (SK); field service: Deschambault Lake (SK); on leave (1980-88); made honorary member (1991).

David & Doris LUMSDEN (1995-p) associate field service: Chipewyan Lake (AB), Atikimeg (AB).

Ed & Karen LYTLE (1982-p) short-term staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); field service: Norway House (MB).

## **M**

Gregg & Shelley (GERBRANDT) MacKENZIE (1992-p / 1984-p) (Shelley) field service:

Norway House (MB), Dalhousie (NB); staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK); field service: Kinistino (SK); itinerant service: Central-Field; (Gregg & Shelley) associate service (1992-p).

Kathy MAHOOD (1988-89) associate (full-time) field service: Brabant Lake (SK).

Ken & Dianne (WILLMS) MAHOOD (1990-p / 1987-p) (Diane) field service: Brabant Lake (SK); (Ken & Diane) field service: La Ronge (SK).

Ruth (SHAKOTKO) MAKSYMCHUK (1957-58) staff service: Headquarters Office (Meadow Lake, SK).

Leroy & Marjorie MARKEL (1954-87 / 1954-p) field service: North Battleford (SK), Pierceland (SK), Meadow Lake (SK); made honorary members (1983); Roy deceased (1987); see Marjorie (Art) ACTON.

Joanne (PRAY) MATHES (1972-77) field service: La Loche (SK), Buffalo Narrows (SK).

Judy MATTESON (1969-78) field service: Burns Lake (BC); publications service: Lac La Biche (AB), Prince Albert (SK); deceased (1978).

Charles & Evelyn MATTHEWS (1961-64 / 1961-67) (Charles & Evelyn) field service: Pickle Lake (ON), Round Lake (ON); Charles deceased (1964); (Evelyn) staff service: Island Lake Indian Bible School (MB); field service: The Pas (MB).

Ken & Debbie MATTHEWS (1988-p) short-term field service: Nobel (ON); field service: Val D'Or (PQ).

Jim & Geraldine McAMMOND (1959-65) field service: Thicket Portage (MB); staff service: Island Lake Indian Bible School (MB).

Brian & Judy McARTHUR (1982-94) field service: Wrigley (NWT); aviation service: The Pas (MB), Nipawin (SK).

Cliff & Ingeborg McCOMB (1951-p) field service: Weagamow (ON); short-term staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); field service: Chagoness (SK), The Pas (MB); administrative service: Eastern-Field; made honorary members (1983).

Dan & Linda McCUTCHEON (1984-87) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Gordon & Janice McGILLIVRAY (1982-87) staff service: Pine Ridge Bible Camp (Beauval, SK).

Marion McGILLIVRAY (1985-87) staff service: Headquarters Bookstore (Prince Albert, SK).

Sharon McGINNIS (see Tom & Sharon DICE)

Jean McIVER (1953-55) associate service: Deschambault Lake (SK).

Nora McKAY (see Nora MILLER)

Charlotte McLENNAN (1973-77) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Rob & Nancy (BUCK) McMAHON (1982-91) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK); associate service (1988-91).

Cynthia MERRIMAN (see Vern & Cynthia ARMSTRONG)

Steward & Viola METTLER (1993-p / 1995-p) associate Bible camp and itinerant service: Nipawin (SK).

Christy MILLER (see Mark & Christy ARNOLD)

Nora (McKAY) MILLER (1955-57) staff service: La Ronge Bible School (SK), Island Lake Bible School (MB).

Lois (FEHR) MILLSAP (1978-79) short-term field service: Carmacks (YT); staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK).

Bob MOBERLY (1994-p) associate field, linguistics service: Buffalo Narrows (SK).

Everett & Rilla MONKMAN (1961-67) short-term staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); field service: La Ronge (SK), Oxford House (MB), Shamattawa (MB); Everett deceased (1987).

Misako MORI (1990-p) staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK).

James & Karen MOSES (1984-94) Governing Board member; staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (on loan from Native Evangelical Fellowship, 1987-90).

