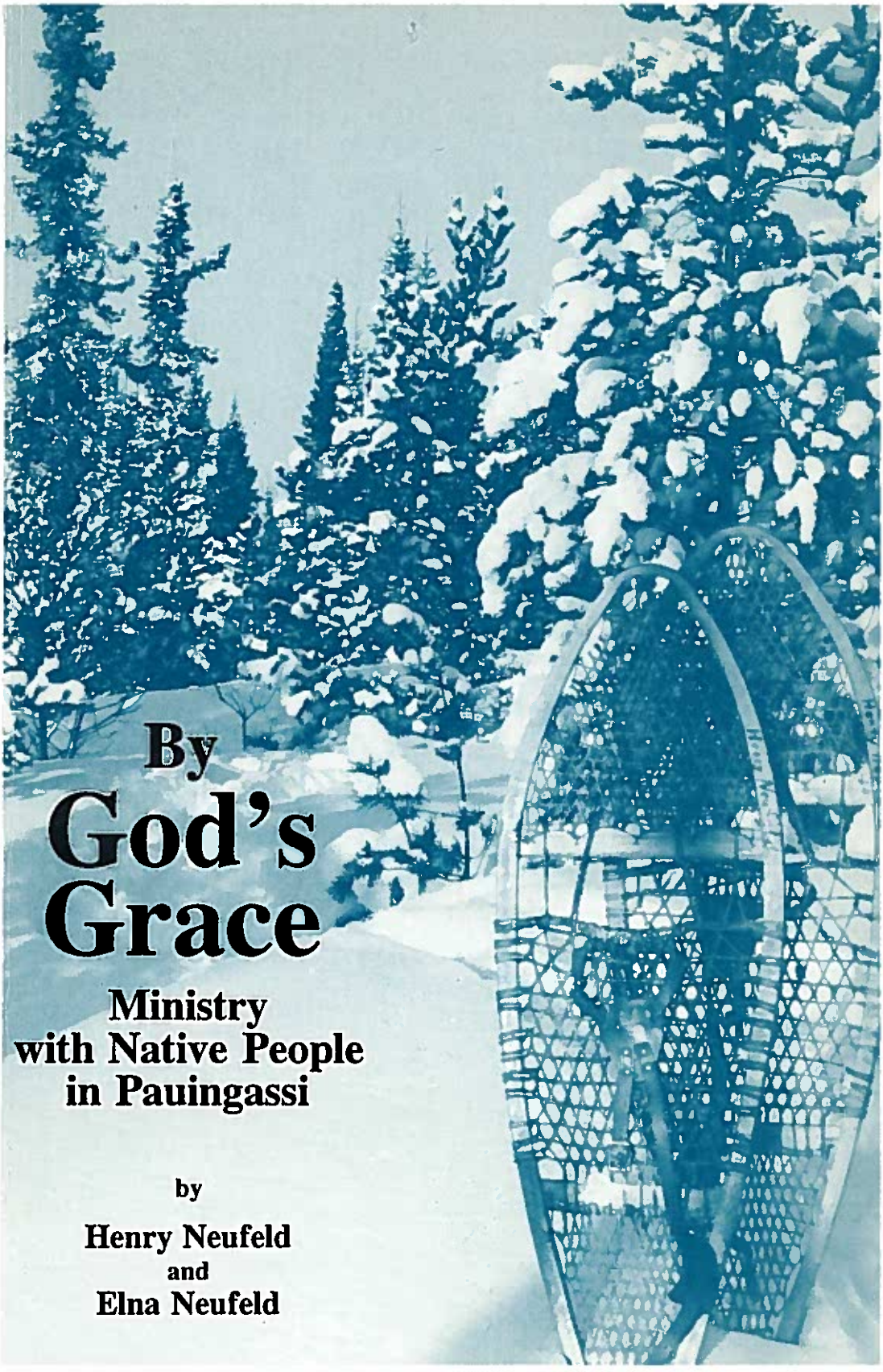


By God's Grace

Ministry with Native People in Pauingassi

by

Henry Neufeld
and
Elna Neufeld

By God's Grace

By God's Grace

Ministry with Native People in Pauingassi

by

Henry Neufeld
and
Elna Neufeld

CMBC Publications
Winnipeg, Manitoba
1991

CMBC Publications
600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3P 0M4

Cover: Gerald Loewen
Cartography: Dianne Harms
Acknowledgements to Native Ministries of the
Conference of Mennonites in Canada
for a generous publishing subsidy

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Neufeld, Henry
By God's grace

ISBN 0-920718-41-8

1.Neufeld, Henry. 2. Neufeld, Elna. 3. Indians of North America - Manitoba - Pauingassi - Missions. 4. Ojibwa Indians - Missions. 5. Conference of Mennonites in Canada - Missions - Manitoba - Pauingassi. 6. Missionaries - Manitoba - Biography 7. Mennonites - Manitoba - Biography. I. Neufeld, Elna. II. Title.

E99.C6N484 1991 266.97/7127/1 C91-097127-7

Printed in Canada
by
Friesen Printers
Altona, Manitoba
R0G 0B0

Contents

Dedication

To our five children
Carol Joyce, Gerald Henry, Lila Janice,
Arlie Crystal and David Merle

You have been a great blessing and inspiration to us. Your support for the work of Native Ministries has been very encouraging. It is through your constant prodding that this book has become reality. We are proud of you!

Mom and Dad

A special tribute

To the elders of the Pauingassi settlement
with gratitude to the whole community

We thank you for the constant open door that we as a family have experienced; for all that we have been able to learn of your way of life; last but not least, for the privilege of learning your language so that we could communicate with you.

A hearty thank you. The Lord bless you!

Elna and Henry Neufeld

Testimony and Tribute

I [Judas] would like to share a bit of my life as it started together with my mother and father. Many times we did not have enough to satisfy our basic needs. We suffered due to the lack of food. It was only after killing an animal that we could eat well. This was before the time we accepted the Christian faith.

When we came to this realization it was a very important step and things have gone well. I greatly rejoice in this way of life because we have seen the results of our prayers to God. I certainly rejoice to have taken this step of faith. I continue to strive after good deeds. Of greatest importance are faith, love and trust. My aim is to gain a greater understanding of God's Word, to grow in faith and finally to inherit eternal life.

We are very pleased to see this book which deals with a section of Pauingassi history. All who read these pages will get an insight into various things that happened when the Henry Neufeld family came to live with us. Their presence brought about many favourable changes in our community.

That is all we have to say. A hearty thank you.

Judas and Annette Owen
Pauingassi, Manitoba

ᑭᓇᐊ· ᐅᓂᑲᓂᐠ ᓯᑲ· ᑲᑭᓇ ᑲᑕᓯᔪᐠ ᐅᕕᐊ·ᑲᓯ*
ᑲᐊᔾᔪᐠ ᑭᐃ·ᓇᓇᑯᒥᑯ. ᓂᓇᐃ·ᐣ/ ᑲᑕᓯᔾ*
ᓂᑭᒥᐃᓐᑕᒥᐣ ᑲᐃᓯᓴᑭᕐᐣ ᒥᐃ·ᒪᔾᒥᑯᔪᐠ. ᐊᓄ-
ᖁᓄᐣ ᑲᑭᐅᒥᑭᑭᓄᐊᒪᐃ·ᔾ* ᓂᒥᓐ·ᑕᒥᐣ.
ᑭᑭᑭᓄᐊᒪᐃ·ᓇᐢ ᓂᓇᐃ·ᐣ/ ᐊᓂᓯᓇᐯᒧᐃ·ᐣ
ᒥᐃᓯᑲᓄᓂᑎᔾ* ᐁᓯᑭᓴ·ᔪᐠ. ᑭᒥᒥᖁ·- ᑭᑎᑯᐢ.
ᑭᑲᐃ·ᓴᐁ·ᓂᒥᑯᐊ· ᑲᑎᐯᒥᐃ·ᓂᒪᐠ.

ᐊᐱᒥ ᓂᒥᓐ·ᑕᒥᐣ ᓄᑯᐢ ᐅᐅ ᒪᓯᓇᐃᑲᐣ ᐁᐊ·<ᑕᒪ*
ᐅ<ᐊ·ᑲᓯ* ᐅᒥ ᐁᓯᑎᐸᑐᑌᐠ. ᒥᓂᐠ ᖁᐊᓇᒥᑐᔪᐠ
ᒥ ᒥᑭᖁᑕᒣᐠ ᑲᐃᓯᓴᐠ ᐃ·ᓇᐊ· ᐊᓇᒪᐁᐃ· ᑭᒪ
ᑲᐃ·ᒪᔾᒥᑯᑭᑕ·. ᐅᒪ ᑎᐸᑐᑌᑭᐣ ᐊᓄ- ᖁᑯᐣ
ᑲᐃᓯᐃ·ᒥᔾᑭᑕ·. ᑲᐱᑕᑭ·ᓯᓄᐊ·- ᒥ <ᔾᐟ
ᑲᐸᓂᒥᓄᓴᔾ*.

ᓂᓇᐃ·ᐣ/ ᔪᑕᐟ ᓯᑲ· ᐊᓇᐟ ᐅᐃ·ᐣ

Foreword

Elna and Henry Neufeld are uniquely gifted and committed workers in the Kingdom of God. They represent the vanguard of individuals who embraced and nurtured the missionary vision in the General Conference Mennonite churches in Canada in the early 1950s. They are among the first generation who merged their personal call to Christian discipleship with the fledgling efforts to make the church the incarnation of a broader interpretation of what it means to "share the gospel in word and deed" in the Canadian context.

Henry and Elna participated in this "leap of faith" together with the church as an act of personal and collective faithfulness. Their selfless efforts, as career missionaries, helped to shape what proved to be a relationship with Native people that has been firmly woven into the fabric of the church.

When the Neufelds were ordained for a ministry at Pauingassi during the annual sessions of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada in July 1956, the whole enterprise was relatively new to Canadian Mennonites. Prior to the 1940s, the church's emphasis had been on Home Missions. *Reiseprediger* (itinerant preachers) ministered to scattered pockets of Mennonites in an effort to assemble the flock and to encourage the formation of local congregations.

During the 1940s, the Bergthaler group of Mennonite churches in southern Manitoba, who had a more established tradition in this country, developed an expanded vision for mission. Initially, they seconded Anne Penner and Peter Falk to the Board of Missions of the General Conference Mennonite Church based in Newton, Kansas. But a longing for more direct involvement in missions continued to grow. An attempt to begin an independent mission among the Tarahumara Indians in northern Mexico faltered after several years of concentrated effort.

The next opportunity surfaced closer to home. At the annual sessions of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada in 1948, an

ad hoc foreign missions committee encouraged the Bergthaler churches to explore seriously a ministry with Canada's first peoples. This vision had been nurtured for some time in Mennonite communities which were in close proximity to Indian reserves and by a number of Mennonite conscientious objectors who had taught in reserve schools during World War II.

The Bergthaler churches acted quickly when an indirect invitation from Matheson Island via the United Church came their way. After an exploratory visit by Bishop David Schulz in 1948, Jake and Trudy Unrau were sent north in fall of the same year under the auspices of Mennonite Pioneer Mission (MPM).

The arduous task of putting the vision into practice began in earnest. Place names like Cross Lake, Little Grand Rapids, Pine Dock, Loon Straits, Manigotogan, Bloodvein River and Hole River as well as surnames like Ross, Owen, McKay, Monkman, Settee, Simard and McIvor entered the consciousness of people in southern Manitoba. The vision for mission was shaped by the new relationships which began to emerge.

The process which has continued for 43 years has experienced many growing pains and reversals; it has also fostered intimate friendships and bonds of Christian fellowship. These new relationships have challenged the church's struggle with what it means to be good neighbours and a people of mission with integrity.

Twenty years after MPM sent out its first workers, the work in northern communities had grown to such an extent that its work was transferred to the national body, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada.

The mandate which has developed out of MPM's experience includes a solidarity with Native Christians, an awareness raising in the non-Native constituency and a mutual effort to work at justice issues together with aboriginal people.

In 1973 the name, Mennonite Pioneer Mission, was changed to Native Ministries to encompass a larger vision of work with Canada's Native people. At present, the program includes three churches, two itinerant ministries, four community and two urban programs involving five ordained Native ministers and 23 staff persons. It is within this framework that Elna and Henry Neufeld were called by God and the Mennonite church to live their lives as faithful Christian servants.

With the exception of two years, when Henry was pastor of the Springstein (Manitoba) Mennonite Church, they have been

involved in Native ministries work with the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. They continue to serve as itinerant ministers to Saulteaux and Cree churches, as translators, Bible teachers, chaplains and senior staff advisers based out of Winnipeg. Their ministry had its beginning in the 15-year (1955-1970) northern experience at Pauingassi described in this book.

By God's Grace should be seen as the first slice of Henry and Elna's ministry. It represents years which are characterized by personal dedication, perseverance and hard physical work in an effort to forge new ground for the church, for the Pauingassi community and for their growing family.

They tell the story in their own words. But read the book not only as Henry and Elna's story, but also as the story of the Pauingassi Mennonite Church. Read it as your own story: you are the co-visionaries and faithful supporters of their calling to the church's ministry in the Native Ministries program.

Reflect with them on these years of service. Share not only in the struggle, frustration and personal sacrifice; share also in the deep commitment, joy of service and evidence of the work of the Spirit. Thank God for the opportunity to participate together in this venture of faith.

John Funk
Vancouver, British Columbia
Executive Secretary (1982-90)
for Native Ministries of the
Conference of Mennonites in Canada

Preface

As we reflect on our many experiences in northern Manitoba, we are overwhelmed with praise and thanksgiving for what the Lord has done, for the way in which God has seen fit to use us in various Native communities.

> *Praise the Lord, my soul! All my being, praise his holy name! Praise the Lord, my soul, and do not forget how kind he is. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He keeps me from the grave and blesses me with love and mercy. He fills my life with good things so that I stay young and strong like an eagle.*
>
> Psalm 103:1-5 (*Good News Bible*)

We share in this book some of the joys and struggles which we have experienced in working with a rejected people, a people rejected by white society in general. We felt called to learn from them, to bring hope, to share the Good News of salvation and to help establish the church among them.

For our family, Pauingassi became home, a way of life. We felt very much accepted among the people there. For the Conference of Mennonites of Canada and others, the work presented a challenge to be supported with prayers and gifts. The following pages about our 15-year stay at Pauingassi are written as a note of thanksgiving to our Creator and Saviour. May they bring honour and glory to God's name.

