

Former Employee--

Lois Keating Writes from Inuvik

By LOIS KEATING
Inuvik Correspondent

(Inuvik, a community in the Mackenzie Delta region of Canada's Northwest Territories, is located 125 miles north of the Arctic Circle and 60 miles south of the Arctic Ocean. It has a population of 3,500, half of whom are Indian and Eskimo. Inuvik was built between 1955 and 1961 by the Canadian government as the administrative center of the Mackenzie Delta.)

INUVIK I arrived in Inuvik on March 1st, flying in on International Jet Air's Electra from Whitehorse, Yukon, having left Fairbanks and the Tundra Times less than a week earlier.

It's cold here, still mostly 20 and 40 below, but the people seem friendly and warm. I know a lot of people from my previous visits, and every day I'm meeting new ones, so there already is always someone waving at me wherever I go.

The sidewalks are slippery, and wherever there is even a slight incline, the children have made slides, you really have to watch your footing. Even proceeding with caution, I've landed upside down a couple of times already.

Walking down to Ingamo Hall (or East Three House, which is the official title for the local Friendship Center), where my office is located, I find that the path in places is on such an angle that it is almost impossible to stay upright. And the steps over the Utilidor are rounded patches of ice.

While walking along Mackenzie Road, I noticed a vaguely familiar hollow crunchy sound and suddenly I was reminded of Dawson City and then I remembered that Inuvik, too, has wooden sidewalks, although of course they are not now visible under the accumulated ice and snow.

Here, above the Arctic Circle, it already stays light till after 8 p.m., and each day is perceptibly longer. The orange-red sun behind the distant mountains across the Delta is indeed a beautiful sight.

I see new construction everywhere, and many new businesses have sprouted since I first visited Inuvik in July of 1971. There also seems to be almost twice as many vehicles on the road as

there were then.

One of the busiest organizations in Inuvik right now is C.O.P.E. (Committee for Original People's Entitlement), which is making a tremendous effort to assist all those people in the Delta region who are eligible to send in enrollment forms under the Alaska Native Land Claims Act.

The deadline is approaching fast.

I was surprised to find that there are so many people in this area whose ancestors came from Alaska. I have been helping to fill out some of the forms and am just beginning to realize the immensity of the task facing the Enrollment Office.

This past week, a public meeting was held to hear the results of the work done by the Education Steering Committee. It was decided to set up an Education Advisory Committee, and an election is to be held March 29.

This is the first time that the community has been given a real chance to take part in what is going on in the school system. Heretofore it has been almost totally a function of the government.

This week a new open-line CBC radio program has been initiated. This series, dealing with items of social concern in the community, began with a discussion of youth.

Larry Springgay, the co-ordinator at Ingamo Hall, and Howard McDiarmid, regional director of Local Government, were the principal guests, along with two students from the local schools.