Richard MOSKOTAYWENENE (1984-87) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Dan & Phyllis MOULTON (1984-95) aviation service: The Pas (MB), Nipawin (SK).

Russell & Virgie MUELLER (1961-p) field service: Paint Hills (PQ), Thicket Portage (MB), Cumberland House (SK); staff, administrative service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); associate members (1992-p).

Carol MULLIN (see Phil & Carol FORD)

N

Norman & Caroline NAPOLEON (1995-p / 1994-p) (Caroline) field service: Sandy Bay (MB); (Norman) associate field service: Sandy Bay (MB).

Benjy & Eliza NATTAWAY (1963-1976) short-term Bible school service: Island Lake (MB); field service: Gods River (MB), Winnipeg (MB); Benjy deceased (1992); Native Evangelical Fellowship members.

Irene NATTRASS (1962-70) staff service: Headquarters Office (Meadow Lake, Prince Albert, SK); deceased (1970).

Classie (HOBBS) NEHRKE (1960-62) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK).

Donna NELSON (see Bob & Donna HOEPPNER)

Jane NESS (1992-p) associate service: Arrowhead Native Bible Center (NB).

Vander & Pat NEUDORF (1965-76) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); field, aviation service: Dore Lake (SK), Island Lake (MB), Moose Factory (ON).

Herman & Nettie NEUFELD (1994-p) staff service: Big River Bible Camp (SK).

Ed & Betty NICKEL (1979-91) (on loan to NCEM from Continental Mission) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); field service: Ft. McPherson (NWT).

Susan (KNELSON) NIELSEN (1982-86) staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK); field service: Dalhousie (NB).

William (& Evangeline) NISH (1946-57) Governing Board member; Deputational Secretary (full-time; 1950ff) Meadow Lake (SK).

Jack & Ginnie NORCROSS (1976-p) associate (full-time) field, aviation service: The Pas (MB); associate service (1988-p).

Paddy & Juliette NOSKEY (1982-84; 87-88) associate field service: Ft. Liard (NWT).

## **O**

Carolyn OADES (see Carolyn JESPERSON)

Sarah OLMSTEAD (1946-47) field service: La Loche (SK); staff service: Mission Office (Buffalo Narrows, SK).

Louise OLSON (see Louise JONES)

Gordon & Ruth OMLAND (1988-p) associate service: Central-Field Bible camps, U.S. Office (Billings, MT); (Gordon) Governing Board member (1990-p).

## **P,Q**

Joe & Hazel PATENAUE (1994-p) associate (full-time) itinerant music evangelism service.

Sandra (HEIKKILA) PACK (1967-70) field service: Rupert House (PQ) area, La Ronge (SK), Burns Lake (BC).

Gloria PATTERSON (see Gloria WILLIAMS)

Robert & Lana PATTERSON (1989-p) field service: Cumberland House (SK).

Jim & Laureen PATTISON (1994-p) (Jim) associate staff service: Headquarters Office; (Laureen) Central-Field Office associate service, Prince Albert (SK).

Annie PENNER (see Annie ANDERSON)

John & Hulda PENNER (1946-68) field service: Ile-a-la-Crosse (SK), Thicket Portage (MB); staff, administrative service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); Mission administrative service; John deceased (1989).

Elizabeth PERKINS (1984-86) associate field service: Cornwall (ON); deceased (1986).

Laurette PERRAS (1989-90) associate (full-time) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Roland & Betty PERRET (1976-80) associate service: publications; Betty deceased (1994).

Ed & Karen (GIESBRECHT) PETERS (1992-95 / 1991-95) (Karen) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK); (Ed & Karen) associate service (1992-95).

Dave & Dorlene PETKAU (1980-p) short-term field service: La Ronge (SK); staff, administrative service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); itinerant music evangelism service (1994-p).

Grace PETKER (see Grace SCHWINDT)

Rick PETKER (1989) associate service: itinerant evangelism: Singing Hills.

Annie (BRANDT) PLETT (1959-61) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK).

Joanne PLETT (1986-92) staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK).

