

1938
The following is culled from Dr. Cormie's reports of recent visits to the northern Indian Missions:

Island Lake:

I reached this point by boat to Berens River and by plane from there next morning.

This is the largest reserve in Manitoba and it shows the most rapid increase in population. The last treaty payment showed a total population of 943 as compared with 917 in 1937. Approximately 625 are under the care of the United Church. The work here is in a healthy state. Mr. Grieve is a methodical painstaking worker. He keeps the most accurate records I have found and has a list, which I believe accurate, of every man, woman and child under his care, with the ages of all.

He has 15 "Leaders" and 6 young men in training. The weekly prayer meeting is largely conducted by one Leader, assisted by 2 young men each night, who read the lesson and take the prayers. A Thursday evening service was arranged and though the weather was bad, 150 people were present.

There are 156 boys and girls in the United Church section of the reserve between the ages of 6 and 15 years, and 140 below 6 years of age. For the last three quarters the enrollment and average attendance was as follows: December quarter 33 enrollment, 19 average attendance; June quarter 60 enrollment, 34 average attendance; March quarter 35 enrollment and 21 average attendance. This means that for a large part of the year not more than 15% of children of school age are at school at one time. The teacher is Mr. Bernard Crafton.

Mr. Grieve is a good gardener himself and during the time he has been there he has persuaded the Indians to attempt this as an auxiliary food supply. 600 to 800 bushels of potatoes will be harvested in September. There were no gardens when he went there.

Like all our missionaries he is dentist, doctor, relief administrator and general supervisor of his people.

Gods Lake:

Our missionaries here are Rev. H.E. and Mrs. Young. I was delayed by bad weather and they were away from home but Mr. Meadows the teacher at the mine was at home, and I attended Sunday School there at which there were 22 children present, and had an evening service for adults with 34 present.

The population of this reserve at last treaty payment was 374. Mr. Meadows told me about 50 children of the United Church section are of school age and his enrollment was 35 the last quarter with an average of 15. Owing to the proximity to the mine there are grave moral problems on this reserve. The Indians have moved over to the mine and this, with removal of trapping grounds makes school work unsatisfactory.

Oxford House

Had three full days here. There are 407 Indians on this reserve. Mr. and Mrs. Scoates are alone on the field. Church services are held on Sunday at 10.30 and 2.30 with a Sunday School at 1.45. There are six teachers of whom three are Indians. One of the Leaders

superintends the Sunday School when Mr. Scoates is at the camps. The prayer meeting is generally well attended and at the meeting while I was there, 150 were present.

Mr. Scoates has interested the people in gardening and most of the Indians now have a garden. They have built a community root house which will keep the vegetables safe from frost all winter. The Chief has the key to the root house and any one may store vegetables in it. This is a valuable addition to their food supply.

This missionary travels 1000 miles in the winter. The farthest camp is 120 miles away.

Mrs. Scoates teaches school. She has sewing classes and I saw numbers of dresses, quilts, sweaters and curtains for prospective homes and the girls had made sweaters for themselves. On Saturdays she has three or four of the girls in the house and teaches them cooking. The girls preserved fruit which they asked Mrs. Scoates to keep for them and have started a book of recipes.

A great deal of medical work is done and Mr. Scoates, when the men are home, he has regular weekly meetings for them at which matters of community welfare and health are considered.

Cross Lake:

I spent two days here, visited several homes, saw a number of men who were building a bridge as a relief project, held an evening service at which 100 persons were present, met the chief and the councillors and has a conference with the leaders, of whom ten were present.

The population of this reserve is 696 of whom more than 50% are under our care.

There is no communion roll but communion services are held three times a year, at New Year, Easter and treaty time. During the year five professed faith.

The Indians here are very much interested in education, but it must be education to suite their particular needs.

Mr. Shoup is an expert gardener and has a beautiful garden of both flowers and vegetables. He has stimulated the Indians to have gardens of their own and there are fine ones everywhere.

Mrs. Shoup is Field Matron and among other duties has classes in her home for the larger girls- for sewing mostly, though one girl is chosen each week to come early to make refreshments. They make clothing for themselves and layettes and quilts for needy families.

Norway House:

I spent a long week end here. This reserve has a population of 833 and is the second largest reserve in Manitoba. Of these 590 are under the care of the United Church. There are two services on Sunday, at 11 in English and at 3 in Cree and a prayer meeting on Wednesday evening. The church was filled for the Cree service. Mr. Baird

our missionary here, conducted a Communicant's Class and at Easter received 13 into the church on profession of faith. At treaty time 5 were received on profession. A men's Bible Class was carried on during the winter.