Elna and Henry Neufeld
Winnipeg, Manitoba
May 1991

Introduction

Pauingassi, which means "sandy narrows," is the name of a Saulteaux Indian settlement. These narrows are about two-and-a-half kilometres north of the present settlement. Pauingassi is located 16 kilometres north of Little Grand Rapids Indian Reserve #14, sixteen kilometres west of the Manitoba-Ontario border on the shores of Fishing Lake and 276 air kilometres northeast of Winnipeg. The nearest all-weather road ends at Bissett, 128 kilometres south. This keeps the area rather isolated.

Although the people belong to the Little Grand Rapids Indian band, the Pauingassi group has chosen to live off the reserve. Perhaps one reason was that fishing was traditionally referred to as being good at the actual narrows. They always lived in this general area when returning from their traplines. Alex Owen, who died in 1968 at the age of 75, talked of his grandfather having lived there. The discovery of potsherds (pieces of clay pottery) is further evidence that this region has been inhabited for many years.

Living off the reserve deprived the Pauingassi people of most of the help that came from the Department of Indian Affairs. Even though they were all treaty Indians, neither the Federal Government in Ottawa nor the Province of Manitoba would assist them with their schools. As a result, no one paid any attention to their need for formal education. Deplorable as this desertion may sound for the middle of the 20th century, the people have always shown a great deal of joy in life and initiative in supplying necessities for daily living.

This self-sustaining, self-supporting spirit has proven to be a very positive one. Besides trapping, fishing for home use and picking wild rice, there is evidence of fairly extensive gardening in the past. Mainly potatoes were grown in patches along the actual narrows and at the present settlement. In both areas pits lined with logs and dry grass preserved the potatoes through the winter; they were opened in early spring. Just up from the sandy narrows, many of these old pits are still visible, the last one having been used during the early sixties. Once they even stored

Members of Pauingassi's last Waapanoowikamik *(medicine lodge) where a traditional ceremony to pray for the sick was held* (from left, back row)*: Moosenee Keeper, Bearhair Owen, Alex Pascal, Moses Owen, James Owen, Angus Owen;* (middle row)*: Kapech Owen, Elizabeth Pascal, Waawaak Keeper, Alice Owen, Margaret Pascal, Lillian Owen, Red Bird Owen;* (front row)*: Alex Owen, Willie Pascal, Shawtail Owen.*

ᐊᐧᐸᓄᐃᐧᑲᒥᑦ. ᐅᑕᓇ*: ᑭᒋᐅᒧᓯᓂ, ᓂᒋᕆᐣ, ᑭᒋᐢ, ᒥᐢᑲᐧᑌᓯ ᐅᐢᑭᓯᐣ, ᐁᐧᓴᓂᒪᐢ, ᐊᑭᐢ.
ᓇᐊᐧᖃᐃᐧ: ᑲᐯ-, ᒪᓇᑎᐢ, ᐊᐧᐸᐧᐣ, ᑭᒋᒧᑯᒪᐣ, ᑌᑭᐢ, ᒪᐊᒍᐢ, ᒥᐢᑲᐧᐅ.
ᓂᑲᓇᐃ: ᐊᐧᓇᒣᐢ, ᐃᐧᐢᖁᓴᐣ, ᐊᑲᑯᒋᐢ.

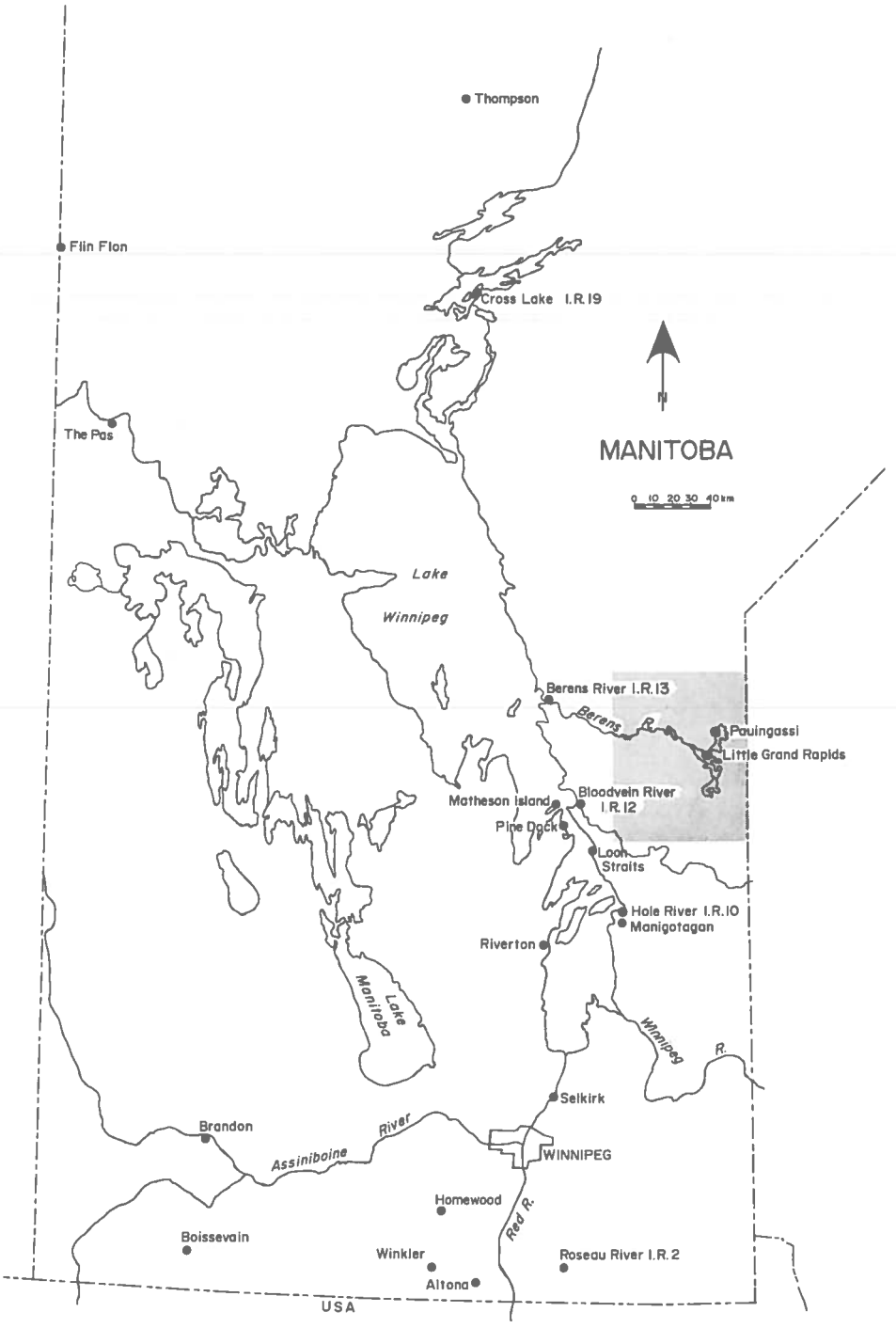
a few bags of potatoes for us. Also up on the hill from the narrows is an area where they sawed lumber with hand saws. These boards were used for flooring in their log cabins.

Directly south of the narrows, a pole, about three metres high, is stuck into a crack in the rock at water's edge. On it are several flag-like bands of material and a narrow strip of hide about 25 centimetres long taken from the nose of a bear cub. The pole is associated with the preparation of Indian medicine.

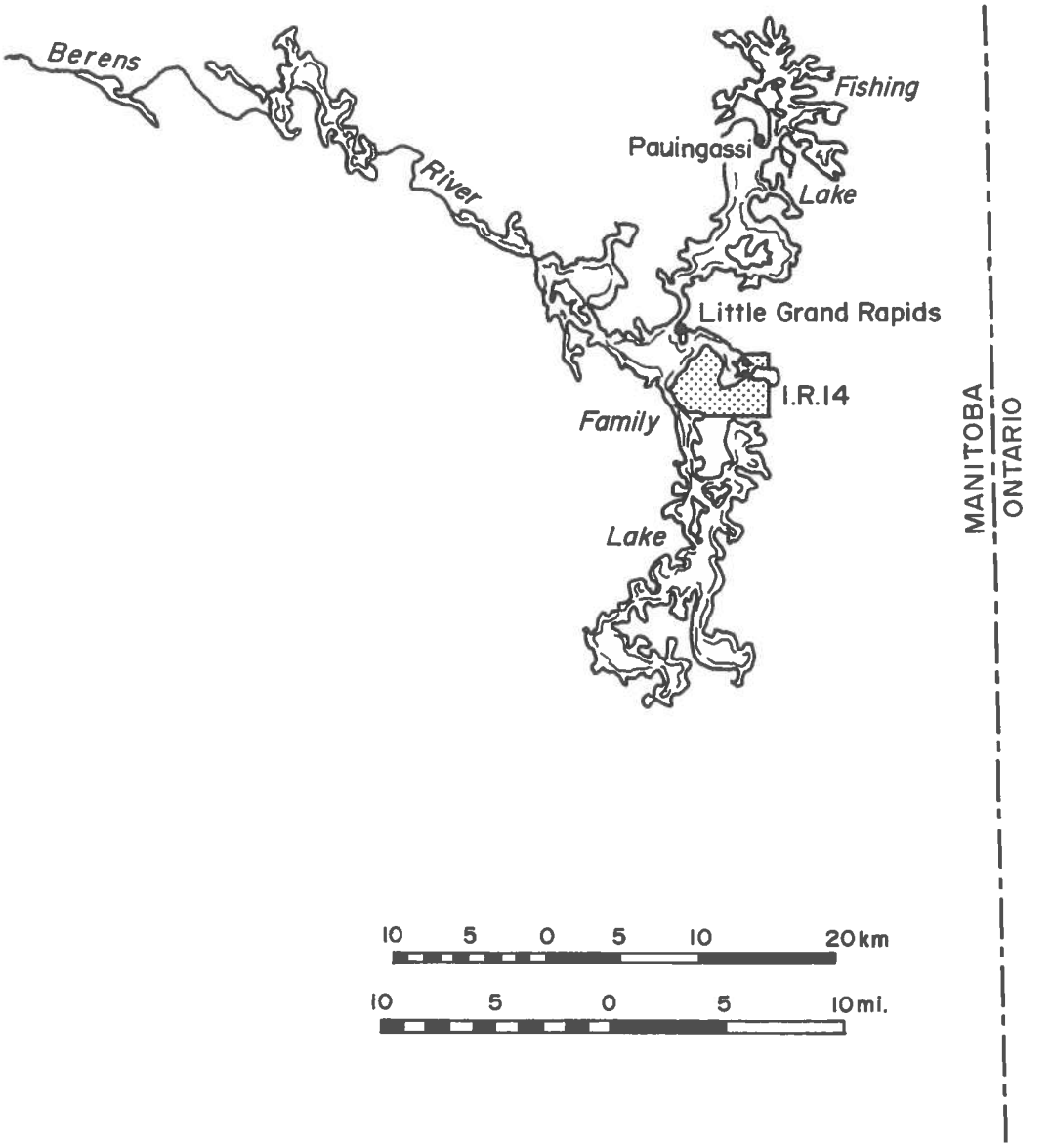
At one time a diamond-shaped dance area, about 11 metres long and two metres wide at the centre, was located under the present school building. Inside the area was a square of four specially named rocks where the drummers sat and drummed. The dancers would dance around the well-beaten path. These rocks were buried on that spot in the summer of 1957. This action was just another step in placing these ceremonies into the world of the past.

During the early 1930s the last *Waapanoowikamik* (medicine lodge) also stood in this area. In it many of the sick were prayed for. Naamiwan (Fairwind) and his four sons were in charge of this ceremony which, within the greater Algonquin group, was peculiar only to Pauingassi. From conversation it is evident that, with the passing of Naamiwan and his sons, this ceremony also gradually disappeared after having been an integral part of the culture for a long, long time. Naamiwan died in 1943; the sons James (Wecaanimaash) in 1951, Bearhair (Niicishaan) in 1952, Angus in 1957 and Alex (Waanaces) in 1968. After Alex died, his son, Charlie George said to me: "My father is gone and the *Waapanoowin* practice is a thing of the past. I too used to be a part of it at one time, but not any more. I will take my father's tools and dispose of them in the bush."

Pauingassi, with a population of 129 in 1955—now it has increased to 300—was the last community in Manitoba to come out of complete isolation.


Thompson
Flin Flon
Cross Lake I.R.19
N
MANITOBA
0 10 20 30 40km
The Pas
Lake
Winnipeg
Berens River I.R.13
Berens R.
Pauingassi
Little Grand Rapids
Matheson Island
Bloodvein River
I.R.12
Pine Dock
Loon
Straits
Hole River I.R.10
Manigotagan
Riverton
Lake
Manitoba
Winnipeg
R.
Selkirk
Brandon
Assiniboine
River
WINNIPEG
Homewood
Red R.
Boissevain
Winkler
Roseau River I.R.2
Altona
USA

DETAIL OF SHADED AREA
ON FACING PAGE



1
Initial Contacts

When I was a youth in Leamington, Ontario, I had vowed over and over again that I would never be a teacher. However, when I attended Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg from 1949 to 1952, a number of things changed.

First of all, the call to service became strong, though not to any specific location. Then, when I fell in love with a school teacher, my childhood vows too began to take on a new colour. Elna (Friesen) had often talked of going North to teach just as her brother had but, because she was single, her parents were not in favour of her going. When we became serious in our relationship, the situation changed. We were married on July 12, 1952, and felt led to go to Moose Lake, a Cree Indian Reserve, to teach in a two-room school.

Moose Lake is 73 kilometres east of The Pas, Manitoba. Although many things were very strange, it was a beautiful feeling to be in a place where we really enjoyed our work together, a place where we felt God wanted us to be. We had many opportunities besides our school work to relate to the children's parents on various levels, as well as to conduct Sunday school with the children.

During our second year there, we felt a strong desire to be in a place where we could do more work through the church and not be restricted to the classroom. We were encouraged in this by the Catholic priest who worked in that area.

While we were at Elna's parental home at Homewood, Manitoba, during the Christmas holidays in 1953, we heard Rev. Jake Unrau of Mennonite Pioneer Mission (MPM, now Native Ministries), who was working at Matheson Island, give a report on his work. Among other things, he made reference to a small settlement on Fishing Lake that had no services like church or school. This was Pauingassi.

Jake first heard of this community in 1949 through the Indian agent serving the area. The following year he was able to visit Pauingassi for a couple of hours with Garf (Garfield) Monkman,

a resident of Matheson Island who owned a small plane. This contact confirmed the need for a worker there.

In March 1954, while we were still at Moose Lake, we received the surprise of a lifetime, a surprise which was to play a very important role in the events to follow. Johnny Kehler, a flying farmer, took Jake Unrau and Rev. J.W. Schmidt, the chairman of MPM at that time, to visit the teacher at Little Grand Rapids. They also visited Pauingassi. From there they wanted to go east to Poplar Hill, Ontario, to check out the possibility of opening a new work. With no assurance that there would be aviation gas available, however, they decided instead to visit us at Moose Lake. It was through J.W.Schmidt that we had been directed to Moose Lake in the first place.