Joe & Helen (DYCK) POPE (1955-93 / 1956-93) (Joe) field service: Gods Lake Narrows (MB); (Helen) medical, field service: York Factory, Shamattawa (MB); (Joe & Helen) field service: northern Manitoba locations, Cumberland House (SK), Hobbema (AB); administrative, staff service: Bible Education by Extension (Lac La Biche, AB).

Walter & Grace POPE (1986-p / 1982-p) (Grace) field service: Wakeham Bay (PQ), Dalhousie (NB), Puvirnituq (PQ); staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK); field service: Great Whale River (PQ); staff service: Bookstore (Prince Albert, SK); (Walter) staff service: Headquarters (Prince Albert, SK).

Wanda POPE (see Brent & Wanda WAHLSTROM)

Maggie POTTER (1954-92) staff service: Headquarters Office (Meadow Lake, SK); made honorary member (1966); deceased (1992).

Joanne PRAY (see Joanne MATHES)

Marla PRIEBE (see Robert & Marla BUCK)

Fred & Verna PREGITZER (1954-57) field service: Pickle Lake (ON), Bruce Mines (ON).

Aaron & Toni PURVIS (1990-p / 1994-p) field, Bible camp service: Oromocto (NB), Fredericton (NB).

Gary & Christy QUEQUISH (1979-p / 1984-p) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); short-term field service: Carmacks (YT); field service: Weagamow (ON), Sioux Lookout (ON); Native Evangelical Fellowship members.

## **R**

Dr. Lorne RABUKA (1982-p) associate service: medical advisor (Prince Albert, SK).

Gerald & Helen REDDEKOP (1991-p) staff service: Printing Dept. / Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK).

Alma REDLICH (see Art & Alma SCHROEDER)

Annie (BRADLEY) REED (1954-57) linguistics service: Meadow Lake (SK).

Mark & Chris REIMER (1991-92) associate (full-time) service (on loan from New Life League): Printing Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).



Henry & Anne REMPEL (1991-93 / 1991-p) associate field service: Nipawin (SK); Henry deceased (1993).

Howard & Jennie RENSBERRY (1986-88) associate field, Bible camp service: Central-Field locations and Pine Ridge Bible Camp (Beauval, SK).

Wilma (LAROQUE) REUBEN (1963-64) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK).

Anne (WILLIAMS) RICHARDSON (1982-85) field service: Wakeham Bay (PQ), Dalhousie (NB); associate service: (84-85).

Murray & Evelyn RICHARDSON (1953-68) field, linguistics service: Duck Lake (MB), Churchill (MB), Buffalo Narrows (SK), Meadow Lake (SK), Cold Lake (AB); Evelyn deceased (1993).

Wilda RIDLEY (see Wilda ROWLAND)

Dallas & Gloria ROBERTS (1971-p / 1971-85) short-term field service: Moose Factory (ON); field service: Ft. George (PQ), Waskaganish (PQ); Gloria deceased (1985).

Dallas & Deena (TURNER) ROBERTS (1971-p / 1971-p) (Deena) short-term field service: Ft. Liard (NWT), Hay River (NWT); staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK); single ladies ministries coordinator (Prince Albert, SK); (Dallas & Deena) staff service: Pine Ridge Bible Camp (Beauval, SK); field service: Beauval area (SK).

Harold & Esther ROBERTS (1952-p) construction service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK), Pine Ridge Bible Camp (SK), Lac La Biche (AB); field service: Cold Lake (AB), Heinsburg (AB); administrative service: Western-Field; field service: Buffalo Narrows (SK); made honorary members (1983).

Bonita ROBERTSON (see Bonita ICETON)

Steve & Eileen ROOD (1973-77) field service: Cumberland House (SK).

Wilda (RIDLEY) ROWLAND (1951-53) staff service: Headquarters Office (Meadow Lake, SK); deceased.

Olav & Ida RYLAND (1959-63) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); field service: Shamattawa (MB), Canwood (SK).

## S

Samuel & Grace SAEKI (1995-p) field service: Eastern-Arctic.

