

Revisits Coppermine Village

By LOIS KEATING

July 9, 1974—Since I last wrote, I had a chance to go to Coppermine, on Coronation Gulf in the Central Arctic, for a week in May. After my very pleasant visit to Coppermine last summer, I really wanted to be back, and especially to see it when the snow was on the ground.

And when we got there, there was lots of it, but by the 14th, when we left, it was starting to melt, and there were puddles everywhere.

This time it seemed as though the Coppermine people were even friendlier than before, and I had a very enjoyable visit — and I also managed to get a few tapes for the Eskimo language program in Inuvik.

Most of the people had just started to go out to their seal camps on the ice — some would remain there until break-up. People were coming and going all the time — on Ski-doo's and sleds.

On the last Sunday in May, from early morning on, the news began to circulate around Inuvik of the tragic shootings in Aklavik.

Fr. Franche, the Catholic priest, had been killed — and before the night was over, two 17-year-old boys, Eugene Lawrence Thrasher and Charles Bell Koe, were also dead.

After Thrasher had shot the priest, he himself was shot — and then when the medical and police group arrived from Inuvik by plane, Koe came out of a house and started shooting in all directions, and was subsequently shot by an RCMP officer.

Alcohol was involved in the tragedies, and the Aklavik Hamlet Council and members of the community immediately started taking action to crack down on liquor regulations in the community.

The atmosphere in Aklavik has been understandably tense since then . . . one hopes that somehow some good will eventually come out of such dreadful circumstances.

One hopeful start was the opening, on July 1, of the new community hall — which has been named the Fr. Franche Community Center, in memory of the man who worked with such dedication for so many years to help the people of the Delta area.

In June, Sam Raddi, presi-

dent of COPE (Committee for Original People's Entitlement), and representatives from COPE and from the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), traveled to Alaska to meet with Native leaders to discuss land claims issues. Some of the group also visited the North Slope and Point Barrow.

During the last week in June, the Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T. and the Metis and Non-Status Native Association held a joint assembly at Fort Good Hope. They reaffirmed a former agreement to write in their efforts to get the land claims settled.

This year Northern Games will be held at Tuktoyaktuk July 19-22nd. It looks like there will be between 200 and 300 participants, and they will be coming from as far as Pelly Bay, Spence Bay, Gjoa Haven, Cambridge Bay and Coppermine in the east — from the Yukon — and hopefully, a group from Alaska, although at this writing, those plans are still up in the air.

I'm in charge of transportation again this year, and it's a real hassle to get everything moving with reasonable facility — and then at the last minute, there's that old bug-a-boo, the weather — perhaps we can get someone to do a sun dance for us!

The Games Committee at Tuk is hard at work preparing for the big event. Charles Komeak of Tuk is chairman there. Participants will again be staying in tents, and people in Tuk are perhaps viewing the influx with mixed emotions. But for many of them, it will be a chance for reunions with family members and old friends.

It also seems quite likely that a group from this area will be coming over to Fairbanks the following week to take part in the Eskimo-Indian Olympics.

Tragedy struck again this past week in Inuvik when Glen Tingmiak, 22-year-old son of Rufus and Sarah Tingmiak, drowned in a boating accident on July 5, during a drinking party.

Glen was well-known throughout the N.W.T. and Alaska — he was one of the original Northern Games team organized by Edward Lennie in 1970, and with his brother, Pat, was a champion high kicker. He won an award at Eskimo Olympics

a few years back, and was known to many Alaskans.

Glen was also with the N.W.T. Arctic Sports groups who went to Anchorage in March for Arctic Winter Games.

The beluga whale season is just starting, and many people have already left for Whitefish Station at Kittigazuit Bay, which is the main whaling camp for the area.

The federal election was held yesterday. Pierre Elliot Trudeau was re-elected as prime minister and Wally Firth was returned as the member of parliament for N.W.T.

I had a chance to talk to Wally briefly when he was in Inuvik last week. I was happy to discover that he's still the same unpretentious down-to-earth fellow he was before his name was known throughout Canada. He combines a love for the north with the ability to listen to all sides of a situation, the courage to say what he feels and to fight for what he thinks is right, and a refreshing lack of egotism. He did most of his campaigning by flying a two-seater plane from settlement to settlement and meeting with people as he found them, rather than expecting them to come to special meetings to hear him.

I couldn't help comparing Canadian campaigns with those of Americans who start campaigning months, if not years, ahead of the actual election. The exact date of Canadian elections are not known very many weeks ahead of time — and therefore the bombardment of political statements at meetings, on TV, on radio or in the press, are limited to a relatively short space of time, which can sometimes be a blessing.