For us, who had lived in isolation for a year and a half, it seemed almost out of this world to think of a small plane flying out to such a remote area. That was a most beautiful visit! When they left and we watched the plane vanish in the distance, a new dream began to well up within me: "We love the North and I want to fly." The first recorded reference to this was made on April 20, 1954. "I am planning to take flying lessons this summer, if it be the Lord's will," I wrote. This same letter also refers to a great struggle about deciding to leave Moose Lake and being willing to teach at Little Grand Rapids, even though it meant changing from a Cree to a Saulteaux settlement.

Earlier during the war years, Henry J. Gerbrandt, who had been teaching at Cross Lake with the United Church, had received an offer to take a position at a very isolated place and do mission work. That was to have been Pauingassi.

During the 1920s and 1930s the United Church had a very active worker, Luther Schutzie, at Little Grand Rapids for about 13 years. Indications are that he and others made periodic visits into Pauingassi. The Indian Affairs records of the time listed the religion of the settlement as being United Church. However, to our knowledge, Pauingassi had never had a resident church worker.

Even earlier, the first Methodist contact had probably been between 1873 and 1876. In his book *Between Canoe and Dog Trail* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1890), Rev. Egerton R. Young makes comments to this effect. Young was stationed in the Berens River Reserve at that time and mentions smaller bands scattered along the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg and inland.

He also writes of having visited the interior. We feel rather strongly that this must have been the Pauingassi-Little Grand area since these settlements are due east of the Berens River Reserve. (The Berens River also has many historical markings which indicate that it had been an important waterway connecting Lake Winnipeg with communities like Little Grand Rapids and others further into Ontario.)

Our decision to leave Moose Lake was not an easy one since the two years there had been most enjoyable. Adding to the problem was the fact that the people did not want us to leave. When we arrived at Little Grand Rapids the next fall, we soon realized that the whole situation there was at a much more primitive level than at Moose Lake. However, we had found God's will in the move and were ready to work at it. This awareness of being in God's will was always a great source of encouragement for us.

The one-year stint at Little Grand Rapids was a good introduction into the Saulteaux world. Besides teaching school we happily accepted the United Church director's request to conduct services. When some of the families from Pauingassi visited the reserve, they sent their children to school, even if it was only for a few days. I welcomed this, but it created all kinds of problems since formal school attendance was foreign to them. I also developed frequent contact with the men since I was tagging furs for them. (Furs trapped just across the Manitoba-Ontario border could only be sold with an attached tag to identify where they had been harvested.)

On March 20, 1955, Johnny Kehler came out for a visit with Rev. Henry Gerbrandt and Jake Unrau. This provided my first opportunity to visit the Pauingassi settlement. It was exciting to see some of the men whom I had previously met and to get to know others. Although there were similarities between Pauingassi and the areas we had already seen, they lived very much according to their own unique lifestyle. Pauingassi was even more primitive than Little Grand. In one of the homes old Red Bird lay in her bed on the floor, quite ill. She was skin and bones. We had a word of prayer with her before we left.

During our various contacts, school and church were always mentioned as needs. One day Alex Owen, leader in the community, said: "Our way of life has been very adequate in the past. We do not know English and will not need of it, but the world

Madeline and Alex Owen. Alex was leader in the Pauingassi community when the Neufelds arrived in 1955.

around us is changing. Our children will need to learn English so they can get jobs and cope with the many demands they will come in contact with. Therefore come and live with us, teach our children and have services."

During the summer of 1954 some workers from Pikangikum, Ontario, who were serving with Northern Light Gospel Missions, also canoed into Pauingassi in search of new outreach possibilities. They too had received an invitation to come and work there, but since this was part of Manitoba they felt led to stay east of the provincial border.

Our prayer and searching continued as we looked for a clear signal to make the move to Pauingassi. At its semiannual meeting in early May 1955, the Mennonite Pioneer Mission Board unanimously agreed to accept the invitation from Pauingassi. This decision clearly indicated that we should be the ones to go and live among the people. God's call was confirmed with us. Now plans moved rapidly since there was much to be done.

On May 13, Alex Fisher (interpreter), Kitakas Keeper (chief of Little Grand Rapids) and I travelled to Pauingassi by canoe. It was a thrilling trip; this was to be our future home. About 35 to 40 people were tenting on the large flat area near the sandbar.

Henry Neufeld conducting the first worship service at Pauingassi on May 13, 1955.

ᓂᑕᒥᐃ ᑲᐱᑎᑲᓂᐅᔨᐠ ᐅᐸᐊᑦ

This was the area on which they wanted us to build. Some years earlier there had been a number of houses and gardens but now there were only a few houses left. It appeared to us that God had his hand in preparing a large area that would accommodate the facilities the people were asking for: a residence and school-chapel.

There in the outdoors we had a brief service, my first opportunity to share the Word in their presence. It was also a special time of relating to old Angus whose wife, Red Bird, had died very recently. I returned to Little Grand and, with great enthusiasm, recounted the whole experience to Elna. She was thrilled with the prospects.

As already mentioned, the people of Pauingassi were waiting with great anticipation for us to move into the settlement and begin the teaching and preaching ministry. In fact, Lucy, one of the local women, later mentioned to us that she had often wished someone would come and live with them to share the Word.

2
Come and Teach Us

A specific request mentioned in our invitation from the people at Pauingassi was that we were to establish a school so the children would have an opportunity to learn English. Alex Owen had experienced a way of life which, until then, had been adequate; it was the nomadic life of hunting and gathering to take care of the needs of the family and the clan. Animals provided food as well as money from the sale of fur. This had been the life of their ancestors, a life that brought joy and satisfaction because it was in the realm of nature where they were born. It was close to mother earth and the Creator who was their provider. Rigorous life in the wilds had made them a hardy people, able to withstand cold and hardships. Because of the harshness of their lifestyle, very few with a major handicap could survive. As a hunting and gathering people, survival was always a number one priority; for them it became the survival of the fittest.

A great deal of teaching about their values and their way of survival took place whenever they were out hunting in their small clan groupings. When the various clans gathered back in the settlement for certain periods of time, native ceremonies were conducted according to ancient tradition. Many of the values which are relevant even to this day are not in harmony with European values. A good example is that of sharing what they have. For them the presence of clan members is like a bank account, that is, a source of help for anyone who has a need. As long as there is something to give away no one among them will be in need.

In his vision for the future, Alex saw that the children would need to know English. They would have to know about the way of life on the outside because various aspects of their way of life were being threatened. Although they had been happy and contented with their lifestyle, with the isolation and the hunting and gathering, there was no way of barring the encroaching way of life from the white world.

Since Pauingassi had never had a school to provide formal education, this style of teaching was completely strange to them except for those few children who had attended school for brief periods while visiting friends or relatives in other settlements. Pauingassi indeed was isolated from the rest of the world.

It was into this setting that we found ourselves appointed and felt the Lord directing us to be a witness. The previous three years of teaching experience on two different reserves was already a good orientation. When the people realized we would be coming to help them, they immediately indicated that we were free to erect a building to live in, another one to use as a school and chapel. A large clearing was designated for school and chapel to give ample room for a playground. Mennonite Pioneer Mission was prepared to put up these buildings and provide the necessary school supplies.

However, since schools come under the jurisdiction of the province, we decided to contact the Department of Education with our plan. Even though they had not taken the initiative to provide the necessary facilities, they did encourage us in our endeavour. Because the people of Pauingassi were of treaty status, we were referred to the Department of Indian Affairs. We presented our plan: we would teach the children English but we would also learn Saulteaux as quickly as possible. One of the officials tried his utmost to discourage us. He said that anyone who learned the Native language lost all respect from the local people. He added that they did not want us to meddle with their department's ten-year policy, but did not reveal to us what that policy was. After further discussion he admitted that there were provisions to pay tuition for every child in attendance.

When I checked further with the inspector who had inspected my classroom the previous three years about the possibility of getting some support for books and supplies, the answer was a definite "no." He indicated that I might as well leave. With no opportunity for further discussion, we decided to proceed without the assistance of Indian Affairs.

While these responses were disheartening, they would in no way keep us from the challenge that we had received. The invitation from the people of Pauingassi was of utmost importance. The building was erected with the help of the local people. Benches and tables measuring two-and-a-half metres long were made from the lumber which we produced on our own sawmill.

Without a power planer a lot of elbow grease was required to push the block plane and get a smooth surface on the boards for the tabletops. In the final end we had a log cabin with primitive, yet adequate supplies to begin our task.

Plans had been made to start school in January 1956, but the children frequently came around wanting to start sooner. We worked hard to get some of the necessities done and officially opened the school two weeks before Christmas in 1955. Fifteen students aged seven to seventeen started in the same reader since no one spoke or read English. Mathematics was much easier because counting was used in everyday life; therefore, the older ones were far ahead of the younger ones. In reading some excelled quickly and before too long there were several different levels. Various other courses required by the curriculum were impossible to implement because of the circumstances. So we limited school to forenoons only. This would give them a chance to get used to the system and still continue some of their regular daily activities.

Communication on the settlement was totally in their own language. Therefore, the aim to teach the children English as fast as possible and for us to learn Saulteaux even faster, was a difficult task. To help the children get a grasp of the English vocabulary, we used a bilingual approach as much as possible.

Attendance was good and the children were more than eager to learn. However, I soon realized that classroom discipline as I had experienced it did not always work and I had to change procedures. The children had always been free to roam around—playing, checking rabbit snares or carrying pails of water from the lake. They found it difficult to sit still in the classroom and concentrate on lessons. Often we did not understand each other because of the language barrier and difference in values. Frequently things had to be repeated several times before they were understood.

Much patience was required in every aspect. Written answers were much easier for them than oral ones. Again and again I was very fortunate if I got a faint whisper in response to a question; if I missed the movement of those lips, there certainly was no repetition. When presenting a lesson I expected full attention, but saw them all looking down instead of up at me. It took a while to realize that in their culture they do not look eyeball to eyeball.

Traditionally learning was done by observation and telling of

Judas Owen, Henry Neufeld and Elijah Crow cutting logs to build the school house.

ᑭ•ᐱ′ ᐊᓇᒪᐁᐃ•ᑭᒪ ᐊᓇᐃᒃ ᐁᑭᐢᑲᐊᕐ•ᐊ•-

Students in Henry's first classroom in 1955-56. Tables and benches were all handmade.

ᓂᑕᒥᑯ ᑲᑭᑭᓄᐊᒪᐃ•ᑕ•

stories with a lesson; our way of presenting bare facts instead of using stories from their own way of life created problems for them. During the early years few of the children had ever been to the city, or had a ride in a car or bus, or had a trip to the zoo or farm. The readers which we were using contained stories about a way of life which was totally strange to them.

Spring and fall trapping were adhered to very strictly, and rightly so, but this absenteeism created difficulties in the children's learning progress. In spite of this we encouraged them to go out to the trapline as families for these seasons, because many good things in a different learning environment happened out there. Consequently we closed school for the spring and taught during the summers in 1958 and 1959.

With a change in federal government in March 1958, a new approach was taken with regards to financial help. All the supplies were provided by Indian Affairs. Rent was paid for the use of the building and tuition for each child in attendance was provided to help cover some of our expenses. With this change, school was extended to the full day. This was more feasible by now, since the students had developed some work patterns. However, when the inspector realized that I supported the family going out trapping and that I used a bilingual approach in teaching vocabulary, I was severely chastised. The use of Saulteaux was to be discontinued for good. This I could not accept, but kept my silence! The Department did not realize how very detrimental it was to frown on the language of the Native people.

Displeasure was also shown to those who went out trapping as a family unit. They thought the men could go out alone, so the children could go to school. However, separating families in this way created great difficulties, both on the trapline and at home. When the threat of cutting off family allowance cheques was used as a lever to keep the children in school, many bitter feelings arose. The three R's were important, but needed to be kept in balance with the rest of life.

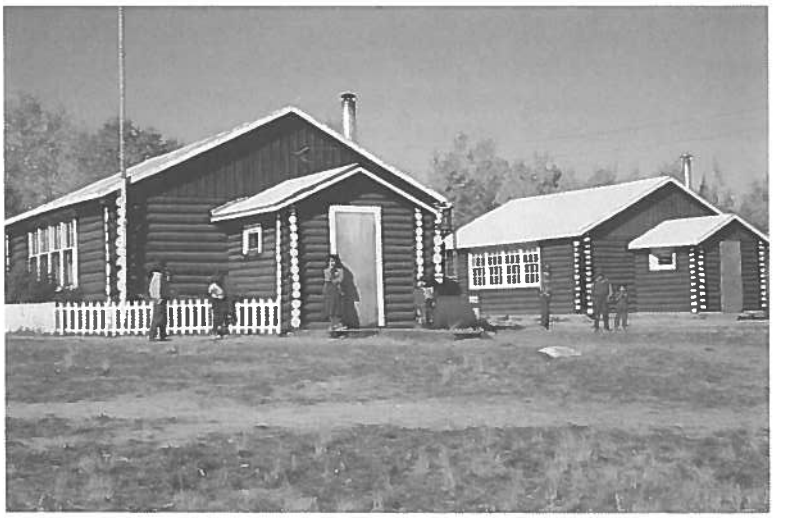
It was of tremendous help to get teachers for the summer so we could carry on with the many other jobs that needed attention. These teachers could also give us their perspective on how things were progressing in school. In the meantime obsolete desks from another area were sent in to replace the furniture I had made.

With the ever-increasing workload, we were convinced that we should have a full-time teacher to take care of the school activities. Elna helped out where she could, but with three small children I needed to be home when she was teaching. We were hoping for a teacher to begin duties in the fall of 1959. That, however, did not happen! I could hardly bear to go back to the classroom after the summer with so many other things left undone! My general philosophy always has been not to worry about anything, but to cross each bridge as I get to it. That year taught me a greater measure of patience as I sought to communicate with the pupils. Although I had never intended to be a teacher, I now had been one for seven years. The Lord knew what I needed. By the fall of 1960, a teacher was found. We were happy to have Edna Dalke board with our family for the next two years. In August 1962, when we left for a sabbatical, Dave and Doris Friesen replaced us and also taught school that year.

When we returned from our sabbatical a year later, we concentrated on building a teacherage to provide more attractive accommodations for teaching staff. In the fall of 1963 Harry and Norma Koop with their two children moved into the newly built log cabin. Harry was the first teacher in Pauingassi to receive a salary directly from Indian Affairs.