Sarah SAHANATIEN (1954-94) short-term field service: Weagamow (ON), Sioux Lookout (ON); field service: Bala (ON); made honorary member (1983); deceased (1994).

Peter & Dianne SALMOND (1988-p) field service: Watson Lake (YT).

Owen & Florence (HEWEY) SALWAY (1950-90 / 1950-p) staff service: Printing Dept., Publications (Buffalo Narrows, Meadow Lake, SK); made honorary members (1990); Owen deceased (1990).

Erna SAWATZKY (1950's) associate service: Red Sucker Lake (MB).

Gordon & Carole SAWATZKY (1980-81) short-term aviation service: Ft. Nelson (BC).

Steve & Delin SAWATZKY (1987-p) field service: Ft. McPherson (NWT), Whitehorse (YT), Ross River (YT); associate service (1994-p).<R>

Margaret SAWYER (1954-61) field service: Sioux Lookout (ON); short-term field service: Weagamow (ON), Manitoulin Is. (ON); field service: Bala (ON); deceased (1977).

Gabe SAYIES (1992-p) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK); associate service (1995-p).

Alice (KEIGHLEY) SCHMIDT (1959-61) staff service: Island Lake Bible School (MB).

Art & Alma (REDLICH) SCHROEDER (1993-p / 1960-74; 1993-p) (Alma) staff service: Headquarters Office (Meadow Lake, SK); staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); Bible school staff service: Lac La Biche (AB); field service: Cumberland House (SK); (Art & Alma) associate field service: Central-Field (1993-p).

Grace (PETKER) SCHWINDT (1985-93) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK); field service: Prince Albert (SK).

Ed & Brenda SELKE (1990-p) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Walter & Cindy SELKE (1988-p) field service: Regina (SK).

Ruth SHAKOTKO (see Ruth MAKSYMCHUK)

Vaughn & Doris SHARP (1951-62) field service: Ft. Chipewyan (AB), Moose River (ON), Weagamow (ON).

Doris SHANTZ (1970-p) field service: Grand Rapids (MB), Thicket Portage (MB), La Ronge (SK), Nobel (ON).

Alan & Hazel SHARP (1981-86) field service: Cadotte Lake (AB).

Rachel SHEWCHUK (see Blaine & Rachel WITHEROW)

Les & Stella SHIEL (1981-87; 1993-p) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB);  
associate field service: Western-Field (1993-p).

Jon & Evelyn (HEPPNER) SIEBERT (1984-p) field service: Sturgeon Lake (AB); staff service:  
Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Dennis & Beryl SIEMENS (1982-p) staff service: Printing Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Tim & Freda SIMON (1987-93) associate service: Eastern-Field: Newcastle (NB).

Dan SIPLE (1981-93) field service: Eastern-Field: Eel Ground, Red Bank, Big Cove, Indian  
Island Reserves (NB); Indian Brook, Millbrook Reserves (NS).

Mary SMITH (see Mary WIENS)

Hubert (& Grace) SMITH (1947-57) Governing Board member; associate field, Bible camp,  
Bible school service; Hubert deceased (1957).

Roy & Betty SMITH (1987-p) administrative / hostess service: Headquarters (Prince Albert,  
SK).

Vance & Brenda SMITH (1989-p / 1992-p) (Vance) field service: Carmacks (YT); (Vance &  
Brenda) staff service: Printing Dept. / Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK).

Mary SOMERS (see Mary DAY)

Carl & Laura SONNICHSEN (1988-p) field service: Newcastle (NB).

Mary (EDWARDS) SOUTER (1950-59; 1964-66) linguistic, field service: Molanosa (SK),  
Cumberland House (SK), Sioux Lookout (ON), La Ronge (SK), Meadow Lake (SK), Island  
Lake (MB).

Ray & Janice SPARKLINGEYES (1969-75) field service: Peace River, Little Buffalo, Saddle  
Lake, Lac La Biche, Crooked Creek, Goodfish Lake, Kikino (AB); Native Evangelical  
Fellowship members.

Jim & Lois STAUFFER (1977-p) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); field service:  
Hobbema (AB), Lac La Martre (NWT).