The Residential School, of which Rev. R.T.Chapin is the principal, and the day schools, have a close relationship. The Junior residential pupils attend the day school. There is also a public school in the neighborhood.

The new scheme for using the Residential School in the tuberculosis control scheme does not appear to be fully worked out but it marks an important change in educational policy for northern reserves.

Poplar River:

My visit here was brief as the pilot refused to land and I had to go through to Berens River and go back by canoe.

Mr. Taylor is the Missionary Teacher. The population on this reserve is 165. Approximate school population is 25, attendance varying with the absence of the Indians at the trapping grounds.

Mr. Taylor conducts two services on Sunday at 11 and 3 with an average at both of over 50. He carries on a Bible class in the school every week, has Trail Rangers and C.G.I.T. groups which meet every Friday and there is also a prayer-meeting on Wednesday.

Mrs. Taylor, who prior to her marriage worked in a dentist's office, is the dentist. She extracted more than 40 teeth during her first year in the north. A white man made a journey of 140 miles to have a tooth removed.

I had a service here, called on short notice, at which 50 Indians were present.

Berens River:

Had a good visit here. Was late in arriving because of storms on the Lake, but the boat was twelve hours late for the same reason.

The population of this reserve is 293 of whom 80% are under our care. This has come to be an important center, as a winter road to the mines is now under construction and supplies will go in over it to Favourable Lake mine 200 miles away.

Our missionary Mr. L.L.Schuetze, was just getting started at his new job. Has two services on Sunday both well attended. He plans a women's meeting this fall for sewing and knitting with which a woman in the neighborhood would help.

The Department has erected for our teacher Mr. C.D.Steet, a commodious new school with a full size basement and accomodation for 60 pupils. It is much the best school of its kind I have seen on any reserve.

Little Grand Rapids:

I spent a day at this point on my way to Sandy Lake. The popul-

ation of this reserve is about 350. The school enrollment is thirty-nine, with an average attendance through the year of about twenty. There are two services on Sunday and a Sunday School. There were about seventy-five at the service which I conducted on Sunday evening. The services were arranged after the first appearance of the plane.

(Mr. Richard Schuetze is now the missionary teacher at Little Grand Rapids, having been appointed since Dr. Cormie made this trip)

Sandy Lake:

I was fortunate in leaving my visit to Sandy Lake off until the middle of August. There is not a soul on the reserve who knows any English. Through a friend in the fur department of the Hudson Bay I had a letter to the post manager who had recently moved to Sandy Lake and he gave me shelter and took me to different points on the lake. There happened to be an Island Lake Indian here for one day and he interpreted for me. Had a two hour meeting on Saturday morning with Adam Fiddler the missionary and half a dozen men, in his tent. After the meeting on Saturday morning we had a service. While I was meeting the men in the tent the women and children laid out a circle, covered it with spruce boughs in preparation for a church service at which some 30 adults and 40 children were present. A young man played a decrepit portable organ, quite a few knew the hymns and the singing was good. Mr. Fiddler read the scripture, two young men led in prayer and I gave an address which was interpreted by the Island Lake Indian. A Sunday service, addressed by one of the young men was interrupted by the arrival of the plane and I had to leave.

Adam Fiddler tells me that he has been in the employ of the church since 1913 and was active in church work ten years prior to that. He is now a very old man and sick but he does his best to carry on services.

Pekangecum:

On my return from Sandy Lake I called at Pekangecum spending about a day there. This is a very backward reserve, not a soul knows English, though it is taught in the school. Apparently what is learned there is quickly forgotten as it is of no value in home contacts. Mr. Mutch has only been here a short time and as yet has no interpreter. He has a fair knowledge of Cree but these Indians speak Saulteaux. I had a service Sunday evening with about forty in church mostly adults and young men and women. There happened to be a man from another reserve who knew a little English but I did not consider the service as very satisfactory. Next to Sandy Lake this is our most isolated post in northern Manitoba. On June 30th last (1937) there were 31 on the roll representing eight families.

Fisher River:

I visited Fisher River (where our missionaries and Rev. F.G. and Mrs. Stevens) and found the work there is good condition. The population of this reserve is approximately 600. Although the weather was unfavorable I had a service with the Indians attended by more than 50. Our buildings here are in good condition. I was particularly interested in a "Church House" which the Women's Association under the leadership of Mrs. Stevens built and paid for. It is commodious and clean and a fine building for community activities. I had an interesting

visit with the Women's Association in their own hall. I spent an hour or two in the school, which has two rooms and two teachers. Enrollment last year was 81 with an average attendance of 51, which is quite good. Mr. Stevens assured me that the Indians have now a good knowledge of the English language. He has been on this reserve for many years and ought to know.