The use of English remained on a very low level even though all teaching was done in English. Nonetheless, there was slow but continuous progress. Again and again we noticed that school supervisory staff compared the academic level of the Pauingassi school with reserves like Fort Alexander, Berens River, and other places in Manitoba where school had already been taught for many years, rather than observing the progress made in the few short years of the school's existence since 1955. This caused the teachers a great deal of heartache because they were pushed to get the pupils through their grade at any cost. At one point, I heard the supervisor tell the teacher that his certificate would be in jeopardy if he did not get them through their books. When the teacher said he might as well pack his bags right there, this threat was somewhat mitigated. Yet the teachers lived under these unrealistic expectations to some extent for a number of years.

By 1966, when the enrolment had reached 40 pupils, the one-room school had become too small, so a second log building was



Chapel-classroom and second classroom. By 1966 enrolment had increased to 40 pupils so a second log school was built.

ᐊᓇᒪᐁᐃ·ᑲᒥᖏ ᓂᑲ· ᑭᑭᓗᐊᒪᑎᐃ·ᑲᒥᖏ

erected. That fall we were fortunate to have two teachers come out, Linda Neufeld and Ruby Enns, who both stayed for two years. They were followed by John and Irene Sawatsky for a year and Ron and Phyllis Lysing for one year. These teachers all contributed a great deal to the education of the children but had difficulty understanding the shy Saulteaux-speaking youngsters.

At one point a language specialist came to assess the children's progress and gave suggestions on how to speed up the use of English. When she realized that our total program in the community, which included children's clubs, ladies' groups, Sunday school and worship services, was all conducted in Saulteaux and that all this took place in the classroom building, she was beside herself. She thought we were the ones who were hindering the progress at school. Immediately she contacted our office in Winnipeg and requested the removal of those "Saulteaux-speaking white people."

As mentioned earlier, the task of teaching the children English as quickly as possible and learning Saulteaux ourselves even more quickly, was difficult. Our need for language study was just another reason for wanting to have a full-time teacher. Then we would be able to concentrate on the Saulteaux and

converse with the people in their own language. It seems we were years ahead of our time in regard to having the people retain their own language. Twenty years later the Department of Education started using this bilingual approach and preferred having Saulteaux-speaking teachers for the younger children.

We did not push the issue of sending students out to residential schools because we had already seen the problems this could create. When students came back after a few years of residential school, they did not quite fit in with their family clan any more, yet could not totally adapt to white society either. This left them very frustrated. Too many in the past had lost their language and their culture in boarding schools. We did not want to see this happen at Pauingassi. Some of the children who were away could not even write letters to their parents because the parents could read only syllabics in their own language. As a result, it was difficult to keep up family contacts.

In our total education program, we also taught syllabics to both young and old, whoever was interested in learning, so there could always be a way of written communication when someone had to leave because of illness or for other reasons. Our whole program was geared to teaching as much as possible right where the people were living and to give an equal opportunity to all.

3
Growing in Faith

The initial invitation to come and have services confirmed our own sense of call to dwell among the people. We feel that these two, a call and an invitation, must always go together. The scriptures were not written in the language of the Pauingassi people; and we were certainly not fluent in Saulteaux. So we would have to be a living Bible. As the old saying goes, "More people read the Bible bound in shoe leather than the one bound in morocco."

With the help of an interpreter we made every effort to relate the Bible stories as clearly as possible. We also began to realize that a number of their legends had distinct resemblances to the scriptural rendition. Somewhere in history this revelation had come to them. Further, gifts like kindness, patience and sharing were obviously part of the elders' teaching.

On our first Sunday in Pauingassi, October 2, 1955, we held a service. Since the church building was not finished, someone suggested using one of the local homes. We were very grateful for the forty people who came. My text was Luke 17:11-19; as Jesus was able to cleanse the ten lepers, so he could also cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The next Sunday, October 9, was a warm day and found us gathered within the four walls of the chapel which, as yet, had no roof or floor. It seemed as if nothing could stop us from moving ahead.

Among the discouragements which inevitably came to us, few left us as empty and helpless as the one on our tenth Sunday there. Jacob Owen had been the interpreter for eight of the nine times we had gathered. The other time it was John James Owen from Little Grand Rapids. We were beginning to get a feel for Jacob's limitations in vocabulary when, on December 4, he did not show up. This was very natural since it was trapping season and he had not made it home for the weekend. All we could do that Sunday was sing a few songs—they in Cree, we in English —then go home after an English prayer. That left us with a very

The second service after the Neufelds moved to Pauingassi was held on October 9, 1955, in the chapel which did not yet have a roof.

ᐱᑎᑲᓂᐊᓕᐣ ᐊᓇᒪᐁᐃᓕᑲᒥᐢ ᑕᐸᓕ ᑭᓯᒋᑲᑌᐦ

Attendance fluctuated but both young and old came to the services.

ᐱᑎᑲᓂᐊᓕᐣ

empty feeling. Yet, there was no other choice. As time went on, there were many Sundays when we had only singing, but even that felt much better when we were able to sing in Cree. Eventually the numbing edge was removed when we came to the realization that, if there was no other way, God is pleased with even the smallest of efforts.

Attendance fluctuated depending on the season of the year, but interest was always there. By sharing the Bible stories we affirmed the oral tradition of God as Saviour and Lord and challenged them to discipleship.

James Evans, a missionary linguist from England, came to Manitoba in the middle of the 19th century and reduced the Cree language to syllabics. Consequently, the Cree people everywhere quickly learned to read. When the Bible was translated and written into syllabics, they also received access to the written word of God. In 1878 R.R. Bishop Barragga compiled a very extensive work, *A Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language* (reprinted in 1966 in Minneapolis, Minnesota). This work used phonetics but not in syllabic groupings.

In those early years Sarnia, Ontario, became the place where the New Testament was translated into Ojibway (Saulteaux) using the English alphabet. As a result, Saulteaux people who did not know English, had to use the Cree if they wanted to read the Word in syllabic form. This has been unfortunate because Cree is not their language. Also, in many cases, Cree has come to be seen as the "Holy Language," the language one really needs to communicate with God. The Cree songbook has taken on a similar position.

Several copies of the Cree Bible were in use at Pauingassi when we arrived. Many biblical teachings were not new; they had heard similar legends from their own people. In later years, however, they frequently said, "Until you came, we did not know that it was expected of us to be born again." What a joy it was to point out this way of salvation from scripture.

To assist us in our singing program, we mimeographed a number of Cree songs and passed them around. We used these until we were able to purchase sufficient Cree songbooks which had been put out by the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission in Saskatchewan.

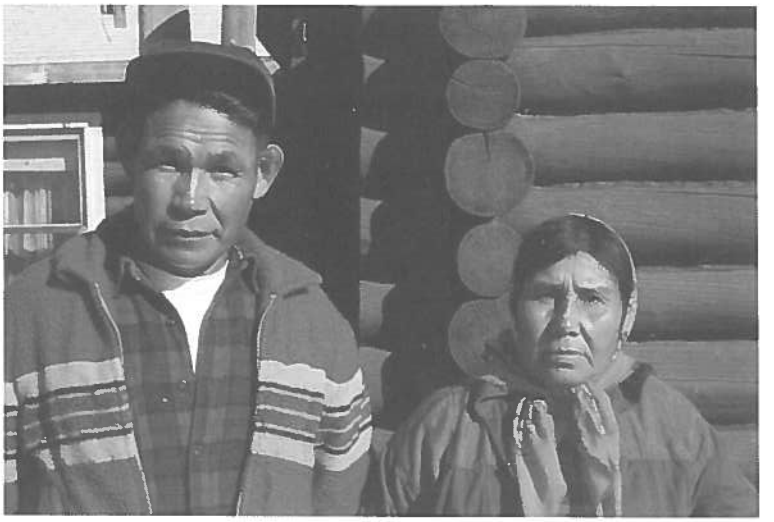
Christ's invitation to follow him was not only part of Sunday services but also involved the needs of the whole person as we

worked together, played together, hunted, visited, laughed and cried together. We soon realized that for them there was no separation between the physical and the spiritual as is often the case in our own culture. Although we made many mistakes in our contacts with the people as we tried to understand their ways and their background, we are very grateful that we did not go in with a machete, as it were, and insist that things had to go a certain way. We learned more and more to be open to ways and means that were different from ours but still acceptable to the Lord. After all, we were coming to a people who had an oral tradition and a background of hunting and gathering while we had a written tradition, with the Word of God spelled out on paper, and a background in agriculture.

Reports by the people that another group was sharing the Good News at Poplar Hill and Pikangikum, Ontario, in the same way that we were, was most encouraging. But, "Who are they?" we often asked. A letter from Poplar Hill in September 1957 revealed them to be Northern Light Gospel Missions. Our contacts with them were very helpful and encouraging. They were far ahead of us in the use of the local language, which brought us new hope. They also introduced us to Sam and Maryanne Quill of Pikangikum who were related to several families at Pauingassi. Sam and Maryanne had both taken a firm stand of faith and related to the people in their own language. Their repeated visits over the years brought blessings to all of us and were a special help in the development of the church.

Year after year the witness carried on. When we needed to go out for conferences or holidays, someone from the supporting conference took our place. This not only provided continuity in the work; it also gave opportunity for others to experience a cross-cultural situation. The work was slow, but progress was steady. There was no time to get bored. Our responsibility was to be faithful at any cost. People from the supporting constituency often felt sorry for us and expressed real concern that there were no firm faith commitments. We did not feel that way because the Word was at work among the people. We could see many positive changes in attitudes and relationships and realized their need to search and discern what implications a decision to follow Christ would have for them.

Demands for health care, mechanical repairs and other physical support remained high. These demands caused Elna the



Sam and Maryanne Quill from Pikangikum, Ontario. They were very influential in the development of the church at Pauingassi.

ᓴᑦ ᓂᑲᐦ ᐱᓂᔪᑦ ᑫᐦᐃᐧᐣ

greatest problems. The best remedy for her discouragement was for me to take care of the smaller children while I did my studying and give her a chance to get out to do home visitation with the older children. It never failed; she always came back a rejuvenated person. In time we noticed a very welcome change: requests came for spiritual help. It was tremendous to leave the activities of the shop to discuss scripture portions and pray with people.

On October 14, 1964, just after we finished a series of special meetings, I went out by boat in the late afternoon to hunt partridges. This provided a little break from the many demands, as well as some space to reflect on the results, or lack of them, at the meetings just finished. The way of salvation and the need of it had been made very clear. In spite of this clarity, no one had taken an open stand for Christ. What was the Lord saying to us? Again and again I reminded myself that we were called to be faithful; the Lord would do the rest.

I arrived home at dusk, placed my gun in the back of the shop and was ready to go in for supper. At the shop door I met St. John Owen. That was nothing new for he often came over. We had a lot to do with each other, especially since the time a

medicine man had put a curse of bad medicine on him (a common practice when seeking revenge on someone). During those years St. John did nothing but lie around and live in fear. Often several of us had walked out to his house late at night to try and help him because he thought he was dying. It was during this time that he actively started to read the Cree Bible which his father had often read. We also frequently went duck hunting together when he was well.

As we met at the shop door, he wasted no time in stating his purpose in coming. "I heard that invitation," he said, "but I did not go forward. However, I want to do something about it now." What a joy it was to kneel right there in the shop before the Lord, once more affirm the way of salvation, then pray with him! He left the shop, head held high with a new direction in life!

That was the beginning of a strong moving of the Spirit. Some asked for prayer in their homes; others came forward during services to make a public commitment to Christ. Still others did not know just when it happened but knew for certain that they were children of the King. Often after services various ones stayed around to study scripture and ask questions. There were so many things they could not understand, especially in a Bible written only in Cree. With my English Bible, a limited use of the Saulteaux language and an abundance of God's grace, a good grasp of the Word was developed with them.

Those who did not want to get caught by the moving of this Spirit seemed to keep their distance. At times even the drinking seemed to be carried on in a more secretive way. It was very obvious that the power of God was at work. By 1970 more than 90 percent of the adults had taken a step of faith in an effort to follow the way of the Lord. But this was not an easy road. For some the price was too high and they returned to their former way of life. To look out the window and see some of these new believers sprawl headlong on the sand in a drunken stupor was a heartrending experience! Even then we were reminded time and again how the Lord had patience with us and was still inviting the person involved to come and receive forgiveness. In spite of the relapse, of shorter or longer duration, the effects of a changed life always remained with them.

Growth in all of us comes at various times and at varied stages. The experience in Pauingassi was no different. I recall

one of the men talking with me about his smoking. This was even before he became a Christian. Three times he had a dream about tobacco which was much in line with their tradition; each time he had made a promise not to stop smoking. Now that he had taken a step of faith, he was having problems with these promises. I did not talk to him about it because I felt that true growth in faith would reveal this to him. He would probably also resent any admonition. Instead of giving up smoking, he continued secretly.

Quite some time later, on a Sunday morning after the service, I was listening to one of the women share part of her pilgrimage. When this brother with the dreams came walking by, he listened for a short time, then said, "That is much like it was in my life. I had promised three times in a dream that I would never stop smoking. In the meantime I have realized that, for me as a Christian, it is not right to smoke, so I have quit." It is hard to describe the rejoicing that took place within me. How delighted I was that I had not entered his domain in a tactless and insensitive fashion. The authority of the Spirit and the claims of an age-old tradition needed to be dealt with. I thanked the Lord for the patience I had been given. The question at stake was settled in this brother's mind once and for all by the conviction of the Spirit.

St. John, the brother who had taken a stand in the shop, was growing by leaps and bounds. It was a real joy to be around him. One day he was back at the shop again, but this time in a rather sombre mood. He thought he had really learned to understand and know what faith in God was all about. Now he was blank and felt he knew nothing. I shared with him that this was not abnormal and that, according to the Word, God is with us through all of this. With that encouragement, his eyes lightened again and he left with a real spring in his step.

Along with growth in the life of faith also came the step of baptism, a public confession of an inward change. Initially three persons were baptized, later another seven, then two more and so on. As time went on, four men with great potential for leadership emerged. They were Jacob and St. John Owen (brothers) and Spoot (James) and David Owen (brothers). We spent much time with them in study and practice to prepare them for eventually taking over leadership of the church. As they learned to understand the Cree Bible, we encouraged them to translate it

The first three people to be baptized at Pauingassi were Lucy and Jacob Owen and St. John Owen seen here with Henry Neufeld.

σCʿ bᓀbᐊCᐃ•C• ∧- ᒐᒪᐢ bᑐᐢ ᐊaᒪᐁᐃ•ᑭᒪ

into Saulteaux immediately for the sake of those who came to the services but could not understand Cree.

Difficulties arose when some said that the Christians had merely accepted the way of the "white man." However, the Christians always very firmly stated that they had accepted the Lord, not a "white man." If this were not so, they said, they would be in real trouble if this "white man" were to leave. How we praised the Lord for that firm conviction!