Brad & Velva STEWARD (1980-84 / 1983-84) field service: Oxford House (MB).

Bob & Darleen STEWARD (1967-p) field service: Heinsburg (AB), Oxford House (MB),  
Shubenacadie (NS); administrative service: Eastern-Field.

Shelley STEWARD (see Shelley WESOLOWSKI)

Arnold (& Helena) STOBBE (1988-p) Governing Board member.

Ed & Sally STOBBE (1987-p) administrative service: TV Dept. / staff service: Printing Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Joanna STOBBE (see David & Joanna BOUCK)

William & Benita STONECHILD (1988-91) associate service: The Pas (MB); William deceased (1991).

Noriko SUZUKI (1976-p) field service: Ft. George (PQ), Puvirnituk (PQ), Great Whale River (PQ); on leave (1992-p).

## T

Albert & Rhoda TAIT (1961-88 / 61-p) service: Island Lake Bible School (MB); field service: Weagamow Lake (ON); Native Evangelical Fellowship members; Albert deceased (1988).

Arthur & Martha TARRY (1946-p) field, administrative service: Buffalo Narrows (SK), Meadow Lake (SK); field service: Burns Lake (BC); administrative, NMTC service: Wetaskiwin (AB), Prince Albert (SK); made honorary members (1985).

Douglas & Anne TAYLOR (1960-73) field service: Moose Factory (ON); Anne deceased (1990).

Norman & Nellie TAYLOR (1956-65) field service: Pickle Lake (ON); service: Island Lake Bible School (MB).

Rolla TAYLOR (see Rolla VANDERVEEN)

Terry TAYLOR (see Terry HOWARD)

Caroline TEICHRIB (see Norman & Caroline NAPOLEON)

Norman THATCHER (1953-54) short-term field service: Red Sucker Lake (MB); staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); staff service: Printing Dept. (Meadow Lake, SK).

John & Marie THIESSEN (1974-p) administrative service; Governing Board member; associate service (1989-p).

Sadie THIESSEN (see Sadie GOTTWALD)

David & Ellen THOMPSON (1995-p) associate field service: Montney (BC).

Roger & Liz TORHJELM (1986-p / 1990-p) (Roger) field service: Ft. Chipewyan (AB); (Roger & Liz) field service: La Loche (SK).

Percy & Jean TOZER (1953-62) field service: Weagamow (ON), Blind River (ON), Moosonee (ON); Percy deceased (1993).

Peggy TOZER (see Larry & Peggy LINTON)

Deena TURNER (see Dallas & Deena ROBERTS)

## U

Heather UNGER (see Chuck & Heather BRAUN)

John & Emily UNGER (1950-80; 82-88) field service: Red Sucker Lake (MB); service: Island Lake Bible School (MB); short-term field service: Weagamow (ON); service: La Ronge Bible School (SK), Lac La Biche (AB); linguistics, literature, radio service: Meadow Lake (SK), Prince Albert (SK); on leave (1976-80; 1986-87).

Wilfred & Rose UNRUH (1953-68) short-term field service: La Loche (SK), Buffalo Narrows (SK); field service: Thicket Portage (MB), Cumberland House (SK), La Ronge (SK), Meadow Lake (SK); public relations service (Ontario region).

## V

Anita VanBOVEN (see Anita DE BRUIN)

Rolla (TAYLOR) VANDERVEEN (1960-67) short-term field service: Deschambault Lake (SK), Thicket Portage (MB), Grand Rapids (MB), Island Lake (MB); staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK).

Arlyn & Ann VanENNS (1982-p / 1993-p) (Arlyn) short-term field service: Ft. Vermillion (AB); field service: Ft. Chipewyan (AB); (Arlyn & Ann) field service: Ft. Chipewyan (AB).

Mervin & Martha (HEPPNER) VanNORTWICK (1959-p / 1949-p) (Martha) field service: Molonosa (SK); staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); field service: Deschambault Lake (SK); (Mervin & Martha) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK); field service: Thicket Portage (MB), Deschambault Lake (SK), Grand Rapids (MB), La Ronge (SK), Brabant Lake (SK); on loan to Continental Mission (1988-90); NCEM public relations (prairie region); made honorary members (1993).

