

Inuvik Busy Town-

Trappers, Environmentalists, Etc.

By LOIS KEATING

Oct. 25 — It's been a long time since I sent in some news from this area. I guess that even a personal visit to the Tundra Times office didn't make up for it — as I arrived without any written material!

Inuvik has been a very busy place this fall. All kinds of people have been in town, representing a number of varied interests. One group has been the Environmental Protection Board, which has been making the rounds of the Mackenzie communities and meeting with the local trappers' associations to discuss what is happening to the area.

Another interesting group has been from the consulting offices of Gemini North in Yellowknife. Pat Carney chaired the meeting in Inuvik last week, which emphasized some of the things that are expected to happen to this area if a pipeline goes through.

Inuvik will receive the biggest brunt of the development impact. Its already critical housing shortage will become even worse. The increase in municipal services was explained by graphs, as well as the expected reduction in the cost of such services as the demand increases.

Power costs should drop. The population is expected to triple, although it was pointed out that, even without any development, it would double by 1983. It is felt that the peak development will occur in Inuvik in 1977-78.

Early in September I went over to Old Crow in the northern Yukon for a week, to tape some programs in Loucheux for CBC in Inuvik. Neil McDonald of Old Crow interviewed a number of the residents.

I was in Old Crow when we heard the tragic news of the plane crash which took the lives of four men — Dean Feist and Don Dall, of the Canadian Wildlife Service, who had worked in Old Crow for three summers; Albert Jackson, a fieldworker for the Yukon Native Brotherhood; and John Gaucher, the pilot, of Aklavik Flying Service of Inuvik.

I had flown into Old Crow with John Gaucher in that same Cessna 185 a few days earlier, and had been planning to go back to Inuvik with him that weekend.

In September I also went to Sachs Harbour with a group of people from C.O.P.E. from the territorial government, and from several oil and gas companies, who met with the residents of Sachs Harbour to discuss the seismic operations each company proposed for the forthcoming winter.

The meeting was well attended by local people. We were weathered in for a whole day, which gave me an opportunity to visit with people I had met on my previous trip to Sachs in April.

While at Sachs Harbour, I also took a tape recorder down to the beach, and made a tape of the sound of the waves, as I figured it would probably be my last chance to hear the ocean until next summer.

At the end of September I flew to Whitehorse and then to Fairbanks. It was a busy week for me because, besides trying to see too many people in too short a time, I also had to repack my things that were stored there, so they could be moved — part to Whitehorse for storage, and part to Inuvik.

I arrived in Fairbanks the day before the borough elections, and was happy to be able to get to Laura Bergt's win-lose-or-draw party, which happily turned into a victory celebration for Laura, who won a seat on the Borough

Assembly.

It was great getting down to the Tundra Times office, and seeing the staff and having a chance for a nice relaxed chat with Howard Rock, who had only recently returned from his long hospital stay. It was good to see him back at his desk and in the composing room, where I had seen him so many times before.

I left Fairbanks on the morning of Oct. 7, in my big red VW van, which was loaded almost to the top — and it turned out to be a pretty rugged trip down the Alaska Highway, because there was snow most of the way.

It took me two full days to get to Whitehorse, and I arrived just in time for Thanksgiving Dinner on the 8th. (Canadian Thanksgiving is on the second Monday of October — a timing I have never been quite able to adjust to — although when you stop to think about it, it's a much more logical time to celebrate the harvest than the end of November).

I spent a few more days in Whitehorse, where the weather got warmed and all the snow melted.

I left for Inuvik on the 11th of October, and as the plane got farther north, it was interesting to watch how the open water and brown landscape changed first to ponds with ice around the edge, then to iced-over ponds, then to lots of snow, and finally to frozen lakes — and even the Mackenzie River had ice along the edges — and within another week the river was frozen at Inuvik.

I got back just in time to watch the 50th session of the N.W.T. Council, which held its first session in 10 years in Inuvik. It was a week-long session, and I sat in on most of it.

It proved interesting, but much more formal and slow-moving than the lively session of the Yukon Territorial Council which I had witnessed two weeks earlier.

One of the most important items dealt with at the N.W.T. Council session was the Report on Alcohol and Drugs, which was undertaken at the request of the Territorial Government by Bill Wacko of Edmonton.

This excellent report dealt specifically with the alcohol situation in the N.W.T., and Mr. Wacko came up with a number of recommendations, all of which Council approved.

I'll write more about this at a future time when the recommendations begin to be put into practice. They are a challenging approach to the situation and the results of their implementation will be closely watched by many people.

In the meantime, more and more communities in the N.W.T. are expressing increasing concern with alcohol problems, and some of them have begun to come up with methods of dealing with it. These range from limits imposed on the amount of booze being brought into the settlement, to setting up local alcohol education programs.

Many people in this area have been out hunting for caribou and moose — and some of the families from the settlements have already gone to their winter trapping camps.

The people of the upper Mackenzie community of Fort Wrangley have been emphatic in their stand against the construction of the Mackenzie Highway. They recently reiterated their position to government representatives — and both the Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T. and C.O.P.E. have backed their decision.

The Wrangley people said that

the people along the highway route had not been fully informed and consulted regarding the government's plans — they have suggested that the government meet with representatives of each community which will be affected by the highway, before any further action is taken.

They believe that no major development of the area should take place before the land claims are settled.

There are so many things happening around here right now that it's hard to know where to begin and where to stop. I'll end this now, but will make a big effort to write more often. I expect to be traveling quite a bit and that's how all the news seems to get backlogged.