Further ridicule came from believers in surrounding communities over the mode of baptism. It was so sad and devastating. They adamantly insisted that life begins in the water. Some even went so far as to say that when one goes into the water (baptism by immersion), one is beyond sinning. The pouring mode of baptism for adults, which was in practice at Pauingassi, was considered to be a mere dry cleaning job. This created a great deal of inward tension for the new believers.

By 1968 the Mennonite Pioneer Mission Board thought that the church in Pauingassi had developed to the point where local Christians should take greater leadership. Perhaps it would be good for us to move to Little Grand Rapids to help there. This posed a serious threat to the church and to the whole community

at Pauingassi. They did not feel prepared to continue on their own, even though they were assisting with various aspects of the services. At one point when we were leaving for holidays, one of them commented, "If you would have let us lead the singing we would now know how."

With that in mind we began to take turns so they could gain valuable experience. In the beginning stages it was very difficult since not everyone was gifted in singing. Yet there always seemed to be others to help carry the tune. Singing never did become very strong but the sharing of the Word did.

The request to pull up stakes and leave also produced a great deal of difficulty for us as a family. Our reactions were strongest during the time we were sawing and transporting lumber to build a mission house at Little Grand. The physical demands of this job were enormous since 3,000 metres of lumber needed to be transported by water through one set of rapids and around another. It seemed a formidable task but it was achieved. At times I felt I would never want to be part of such an undertaking again, yet it gave me a feeling of outstanding accomplishment.

This physical strain coupled with the emotional pressure of pulling up roots from a place that had been home for so many years, was almost too much for us to handle. Even our children protested by saying, "Why don't they let us live where we want to live?" After many hours of soul searching for God's will, we were able to say "yes" to such a move.

Our proposed leaving certainly did not meet with the people's approval because they had not experienced this before; there was no precedent of local church leadership. Their plea was that we postpone our leaving for at least two years. That was accepted as the Lord's will expressed through the people and took care of our move for the time being. But the ties which had held us so tightly all this time were being loosened. From then on an accelerated program to phase out our resident assignment was set in motion.

In the fall of 1969 we announced that we would leave the community the following year. This gave all of us time to prepare. At times we purposely left the settlement to give them the opportunity to conduct services by themselves. They participated not only in the services at Pauingassi but also at Little Grand Rapids where I had been going every Sunday afternoon for a number of years.

In the winter of 1961 and 1962 the use of the mission plane had greatly simplified transportation. For our last winter in Pauingassi we were able to rent a plane. It not only facilitated our transportation, as the mission plane had; it also gave further opportunity to reach out into other communities and give the leaders greater exposure and fellowship with other Christians.

In spite of the conscious effort to phase ourselves out of the church leadership and let the local church take over, we felt there would be need for resident support staff for a period of time. This was provided by Vic and Norma Funk who were willing to move in on that basis. Even the expectation of this assistance proved to be of great help as the community prepared for our departure and their arrival.

4
Elbow Grease

The invitation to work under the umbrella of Mennonite Pioneer Mission (MPM) in 1955 entailed the major task of putting a roof over our heads. This was in stark contrast to simply occupying the teacherage as we had done during our three years at Moose Lake. I had never even built a biffy (outhouse) before; now we had dreams of living in a log cabin. In those days we seemed to have an endless supply of drive and energy. We were young and no task appeared to be too large. That energetic and adventurous spirit carried us through many situations.

The easiest way of meeting our needs would have been to fly in the required lumber and build a frame house, but that would have been out of place among all the existing log buildings in the settlement. Many of these buildings had low walls, flat roofs and dirt floors which were regularly covered with fresh spruce boughs. The flat roof was not always waterproof. Consequently, during spring thaw or in rainy weather it would leak, making it difficult to stay dry inside. Most of the one-room houses were about four by four metres or smaller, just big enough for an airtight heater, a small self-constructed table, a few wooden stools and several bed rolls neatly stacked in one corner. Our aim was to build a home at a level which would be attainable by the community but would also be an improvement in their standard of living. So all our buildings, even the doghouse and playhouse, were of log construction. The only exception was the outhouse. We needed to erect one as soon as we got there so we did not spend much time at it.

The MPM Board decided to fly in materials such as doors, windows and plywood for interior finish, as well as a sawmill to produce the dimensional lumber for our own needs and those of the local community.

Two volunteers from southern Manitoba were willing to come to Pauingassi for July and August to get the project started, to set up the mill and get up the logs for the house and the chapel-

Solomon Pascal and St. John Owen carrying logs to the shore. The logs were then floated 8 to 10 kilometres and carried to the sawmill.

ᓀᓂᒪᐠ ᓀᑲᐧ ᑲᑐᐢ ᒥᑎᑯᐟ ᐁᓭᓀᐱᐃᐧᑐᐧᐦ-

The sawmill which Mennonite Pioneer Mission flew in from southern Manitoba to produce dimensional lumber for log buildings.

ᐁᑕᐢ ᑭᐳᒋᕀᓂᐣˣ

school. Because of the size of the buildings, 6.7 metres by 7.3 metres, much bigger logs were required than had been used to build community homes. However, with the help of local men, these buildings became a reality. Logs 10 metres long and 25 to 30 centimetres at the butt end take a lot of energy to transport when no horse or tractor is available. They had to be floated 8 to 10 kilometres. To say the least, shoulders drooped when we were carrying these logs anywhere from ten to twenty metres to the shore for floating, then from the shore up to the building site.

Finally on September 30, 1955, Edwin Friesen of Homewood, Manitoba, and I were able to go in on the mail plane to get the buildings closed up before snowfall. Not knowing that we could have had the plane drop us off at Pauingassi, we disembarked at Little Grand. Alex Owen was there shopping so he took us along to Pauingassi, but this meant carrying all our boxes two kilometres to his canoe. It seemed as if our arms stretched at least 10 centimetres by the time we got to the top of the rapids. It was most interesting that Alex considered me as one of them; he let me sit in the bottom of the canoe as they did, but he gave Edwin an honoured position by making a soft cushion-like seat with fresh spruce boughs for him.

The small tent which the men had used was there exactly as they had left it. This was to be our home for the following days and nights. It proved to be well ventilated, requiring all the clothing we could muster to keep us warm during the night. In the morning we used the clear, cool water by the shore for a quick face wash. This took care of any sleep that may have lingered.

On the first evening at Pauingassi we stored our extra supplies in a corner of the house because there was not enough room in the tent. During the night the dogs barked continuously. We wondered why they wouldn't stop. In the morning we noticed that one of the dogs had fallen into the basement and could not get out. This was very fortunate because we had stored a picnic ham plus other food in the house.

A few days later we nearly cried when we realized that a dog had gotten into the tent and run off with the picnic ham after all. This, however, was replaced a short time later with a piece of moose meat. While we were working at the house, a moose appeared just across the narrows. With good hunters around

there was little chance for it to escape.

As many men as possible were put on the job to get the building closed up. Although my Saulteaux was very limited, we were able to communicate enough to get our work done. This is where we got to know each other as we worked side by side at the same job.

There was great rejoicing when our wives arrived in the middle of October and we were able to move into our log house. They also brought the rest of the supplies we needed for the winter. It was important for our family unit, which included our little 14-month-old daughter, to be there together so we could give each other support.

Although the days were becoming shorter, the gas lamp provided enough light so we could work twelve- and fourteen-hour days in an effort to get necessities done. At times we had to operate the sawmill by flashlight. Simply everything had to be made whether we had experience or not. In most cases there was no opportunity to ask for advice because it took too long to get a response with the post office 16 air-kilometres away and with mail service once a week. However, the local people had gleaned an abundance of experiential knowledge from their life of hunting and gathering. It was great to learn from them! I marvelled again and again at the amount of physical strength they had developed and the wisdom they had gained in their struggle for survival.

As the main part of our own physical plant was nearing completion we wanted to get started with local improvements, as originally planned. In order to embark on a full-scale improvement program, we made application to Indian Affairs for assistance. As a mission we were not able to carry the cost of such a venture. Since the people lived off the reserve, the Department refused support of any kind. Therefore, in order to get the project under way, we requested that each person who wanted lumber should contribute to the operation of the mill. At the same time, we continued to pressure the Department for help. It was only after we wrote to Ottawa requesting help that we received a positive response.

The change in government in 1958 brought a change in policy. Officials who came out went away impressed with the program that we had developed. From then on, a very positive relationship with the Department developed. That year, roofing,

Elna and Henry with one-year-old Carol just before they moved to Pauingassi in 1955.

ᐊᓇᒪᐁᐃᐢ ᑭᒪ ᐃᐢᐊᐢᐣ ᑫᕆᐅᑦ

Henry and Elna Neufeld's house in Pauingassi.

ᓂᐊᐢ ᑲᐃᑲᓂᓇᐣ

windows and doors for ten homes were sent up. Each person was responsible for his own logs to build the walls and for sawing lumber but the Department paid for the operation of the mill.

The many hours we spent working at the mill each summer were hard but rewarding, even though there were problems with some who found it difficult to follow a schedule. Never having operated a mill before created its own fun. When I made a wrong adjustment, which resulted in an oval-shaped babbitt bearing, I had to send it out for repair. Later we changed over to ball bearings which needed only occasional servicing. On another occasion the mandril shifted and caused the blade to heat. I never would have believed that a 91 centimetre blade could flop like a dishrag! I stopped it as fast as I could only to find out later that this was the worst possible thing to do. By letting it run, it would have cooled evenly. Now I had to send it out to get it balanced. Such mistakes usually meant waiting quite a while before we could resume the sawing.

Departmental policy changes during the sixties brought about a shift from constructing log houses to building frame homes. To create employment we wanted to continue sawing the dimensional lumber and ship in only the finishing material. However, since we did not have a planer, Ottawa insisted for a number of years that everything had to be shipped in. This was very disappointing since we did have the mill and local residents were much in need of employment and eager to work. For community housing, a carpenter was sent out to work with the men to erect the frame buildings.

In 1970, our last summer there, I was offered the contract to saw rough lumber and build two houses. I accepted. To make the program work, I hired a number of men to produce the required lumber and brought in a carpenter from southern Manitoba to do the construction with local help. Under this plan payday came every Friday which worked out very well for all involved. Never had a project gone so smoothly because everyone knew where he stood financially. That system was talked about for years to come. It also paved the way for local men to take the contract in future years. They did their own building with minimal inspection from the Department. Good basic work habits and working together over the years developed the confidence and trust to take over this kind of program. Indian Affairs was always very

pleased with the way the Pauingassi men handled the local building projects. All in all the mill was a major component of community development which paid many dividends. In total we produced about 43,000 board metres. If we would have access to proper equipment this would have been a small job, but with manpower only it was a huge task.

In 1968 about 3,000 board metres of lumber were needed to build the mission house on the reserve at Little Grand Rapids. Indian Affairs had a sawmill on the reserve that was identical to ours, but we were not able to make satisfactory arrangements to use it. The only option left was to do the sawing at Pauingassi and float the lumber 20 kilometres downstream to the building site. Except for the two sets of rapids this would not have posed any major problem.

Producing the lumber went very well. Eighteen men were hired on August 8, 1968, to do the logging six kilometres down the lake. In three-and-a-half days they had just under 300 logs at the mill ready to saw. After sawing all the logs we realized we were still short of lumber. Most of the men had already moved out to harvest wild rice, but finally we were able to hire the few remaining men to cut the needed logs. When I lifted a heavier load than usual, I pulled a muscle in my back which slowed me up for a while. Dave Friesen, who lived at Little Grand with his wife Doris that summer, was of tremendous help in getting plans for this whole project under way. We regretted that they had to leave before it was finished since planning the transportation of lumber on my own proved to be a very difficult.

To transport the lumber in a manageable way, we strapped the boards in bundles that could be handled by two people. These were piled criss-cross on two rafts. It took all day to float them the 13 kilometres to the rapids. The next day we sent the rafts through the upper rapids one by one. They resembled a majestic steamboat as they went through. The many hours of searching and praying for a way to get the product to its destination were showing results.

At the big rapids we had anticipated sending through one bundle of lumber at a time and collecting it down below, *if* it did not get stuck in the falls. However, I realized that the bundles would probably disintegrate on their way down the swift falls. Then it occurred to me that a TD14 caterpillar tractor was working on an airstrip nearby. I checked if the driver might be

interested and willing to pull the rafts out of the water and across the one-half kilometre portage. To my great joy he consented! I was walking on cloud nine that day!

The rafts easily slipped on to the portage despite the fact that they weighed nine metric tons. Such power nearly boggled my mind after having done all that work by manpower only! On the portage, however, the rafts broke up and we had to rebuild them into four new ones. Getting them back into the water was treacherous in the swift current. However, we accomplished this and then floated them three kilometres across Family Lake to the building site. We had lost only about a dozen planks. Under the circumstances it was a fabulously big job. But by God's grace it was completed. What a feeling of accomplishment! Never before had there been a caterpillar in Little Grand during the summer. The Lord knew of our need and supplied the heavy equipment at the right time.

These were some of the big jobs, but there were a thousand and more little ones that also needed to be done. As already mentioned, everything had to be handmade. To make and repair knick-knacks was a special pleasure of mine. It was both enjoyable and relaxing for me to make some special items around the house and at the shop. One such special was a water pump taken from a washing machine to pump water from the bathtub into a pail. This was necessary since we had no drainage system for the winter.

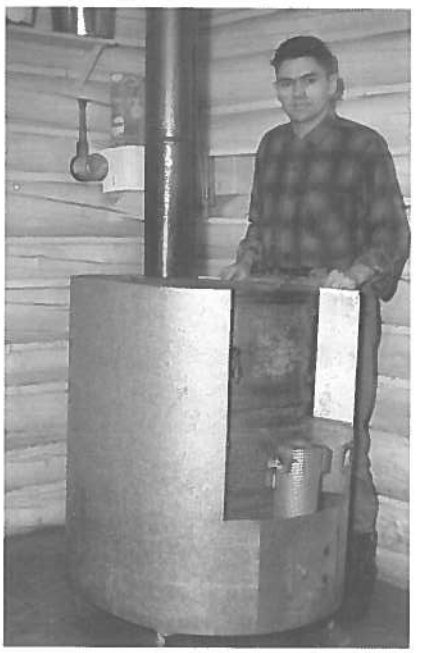
Another special was an old water tank hooked up to the woodstove to give us a steady supply of hot water. Often we did not have the required supplies or materials on hand but soon realized that even a piece of macaroni worked well as an insulator on a damaged radio wire. Improvising gave much satisfaction!