David & Sharon VANSTONE (1994-p) associate service: public relations resource personnel: Briercrest Bible College (Caronport, SK).

Josephine VENAAS (1962-63) staff service: Headquarters Office (Meadow Lake, SK).

Nancy VINCENT (1994-p) staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Jack & Lucy VOGT (1981-84) associate construction service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB), Headquarters (Prince Albert, SK).

Peter & Louise VonZUBEN (1979-p) field service: Ft. Rae (NWT), Rae Lakes (NWT), Yellowknife (NWT).

## W

Lorena (GOOSEN) WAHL (1960-1972) short-term field service: Deschambault Lake (SK); staff service: Headquarters Office (Meadow Lake, Prince Albert, SK).

Brent & Wanda (POPE) WAHLSTROM (1985-p / 1980-p) (Wanda) short-term field service: Carmacks (YT); staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK); (Brent & Wanda) field service: Deschambault Lake (SK); staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Ron & Wendy WARD (1986-p) field service: Buffalo Narrows (SK).

Arthur & Dorothy WELLWOOD (1949-79 / 1949-94) field service: La Loche (SK), itinerant service: Eastern-Field: Hantsport (NS); field service: Carmacks (YT); Art deceased (1979); Dorothy made honorary member (1983); Dorothy deceased (1994).

Phil & Grace WELCH (1972-p) field service: River Denys (Cape Breton, NS), Great Whale River (PQ).

Steve & Rosella WERDAL (1984-94) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); field service: Ft. Fort Liard (NWT); associate service (92-94).

Shelley (STEWART) WESOLOWSKI (1983-85) staff service: Headquarters Bookstore (Prince Albert, SK).

John & Ellen WHEELER (1946-48) field service: La Loche (SK).

Sinclair WHITTAKER (1947-58) Governing Board member (deceased).

Barb WIEBE (see Barb HICKS)

Glen & Sharon WIEBE (1989-94) aviation, field service: Nipawin (SK).

Herman WIEBE (1946) Governing Board member.

Frank & Ethel WIENS (1994-p) associate service: U.S. Office, public relations (Billings, MT).

Mary (SMITH) WIENS (1949-53) field service: Ft. Chipewyan (AB); linguistics service: Buffalo Narrows (SK), Meadow Lake (SK), Paddle Prairie (AB).

Maynard & Sharon WIENS (1982-p) field service: Carmacks (YT); associate service (1994-p).

Anne WILLIAMS (see Anne RICHARDSON)

Gloria (PATTERSON) WILLIAMS (1960-64) staff service: Montreal Lake Children's Home (SK).

Stan & Margaret WILLIAMS (1960-p) field, radio service: Manitoulin Island (ON); made honorary members (1989); Native Evangelical Fellowship members.

Dianne WILLMS (see Ken & Dianne MAHOOD)

Bertha WILSON (see Bertha CIRANKOWITZ)

Gary & Ardys WINGER (1983-p) field service: Buffalo Narrows (SK); field, administrative service: Puvirnituq (PQ).

Blaine & Rachel (SHEWCHUK) WITHEROW (1981-p / 1980-p) staff service: Headquarters Office (Prince Albert, SK); staff service: TV Dept. (Prince Albert, SK).

Leigh & Terry WOLVERTON (1982-p) staff, administrative service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Joan WRIGHT (1986-p) short-term field service: Oxford House (MB); staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB); associate service (1992-p).

Ed & Margaret WYNN (1982-86) associate field, Bible camp service: Swan River (MB).

## Y

Ken & Lina YADLOWSKY (1993-p) associate staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).

Rick & Gail YULE (1989-p) field service: Wrigley (NWT); Ft. Liard (NWT).

Lillian YOUNKER (1987-90) associate (full-time) staff service: Key-Way-Tin Bible Institute (AB).