There were also endless requests for repairs from the local people. Gas cans, guns, traps, washtubs and many other things, that in the past would have been discarded, now were brought for repair. The most difficult job was trying to solder a washtub whose cracks had been plastered shut with sunlight soap to keep it from leaking excessively. Solder just does not want to mix with that guck!

We looked at various options to meet the need for electrical power. A 110-volt power plant, which could run any appliance or tool, would have been the easiest route to go, except for the

large expense for maintenance. In our search for a solution, a 32-volt wind charger, which had become obsolete in southern Manitoba, and a set of glass batteries were donated. This produced enough power for lights at the house and the chapel, provided there was enough wind to keep the batteries charged. It meant being very punctual in turning out lights. We soon realized that the charger tower was too low with all the trees around so we had to get a generator as backup. We were also able to locate various 32-volt electric motors and an electric iron which served our needs very well. We even came across a 32-volt welder that had not been used since hydro came into southern Manitoba. This opened many possibilities for repairing and manufacturing new things. Since I had never welded before, I initially produced lumpy beads which looked as if ducks had flown over. After some practise even that improved!

When I built a stove from a large gas drum, I knew many requests for stoves would follow. Eventually, with the large number of demands, I set the condition that if someone wanted a stove made or repairs done, we would work at it together. For some it worked well and was a good learning process; others turned away.



Henry with the stove he built from a large gas drum.

ᐊᓇᒪᐁᐃᑉ ᑭᒪ

ᐳᑕᐊᑉᓇᐱᑯᖅ ᐁᓂᐸᐃᑉ ᐧ

Many times I wondered if there would ever be an end to the demands. Would they ever request spiritual help? Again and again we needed to remind ourselves that our responsibility was to be faithful and let Christ be seen in us and through us, even at the end of a welding rod. After coming back from our first sabbatical in summer 1963, we did see a change. What a joy it was to leave the activities of the shop and spend time dealing with spiritual needs, with concerns about the soul.

One specific incident occurred when David Owen came over to get some welding done. While I was examining the pipe which he had brought, he said, "There is another thing I would like to check with you. The night before last my wife commented that it was time we did something about taking a stand, but that it would be difficult for only one of us to do so. Last night she said the same thing."

I responded, "So you have both decided to give your lives to Christ?" His answer was a clear, positive "Yes."

After finishing the welding job, we went to their home and experienced a blessed time. They both prayed for forgiveness in a humble way.

It was very obvious that if we had not been willing to deal with the many physical requests during the first half of our stay, we would not have seen the spiritual revival that occurred during the second half. In order to successfully reach an individual with the Good News one must deal with the whole person. No one can be pushed into taking a stand; one must be loved into the kingdom.

5
Healing Ministry

To live far away from a medical practitioner does not mean that one does not get sick or that one is not in need of medical help. It simply means that a person must become alert and be prepared to take care of everyday needs as they arise. There are many home remedies that are very adequate; at the same time it is necessary to be open to special needs that may occur.

We soon realized that natural medicines formed an integral part of the Native people's existence. Men and women with special gifts took care of medical needs according to the customs of their culture. These have been very adequate and in many cases are still being used, but they also have their limitations. We saw a need to supplement their methods with a scientific approach to bring healing to various ailments.

They also had their evil medicine which is used to retaliate, to overpower or even destroy someone else. There is no question about its power in the lives of those who believe in it.

During our early years, we received a one-day visit every two months or so by the nurse from Pine Falls, 177 air kilometres away. In the meantime many odds and ends needed to be taken care of. To help with this situation, she supplied us with some basic medications including antibiotics for injection and oral application. These we dispensed according to her instructions, based on the final diagnosis we would have to make on the spot. The demand for this service accelerated very rapidly since there were many ailments among the people. Contact with the doctor in Pine Falls was very difficult in the beginning. Messages could be sent out only via Morse code from Little Grand Rapids and that only if atmospheric conditions were favourable. Imagine my dismay at times to find signals completely out! That was very disheartening during emergencies.

The young people of Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg came to our rescue by supplying us with a two-way radio. It was with overwhelming joy in late fall of 1956 that I came home from the post office with that prized possession! I was as proud

Henry at the two-way radio which was supplied by Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. It greatly improved communication with the South and with the medical staff at Little Grand and beyond.

ᐊᓇᒪᐁᐃ· ᑭᒪ ᐁᑭᑭᑐ-

as a four-year-old receiving his first train when I strung up the antenna, connected the set to a battery and prepared to press the transmitter button. What a thrill to realize the operator picked up my signal loud and clear!

It was the beginning of a new era when we were able, via two-way radio, to contact our office in Winnipeg, our family at home and, especially, to receive urgently needed medical advice. We could now check for instructions on special cases with the doctor or call for a plane if necessary. It was a joy to work with the doctor because he recognized our lay position and gave advice accordingly. We always had the assurance that he would support us, even when we made a wrong diagnosis. Neither of us had any medical training.

We had already realized that the mortality rate among infants was around 33 percent. This became very alarming as one baby after another weakened and died. We did what we could but found it very disheartening! It seemed to be a survival of the fittest. Eventually we realized that conditions which led to severe dehydration caused the major problems. To feed an infant water during a time of diarrhea was an absolute no-no in their culture because they felt they were starving the child. To use a cold

compress on a child in order to bring down a high fever was considered inhumane. A clash of values needed to be dealt with.

One cold Sunday morning in March I was asked to visit baby Job. He had a fever so I gave him penicillin by injection according to the general instructions I had received. Being worried about him, I tried to call the doctor, only to find that there was no signal on the radio. This could be the case for a few hours or for a few days. This time it took nearly a week! Every day I spent hours trying to get through but to no avail.

In the meantime, a woman in dire need of medical attention was brought in from the trapline via dog team. Now there were two patients but no signal. Finally on Friday morning, the signal picked up for about ten minutes, just long enough to get a message to the doctor. He immediately sent a plane with a nurse on board to evacuate both of them. When the plane arrived, only the woman consented to go. The parents refused to release their baby. I wept in desperation. The following week the baby died.

In 1957, Medical Services built a nursing station at Little Grand which brought relief in various ways. They also installed a two-way radio. Nursing staff began to make regular monthly

Charlie George and Janet Owen at their child's coffin. Infant mortality rate was around 33 percent.

ᐅᒥᓂᐣ ᓂᑲ· ᒣᓵ′ ᐅᓂᒃᓂᓂᐊ·ᐠ ᑲᐊ·ᓂᐊᐊ·-

visits to Pauingassi bringing a source of help much closer. Certain cases could now be sent to the nursing station which reduced our responsibilities considerably.

In spite of all this, the demands were many and much time was spent ministering to the sick. When baby Lucy was reported ill, I immediately felt she needed more attention than I could give. I urged the parents to get her to the nursing station. Even when I offered to take them there, they felt they wanted to wait till the next day. I felt the urgency of making use of a good day as far as the weather was concerned; we had just entered the month of November and the water was still clear of excessive ice. But they declined and baby Lucy never saw the morrow. By about 4:30 p.m. that day she breathed her last.

With several local midwives around, most of the babies were delivered on the settlement and only cases with complicated histories were flown out to the hospital at Pine Falls. However, this changed rapidly with pressure by Medical Services to fly them all out.

In the spring of 1957 a number of families had moved out of the community for the trapping season. Several of the young fellows frequently paddled back to the settlement for supplies. It was a long strenuous trip with a number of portages to make but, tough as it was, they thought nothing of it. This was a way of life for them. Not wanting to paddle the 32 kilometres it would take to go to Little Grand and back, they checked if they could get a ride with me that afternoon.

While we were discussing the matter, suddenly, without a moment's notice, one of them fell over and lay on the floor incoherent and throwing up. He was buckling up and did not want to be disturbed. Try as we might, there was no way to get him to respond. After fifteen minutes he showed some response so they carried him home. Two hours later I checked with the boys on his condition. He had not regained consciousness but also had no further convulsions. I then phoned the doctor and shared my observations with him. He ordered a plane immediately to pick up the patient.

After the doctor completed a thorough checkup, he called back to inform us that it was a burst blood vessel in the brain and that surgery would be necessary. The operation was successful and this fellow returned home after sufficient recovery had been made.

Epidemics, like the measles outbreak in the summer of 1959, kept us busy all day, going from house to house to give penicillin shots upon instructions from the doctor in an effort to prevent complications. Several forty-year-old adults also came down with the measles and were very sick.

One summer day in the mid-sixties while I was working at the sawmill, a father came along very alarmed about his daughter who had a fishhook in the fleshy part of her thumb. She and her older brother had been trying to fish with a string and a lure. She got hold of the lure and, as her brother gave the line a pull, she was hooked.

Inside the house I quickly diagnosed the situation. Because of the barb, there was no way of just pulling it out. I injected some local anaesthetic to freeze the surrounding area. Meanwhile, the father was very uptight about what might happen. With a regular pair of pliers I pushed the hook through to expose the barb. Having done this I was able to cut it off with wire cutters. With the barb gone, the rest of the hook could be pulled out with ease. As the hook emerged, the father let out a deep sigh and exclaimed, "I did not know you had all that stuff to do such a job!" After I cleaned and bandaged the thumb, they gratefully went on their way.

One November day in 1969, a young fellow about 18 years old, went for a walk in the bush with his 22-calibre rifle. Suddenly I was called to see him. He had received a gunshot in his leg just above the knee. It was very obvious that the bullet had entered one side of the leg and gone out the other side. He claimed he had fallen down and the gun had gone off accidentally. I cleaned the two holes and bandaged them. Not knowing exactly what would be best for him I contacted the nurse at the nursing station to report the incident. I was instructed to give him penicillin for a number of days to avoid the possibility of infection.

As I daily took care of him I noticed that a numbness, which had started in his toes, was gradually moving up and beyond his knee. The bone seemed to be intact; there was no bleeding; and he had been able to move his toes right after the accident. According to the nurses, everything should have been fine. When I was still uneasy about the numbness, the nurses ventured out by boat to come and have a look at the leg. Only the main part of the lake was still open water so it was a very cold trip for

Henry with his medicine bag. The nearest nursing station was at Little Grand Rapids so Henry and Elna were often called on to provide medical services for minor—and not so minor—ailments.

ᐊᓇᒪᐁᐃ• ᑭᒪ ᐁᐸᐸᓇᑲᒋᐊᓕ ᐅᑕᑯᓗ

them. I greatly appreciated their cooperation and concern. After checking him thoroughly, they said he was in good shape. It would only take time for this to clear out of his system. The bullet had missed bone, tendon and arteries. He suffered no aftereffects.

A call to visit another young fellow revealed that he had a bullet wound in his abdomen to the right of his navel. Further examination disclosed another hole in the back between the hip bone and ribs. This was rather alarming. I could not help wondering what the inside might look like. Both visible holes were clean cut, obviously made by a 22-calibre bullet.

After cleaning the holes and placing a bandage over them, I reported the accident to the doctor who sent a plane to have him evacuated. In short order he was back and up and around as usual. The report revealed that the bullet had slithered between the intestines leaving no sign of damage on the inside. How fortunate! Some years later, however, he was found in the closet of his house where he had hanged himself.

Many more incidents of this nature could be shared. In fact, by 1968 the demands for medical calls became so great that we were not able to handle the situation. In desperation, we

concluded that some changes would have to take place. There were just too many requests to check minor ailments so we decided to limit house calls to absolute emergencies. I shared this deep frustration with one of the elders. As a result everyone seemed to be aware of our dilemma. A few distasteful experiences followed but the demands were decreased by 65 to 70 percent. The rest we could handle. On our own we could not have facilitated such a change but by sharing our frustration, the people responded. For this we were indeed grateful.

6
Liquid Spirits

"Our way of life in the past has been adequate," were the words of Alex Owen. He alluded to a way of life that was free from alcohol. The old people confirmed that earlier there had been no drink on the settlement. Somewhere, somehow, alcohol had found its way into their way of life until it became a very active ingredient, a very devastating force, especially during weekends and special holidays like Christmas and New Years.

During the early years drink was brewed at home from staple foods like potatoes, beans, tomatoes, raisins, sugar and yeast. Although the alcohol content could not have been very high since it was consumed within 24 hours of being mixed, it did create a lot of intoxication, depending on the nature of the person.

At those times when the law tried to deal with the matter of drink, they fined or incarcerated individuals for brewing the drink, not for being intoxicated. Later, with easier access to planes, trips were often made out to the nearest hotel, about 128 kilometres away, to get a supply of liquor. Naturally this depleted the resources that should have been used to provide for the family. Drink brought temporary relief from the rigorous life of hunting and gathering and was an "enjoyable social event;" but, when it was gone, it left misery and emptiness which had to be relieved by the next round, as soon as there was enough money to make or buy more.

H.W. Gibson's description of alcohol certainly fits the style of life as we experienced it:

> I am the greatest criminal in history. I have killed more men than have fallen in all the wars of the world. I have turned men into brutes. I have made millions of homes unhappy. I have changed many promising young men into hopeless parasites. I destroy the weak and weaken the strong. I make the wise man a fool and I ensnare the innocent. I have ruined millions and shall try to ruin millions more. I am alcohol." (source unknown)

The demands of the wilderness were such that the people became geniuses in every possible situation while out travelling by boat. We had heard of several drownings but never when the travellers were sober. We always found it amazing to see how well the do's and don'ts of travelling with the whole family were learned. Children did not romp around in the canoe; that came later on land.

They certainly had their differences and at times used harsh words to clear the air but they never resorted to fighting. The latter came to the foreground only when drink was involved. We were often called to bandage up wounds that were incurred during such brawls.

One specific incident was a fight involving several people. One of them came to our house for immediate help. He had three punctures in his head which was throbbing with pain and bleeding. I bandaged up the punctures and suggested he go home to sleep.

One of the others wanted to get away in case further trouble would erupt so he left for his trapline the next morning. There he ran into problems. His finger, which had been seriously bitten during the fight, quickly became infected. (From this experience

Jacob and Lucy Owen going hunting with their son Dick and grandchildren Lambert and Sara Pascal.

ᑲᒪᒃ ᐱᓪ ᑭᐦᐃᐦᓂᒃ ᓂᐢᑎ ᐅᔨᑕᐃ ᐊᐢᑕᐸᒥᒃᑲᐊᐦᑎ

I learned that a human bite is much more serious than a dog bite). He realized the plight of a finger which was two or three times its normal size so he returned to the settlement for help. As I tried to move the finger back and forth we could hear the bone crunching as though it had been severed by the bite.

For over a week I gave him a daily injection of penicillin and took care of the finger. When the swelling finally went down, one side of the finger revealed a strange white spot. Checking it closely I realized that it was a hard chunk of puss that had formed due to the heavy infection. When I removed the puss from his finger, he jokingly commented that it must be the tooth of the person who did the biting. Finally the finger healed but not before it had caused him a great deal of agony.

There were times when only the children and one woman were sober. For some reason she never got involved. It was not easy for her but she never broke down and always had the fortitude to say "no." The children roamed around aimlessly with little to do. The attention they coveted from their parents was not available when they most needed it. This often led them into trouble as well. Certainly the example set by the parents was no asset.

The desire to experience a change in life was there, but the power to overcome the evil seemed so impossible. For some, not even a tragedy in the family or a serious illness made any difference. For others such an experience brought a temporary halt to the drinking and gave them time to think and deliberate the consequences.

As the Word was shared year after year, an alternative was being provided: a way out, life on a higher plane, the power to say "no." When a step of faith was taken, they had a new purpose in life because of Christ. Then they also had money to pay bills and acquire various extras. But they needed a functional substitute to take care of free time and surplus money and to provide them with constructive social activities. Sewing and cooking classes developed when we were able to get used sewing machines and wood-burning cookstoves; these times together often became valuable replacements for the time spent drinking.

The more we got involved, the more we realized the need for friendship evangelism to help change the situation in which each person found him or herself. They needed stability to their new step of faith and a base from which "no" could be a legitimate

Janet Owen at the cookstove. At sewing and cooking classes the women learned new ways of providing for their families.

ᖃᓄᐃ ᐁᐱᑕᐱᒃᑲᐃᖅ-

answer when drink was offered.

At least 65 percent of all illness was directly or indirectly a result of drink. Thus a tremendous amount of suffering was self-inflicted by those who were bound by their own habits. At first the percentage seemed so much higher than the national average. However, as we checked the statistics, we realized that the situation in Pauingassi was very much in line with what was happening in the rest of society.

7
Learning to Understand

To try to reach into the intimate chamber of a person's soul by learning his or her language rather than merely trying to communicate via an interpreter was not a hard decision for us to make, even though some discouraged us from wasting any effort in learning the language. To use an interpreter or "interrupter," as we sometimes called him, was only second best.

After three years of teaching under the Department of Education, we realized how important it was not only for the children to achieve fluency in English, but also for us to become fluent in Saulteaux so we could reach a rejected people. This was a way of saying to them, "What you have is okay. We want to know your language and your culture." There was also a need for being a go-between with the outside world. The only way to do this was to take language study very seriously. The people soon realized this and were most accommodating, even though we made many grammatical errors in our efforts.

The year at Little Grand Rapids gave us a good start on vocabulary and in learning to understand concepts and values that were different from those in our own culture. The basic linguistics course we were able to take in the summer of 1955 gave us some skills to work with during the coming years.

Anyone going on a foreign mission assignment spends a year or two at full-time language study, but that was not an option for us. When we arrived in Pauingassi, Mr. Winter was just around the corner and we desperately needed to get a roof over our heads. Although this kept us from formal study, working with the men gave an excellent opportunity to listen and to practise the language.

In the early stages we were not aware of any available grammatical literature, but after a while we had access to a Saulteaux-French grammar book. Although we did not know French, it did give us some direction. Work with an informant was very beneficial to acquire new vocabulary. When he was not available, we experienced frustration because we were anxious to

advance as rapidly as possible.

Elna was much more conscious of the grammatical structure than I was and wanted to get this down pat before she used the language. I found it easier to play around with vocabulary whether it was right or not. Our basic aim, however, was to learn all we could and then start to speak. We soon realized this was the wrong approach. We needed to get out and constantly use what we had learned so that the language would become a part of us. Regular contact with the people also gave us good access to the language.

In playing around with words there is the danger of getting into trouble. In our presence the people did not usually laugh at our stupid twisted mistakes but in our absence I'm sure they did. On one occasion one of the women did burst out laughing! I was checking with her whether or not she had some cod-liver oil to give her children but for some reason I used the word for motor oil. That was just too funny to keep sober. The moment I had said it, I realized my mistake. So we both had a good laugh! We soon realized that a laugh or a smile is the same in any language and also helps break tension.

As time went by and our communication in Saulteaux improved, we could share many things with the people. This was very rewarding for us. In our home, the children's first language was German. As they played with the neighbouring children, they quickly started to pick up Saulteaux; and they learned their English from storybooks and from hearing us converse.

In October 1958, when two of the Northern Light Gospel Missions workers dropped in for a brief visit, they shared in Saulteaux with the children in school. That gave us new courage to try to move ahead; we saw light at the end of the tunnel. On July 17, 1959, one of these workers and his wife returned and shared God's message in Saulteaux without the aid of an interpreter. He also informed us that a two-week language course was to be taught at Pikangikum 96 air kilometres away. Our workload was heavy but, in spite of everything, the decision was made that I should take this course while Elna stayed home with the children. The Northern Light Missions people offered to come pick me up by plane so final arrangements were made on the spot. Locally the people found it hard to see me leave but, with the prospect of getting linguistic help, nothing could keep me home!

On August 3 the plane was there to pick me up; it brought me back on August 9. The course had been shortened to only one week but we had an excellent time of fellowship. Our only regret was that Elna had not been able to go.

I had been counselled during the course to let go and speak without any interpreter. With that encouragement and observing what the Northern Light people were doing, I took a leap of faith. As I met the interpreter at home, his first question was if I would need him for further language study. I assured him I had much more to learn but for services I would try to do without him. Praise the Lord for the words he gave to share the Good News in the Saulteaux language!

At first I needed to write out the lesson word for word. This was only for a short while. Then I changed to notes only which gave much greater satisfaction and more freedom.

On one occasion when an official from the Department of Indian Affairs came out for a meeting, I reluctantly agreed to interpret, since there was no one else around to do so. When one of the local leaders responded to the Department's presentation, among other things he referred to the baby talk which was being

Norman Quill, an informant from Pikangikum, helps Henry and Elna learn the Saulteaux language.

ᓄᐟᒪᐣ ᐅᐃᐧᑎᐊ ᑎᐊᓂᓇᐯᒧᓂᐧ

used for the meeting. In spite of the fact that this comment was directed at my limited vocabulary, I had a good laugh with them and carried on.

Even though many times our limitations will have come through as "baby talk," by God's grace we knew that the message was being heard. Elna and I were very grateful that both of us were able to see the day when we could freely share in their language. But it took fervent prayer for wisdom and understanding, strict discipline and determination to find time for language study.

In the meantime, lessons in Saulteaux grammar were being produced by a linguist in Minnesota. These proved to be of tremendous benefit. He was the instructor who helped us at the Pikangikum session and again in 1963 for a month of language study at Red Lake where both of us could participate. There was still so much that needed to be learned, but it was exciting to use what we had and realize we were being understood. Appreciation from the people for our efforts continued to be strong.

Even though the younger people studied English in school and others had contacts with English when they went out for medical care, Saulteaux still remained their dominant language.

8
Travelling Along

Natives in the northern areas of Canada have always lived along the shores of the natural waterways (rivers and lakes). This gave quick access for travel by boat in summer and by dog team in winter for hunting and trading purposes. They talk of their forefathers having gone as far north as Hudson Bay. Evidence of trade with the outside is the presence of the sea shell which was the emblem of the *Waapanoowin* (Medicine Lodge ceremony). I have seen various shapes, sizes and colours of shells, one of which, I am told, is found only in California but somehow made its way up the trade routes.

Pauingassi is connected to the Berens River system. Travel along this route used to be very extensive. In fact, before the time of the caterpillar train, all freight for the Hudson's Bay Company was transported by York boat and canoe up the Berens River from Lake Winnipeg. This is a distance of only about 160 kilometres but it contains 52 sets of rapids. I travelled the return distance once and made 75 portages. The trip was fabulous but I decided I would not like to make my living that way. To have moved into Pauingassi along this route would have been very rough so we were delighted to be able to fly in with the mail plane.

For our summer travel, we had purchased a 3.6-metre fibreglass boat, thinking it would be easy to portage wherever necessary. However, this soon proved to be a poor investment. The boat was rather shallow and, on one occasion, one of the local boys and I almost swamped. I then knew it was time to get something bigger for the family.

When the Hudson's Bay Company manager wanted to sell his 4.8-metre wooden boat with a 20-horse power motor, we wasted no time in buying it. This purchase was later sponsored by the Sterling Avenue Mennonite Church (now Sterling Mennonite Fellowship) in Winnipeg. It served us very well for ten years. Locally, the canoe, both paddling and freighter, was the sole means for summer travel. Although I had no problems travelling

with local people in a canoe, I did not feel at ease about having a canoe for our family. It tipped too easily!

For winter travel, we had our two legs. The settlement was less than two kilometres long so that created no problem. The local people always walked so it was natural that we would walk for our visitations as well. Trips to the store at Little Grand 16 kilometres away were another matter. Whatever we bought there also had to be carried home. Of the six times that I walked, once I hardly made it there and certainly didn't know how I could possibly make it back and carry the groceries besides. Fortunately a small plane happened to land at Little Grand that day, so I chartered it to take me home.

This experience emphasized the fact that we needed some type of vehicle. We were just not able to walk the distances which many of the local people walked. We considered getting a team of dogs like the natives used extensively but were discouraged from doing so because of the need for year-round feeding. We had one dog, Brownie, whom I used once in an emergency. He was willing to pull the toboggan home and performed very well. This was very exciting for me!

Andrew Bushie, Boniface Bushie and a friend paddling up the Berens River. Before the time of the caterpillar train, all freight was brought up the Berens River from Lake Winnipeg.

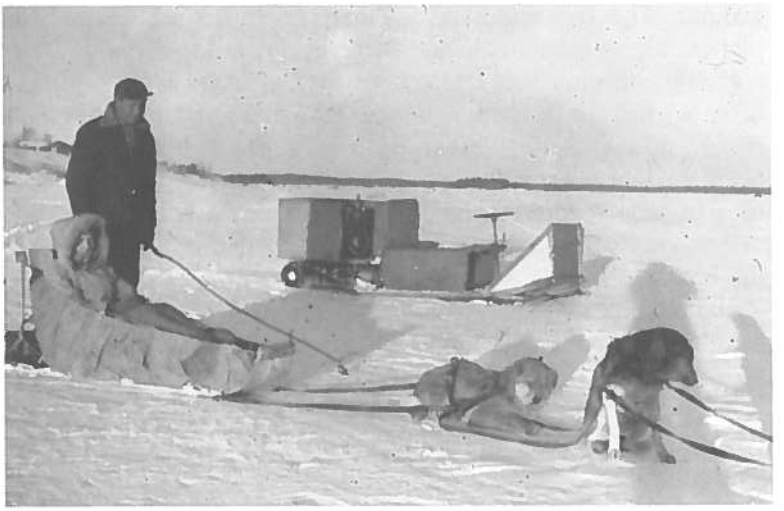
ᐊᑕᓂ ᐳᒋᐢ ᐊᐁᐧᑫᐧᐣ ᓴᑭᑕᐊᐧᐣᐟ ᐁᓯᐱᒥᐢᑲᐊᐧᐣ

In the mid 1950s the snowmobile was only in its beginning stages. Someone from the mission executive had seen a demonstration of a machine made in Lanigan, Saskatchewan. He was impressed and decided to supply us with one. At that time the caterpillar train did not come all the way to Pauingassi, so I had to pick up the machine at Little Grand in early March 1956. Parts of a five-kilometre trail had to be cleared to get through the bush so two of us walked with axe and saw in hand to clear the trail. It was with pride that I drove through the bush and anticipated driving the 11 kilometres across the lake. But that pride lasted only about half a kilometre on the lake. From there it refused to move. What a let-down to have to walk home instead of driving! My feet were literally dragging with exhaustion!

Although the snowmobile was a good form of transportation, we could not always depend on it getting us to our destination. One day the Hudson's Bay Company manager asked one of the older men, "How is Henry making out with his power toboggan?" He laughed and said, "Sometimes you see him go by like a rabbit. The next time he looks like a fool; he's pushing it!" That described our situation exactly! When the belt track got wet it shrank so much that it would not rotate. The cleats were also running metal on metal. This was during the days when the Russians were sending out their spaceship so I nicknamed the machine "Sputnik." I never got it into orbit, but it did get me to my destination many times. After it was rebuilt in the summer of 1957, it improved and we did get a fair amount of travel out of it, but maintenance was tedious.

Often while struggling with this machine my thoughts were up in the air. The dream to fly, conceived in 1954, was growing within me and I wondered, "Will I ever pilot a plane?"

As time went on and the need for better transportation increased, the mission executive promised to look into the matter of a better vehicle. We were certainly very single-minded: flying was the only improvement possible. With great anticipation we waited for correspondence after the board meeting. To our dismay they decided to buy us an Allis Chalmers B tractor with a half-track for both winter and summer use. They felt it could be used to haul logs up to the mill, but little did they realize how steep the hill was! We felt let down because they had not asked us for advice on what would be most useful. The tractor itself was fine but it was expensive and it would not adequately serve



John James Keeper with the nurse and dog team. In the background is the Neufelds' first snowmobile, nicknamed "Sputnik."

ᐅᑕᐸᐣ ᐅᑕᓇ*. ᐸᖏᐠ ᒪᐟᑭᑭᐃ•ᖁ• ᓂᑲᓇᐳᐃ
ᐁᐅᑕᐸᐊᓯᒣ•ᐊ•-

either of the purposes for which it was intended. I immediately got on the radio and asked for the decision to be reversed. This was accepted.

In early 1960 there was a great deal of correspondence about placing a boat and motor at the rapids so that commuting to the reserve might be improved. However, this plan never materialized. The boat was sent to Berens River by mistake and from there returned to the sender. In the meantime, some serious thoughts about flying were entertained.

Many aspects of using a plane, including the cost factor, were discussed. Records show that at times the mission treasury was empty; yet there was a constant need for expanding mission outreach in various ways. The toboggan had cost us a good deal not only in dollars but also in an enormous amount of energy and emotional strain. As a Mennonite people we had learned to live with the hazards of a highway, of the power take-off and other farm equipment but were not open to the hazards of a flying machine. Some said, "Now that we have a worker there we don't want to supply him with a plane so he can kill himself." Others considered it essential that we keep our feet on the

ground. The fact was, and is, that people do not die only in planes. Many were not aware that weekly, at times daily, I was travelling through very turbulent rapids that were no joke. I often wished for the opportunity to take these people through the rough side of such rapids. By God's grace I never had an accident, but because of being underpowered, I sometimes had to turn around mid-stream and go back down again. That was never comfortable, especially when our small children were in the boat.

Jake Gerbrandt and Johnny Kehler were flying farmers from southern Manitoba. They were deeply involved with flying around home as well as in the north. By the end of 1960 they had visited us about a dozen times. Their interest went far beyond flying and hunting; they were keenly interested in the welfare of body and soul, of getting the Good News out in the most efficient way possible. It was through their efforts that it became possible for me to take flying lessons during the summer of 1960. With no other responsibilities for that time, I completed the requirements in just over three weeks.

The dream of 1954, resulting from that unforgettable visit by our friend Johnny Kehler, had come true. We were very grateful to the Lord for leading in this direction. A plane brought with it its own problems but, considering the money involved, the opportunities were also much greater. Besides simplifying the trip to the reserve at Little Grand, it would also open the door to get out to the trapline where the people spent a good deal of time. Our deep desire was to meet them on that level. It would also create the possibility of touching base with other stations for fellowship.

In 1961 the Board of Mennonite Pioneer Mission voted to solicit special funds to purchase a plane for us. Jake and Johnny had a 90-horse power J-3 Piper with wheels and skis lined up for $2850. With the two of them as the main push behind this fund drive, the required amount was acquired in short order. On January 29 of that same year they had the joyous task of personally delivering aircraft KOV to us.

It was just before dusk when two small planes flew over our house at low altitude. We immediately recognized their mission. It would be hard to describe the deep satisfaction and joy that we all experienced at this event. The first paragraph in a letter from the office on February 7 read, "We rejoice with you that God has

Henry Neufeld with the Piper J-3 KOV airplane which was purchased in January 1961 by the MPM Board.

provided you with an easier means of transportation.We trust also that this will prove a blessing to your total work and make the work much easier for you personally."

It was easier and we were grateful for it. Trips to the trapline and other stations turned out as planned. Locally certain requests could not be honoured, which created some uncomfortable feelings, but on the whole, the concept of having a plane on the settlement was well accepted. It was great to be able to take someone along or to bring some supplies if space was available. One time when one of the women aborted the child she was carrying and there were complications, I was able to fly out and get the nurse. Later one of the men said, "I guess that woman would have died, if you would not have had the plane." It was a satisfying feeling for me to hear this expressed.

On April 22, 1961, I experienced my first real problem. I wanted a commercial pilot to check out my flying procedures while he was waiting for the doctor at Little Grand. With me in the plane was a woman who needed to see the doctor. Just as we were taking off, there was a sharp snap. I was immediately aware that the left ski was flopping; the leg had broken.

What now? To continue on my trip and land at Little Grand

seemed the most reasonable course of action. The nursing station there had two nurses and a doctor with a plane and a pilot standing by in case something went wrong. Those ten minutes in the air were tense. Searching my relationship to the Lord in case of a fatality and the necessity of landing with the least amount of damage were uppermost in my mind. Every step was thoroughly considered and prayed for. When the pilot and all the others at the nursing station saw my plight, they too were full of anguish. I was told later that the doctor paced the floor while I was circling, wondering what kind of a tangled mess he may have to work through. However, it turned out to be one of the smoothest landings I ever made and did very minimal damage to the plane. How thankful we were for the Lord's protection!

Just ten days later when I was taking off at Loon Straits, the other leg broke. Again there was very minimal damage to the wing as it touched down. I soon realized my problem. I was taking off with the tail too high. In training I had always been too low and was overreacting to the correction of the instructor.

Since we did not have pontoons for the plane, we had to revert to boat travel for the summer season. Because of a number of delays in getting the plane checked out in fall, we did not get it back for winter use until February 20, 1962. It continued to serve our situation well but so little of the winter was left. However, it was a great joy to fly whenever possible. With a year's sabbatical to begin in the summer, work with the plane would be set aside for a time. Little did we realize how long that time would be!

Early in 1963 we were informed that, because of expense and excessive danger, the plane would be sold. Those were difficult days as we tried to digest the implications of this move. We would need to go back to the old ways of travel if we were to continue the task to which we felt called. By God's grace, when our wings were clipped, we found sufficient strength to carry on without the use of the plane.

Stewardship is of greatest importance in the whole matter of kingdom building. To make solid decisions one must be in close touch with a particular situation. Let me give an example. Because of financial struggles, the office frequently asked why we could not get along with smaller outboard motors. When one of the executive members was to travel from Matheson Island to Bloodvein, a distance of about 19 kilometres by boat, the

workers involved all silently prayed for swells—and swells there were during that crossing. The next day he commented, "Fellows, I still feel it in my stomach." Never again did he question the size of a motor!

Eventually a skidoo with a 7.5-horse power motor was purchased to replace Sputnik. Although small, it worked well. For summer travel, a boat and motor were placed below the big rapids to alleviate some of the tediousness of that stretch. Although I often had a deep longing to be back up in the air, there was a job to be done which did not permit me to dwell excessively on that disappointment.

Extensive travel took place in the following years as opportunities permitted. When the wooden boat demanded too much attention to keep it going, we switched to an aluminum one that did not need maintenance. Because the caterpillar train operator forgot to load this aluminum boat on his last trip into Pauingassi, we had to make arrangements to pick it up. They were making another trip farther north so we asked them to tie the boat to a tree on the portage at Eardly Lake. This was about 88 kilometres downriver from Pauingassi. The plan was to fly there in spring and bring the boat home. In high water this would be viable, in spite of the many rapids that lay between us; in low water it would be very difficult.

On May 30, 1967, two local fellows, an MPM staff member and I flew to Eardly. With us we took our new motor, an accurately calculated amount of gas and the necessary equipment to carry the boat across the portages. By 4:00 p.m. we had the boat in the water and were on our way. The next day at 6:00 p.m. we pulled up at home.

The settlement stared in amazement because they knew the route we had taken. We had experienced a night out in the open and 25 sets of rapids: 15 we had to portage, five we pulled up with ropes, five we drove up. When the prop got sheared in one of the rapids we were forced to turn back and portage. We got home with only 3.5 litres of gas left. There would have been no gas available anywhere between Pauingassi and Eardly. Although the trip was tough, it was very adventurous.

As the time of our leaving drew nearer, the need for outreach by the local church had become very important. We also wanted to be in contact with leaders in other settlements. This could only be done by plane. We felt the urgency to once more discuss the

matter of a mission plane. The fact that John Rempel, a personal friend of ours, had recently done some flying for MPM, helped activate the subject. Buying a plane was financially not feasible but John had his plane up for sale. He offered to rent it out for the winter of 1969-70 if we so desired. His was a PA-11, a newer version of the J-3 we had owned before. It was in excellent condition. After considerable deliberation this offer was accepted. Since I had not flown for over seven years, John helped me get up to date in my flying again. On December 3, 1969, I flew into Pauingassi. I had been away for several days, so my family and the local people were waiting for my return. As I flew over the house, our dog jumped up on his hind legs and barked. He sensed who was in the plane.

In total we logged over 80 hours on aircraft RPY that winter. The projected goals for outreach were met in a remarkable way. The emerging church leaders were pleased to have been part of this opportunity.

9
Outreach

Our entry into Little Grand Rapids in 1954 has already been mentioned. Whereas our contacts at Moose Lake were through the Anglican Church, at Little Grand they were with the United Church of Canada. The school we were interested in was under the Department of Indian Affairs but conducted by the Mission office of the United Church. We got our acceptance to teach from Indian Affairs only after we received approval from the United Church, which served the north end of the reserve. The south end had the same arrangement with the Roman Catholic Church. The position required not only doing the daily teaching but also conducting weekly services. This was exactly what we had hoped for because we felt called to be an active part of the church.

When we arrived at Little Grand, we tried very hard not to share our denominational background. Too often we had experienced negative vibrations as a result of denominational barriers. We wanted to come across as Christians and try our utmost to live that way. This, however, was not acceptable; we were questioned until we realized that it would be better if we shared our heritage and faith position as Mennonites. Although we simply tried to be ourselves by living out the implications of the Gospel, the fact that we did not baptize infants revealed our position as being different.

Since our belief in baptizing upon confession of faith was new, it caused some frustration and was simply not understood. Yet all in all, the opportunity to serve that winter, both in school and in worship services, brought us a great deal of joy. We felt God was guiding and directing us each step of the way.

Discussions with the chief of Little Grand Rapids about the needs at Pauingassi had also prompted some question about services at Little Grand. However, this dialogue did not continue at that time.

After our departure to Pauingassi in the fall of 1955 it was not always possible to procure teachers at Little Grand who

could also conduct the services. By January 1959, we received verbal invitations from the reserve to come and conduct worship. On February 3 a written invitation signed by several families was delivered to us.

After praying about it, we felt this was the time to go. I was there the following Sunday. Thus began a ministry to Little Grand from Pauingassi, a ministry that continued for ten years. Every Sunday afternoon, except during freezeup and breakup, brought me to the reserve. With this call, we felt compelled to be as punctual as possible under the circumstances. Only in very extreme conditions did the weather keep me home. On cold, rainy, blustery and stormy Sundays, it would have been very comfortable to stay home with the family, but no, the call to service was there. Even the flashlight lantern I used to light the way for Sputnik protested in the severe cold. It got dimmer and dimmer on the way home.

On February 7, 1960, a heavy snowstorm developed while I was conducting the afternoon service. After dismissal, we stood around and visited for a while. Various comments were made about the heavy snow. In spite of the stormy weather I set out

Service in Adam Keeper's house at Little Grand Rapids. For ten years, beginning in February 1959, Henry held weekly Sunday services at Little Grand.

ᒥᓱᐸᐃᑎᑯᐣ ᐊᑕᐢ ᐁᑕ- ᐁᐱᑎᑲᓂᐊᐢᐣ

for home at about 7:00 p.m., but as soon as I hit the lake I got stuck in some slush. Try as I would I could not push Sputnik out. The nearly five-kilometre walk back through the bush to the Hudson's Bay Company post was slow. Several people there decided it would be very difficult to get the machine out of the ice if it was left to freeze overnight, so they walked back with me to push it out. We got it going but made no progress, so we left it on the bush trail and walked back to the store. Obviously it was God's protective hand that kept me off the lake in that storm. By the time we got to bed it was 3:00 a.m. Weary? Yes, completely exhausted! Only on Monday afternoon, when the men from Pauingassi had broken the trail with their snowshoes, did I venture home again. Fortunately there were other trips which were less difficult!

In summer I used two or three boats, depending on the season and the height of the water, which fluctuated a great deal, plus a walk on the portage, to get to Little Grand Rapids. The times we had the plane were by far the quickest and easiest.

Attendance at services ranged anywhere from three persons to a hundred. Usually the interest was good. There were times, however, when I wondered if I should discontinue; on a few occasions I actually did. The real conflict occurred when there was an overlap with personnel from the United Church. The thought of denominational competition created a great deal of agony for us, but there seemed to be no real way of dealing with this subject redemptively. We realized that the United Church frowned on our coming to Little Grand for services and also did not appreciate our presence at Pauingassi.

This type of spirit was evident in various forms among the different denominational groups throughout the North. An absolutely devastating spirit was destroying the healing edge of the Good News. In an honest search for a solution to this problem, an inter-church meeting of personnel working in Native communities was set up for the summer of 1967. The sessions were very tense but the results were positive. Consequently, this annual Inter-Church Seminar has continued to the present day.

These meetings created a forum in which the various denominations could dialogue in an effort to gain an understanding and acceptance of each other in spite of differences. The bickering that had gone on for decades throughout the whole North had caused mountains of trouble in the minds of the Native people.

How could each group say they were right, while all of them claimed to be worshipping the one and only God? It is unfortunate that the church-at-large created such an image.

That same year the United Church again placed a worker at Little Grand to conduct regular worship services. This was frustrating considering the ups and downs of the past years. Young converts from Pauingassi had started to accompany me on these trips and were really enjoying the opportunity of sharing with their own people. They found it hard to understand how an agreement could be made that the United Church should be confined to Little Grand and we should stay at Pauingassi.

No sooner had such a decision been made when an invitation came from the south end of the reserve to come and share with them. In light of the above agreement and because the Catholic priest had gone on a study leave, we found ourselves in a very delicate situation. Consequently, I wrote the priest a letter telling him of the invitation and asking his advice. His response was that we should go ahead if that is what we felt the Lord saying to us.

The chief of Little Grand and members of his council were not happy that the south end was receiving only periodic visits. They wanted us not only to make weekly visits but also to set up a resident program similar to the one at Pauingassi. Church members at Pauingassi could not grasp the necessity of allowing adequate time for processing decisions on the denominational level. They wanted to move immediately. However, discussions had to take place with Mennonite Pioneer Mission, the United Church, the Catholic Church and the Reserve. As a result of these deliberations, facilitated by the positive outcome of the Inter-Church Seminar, a resolution was passed to begin services at the band hall on October 15, 1967.

The meetings that followed were the same as they had been in the past, but they were special in that the Pauingassi church actively participated in and eagerly encouraged us to take up the challenge of the invitation. It was a joy to share this new avenue of outreach with them and see them grow in it.

The discussion to place a resident worker at Little Grand continued. An intense effort was made to come to the right decision in response to requests by the local people. As kingdom building continued, the goal was one of unity. Open discussion with both the United Church and Roman Catholic offices made

St. John Owen and Henry on their way to hold services at Little Grand in 1969. Beginning in 1965, members of the Pauingassi church assisted Henry in these services.

ᑲᑐᐢ ᐊᓇᒪᐁᐃᐦ ᑭᒪ ᒥᓯᐸᐃᑎᓴ ᐁᐳᑕᐱᑎᕃᐊᐦ

the deliberation much easier. We recall how often we became impatient with the long delays but, for the sake of the gospel, integrity was of prime importance.

In 1968 it was finally decided to build a residence on the reserve for a full-time worker. The chief offered a few sites from which we could choose. The resident worker was to meet the various requests from the community but was not to interfere with the Pauingassi group's participation in sharing the Word week by week.

Even with the arrival of a resident worker, we continued to give support and help with the teaching and preaching. In the meantime, at the north end of the settlement, a local person had been put in charge of the United Church. Whenever worship was conducted we had the freedom to join them and assist in the service. That cooperation created real joy!

The agony of denominational boundaries, has been replaced by a spirit of cooperation which, by God's grace, has made it possible to keep an open door to all of the various groups involved. When the Pentecostal and Apostolic movements came into Little Grand in the 1970s, they provided another kind of emphasis there.

After we left Pauingassi in 1970, the very active involvement of the Pauingassi church at Little Grand tapered off. We have kept constant contact with the various forms of church on the reserve. Who would have thought that, after 20 years, we would still be going back on a regular basis to share and teach God's Word?

10
Creative Activity

On any Indian settlement groups of children run about with nothing in particular to occupy their time. Pauingassi was no exception. Every home we visited seemed to have children and grandchildren helping with chores or playing around. They would carry pails of water from the lake (their only water supply) or saw wood to heat the house and cook the meals. The older children often cared for their younger siblings while the mother was out sawing wood or gathering moss to wrap around the baby. In summertime the children would accompany an adult to go berry picking: blueberries, wild raspberries, low-bush cranberries and saskatoons. Usually the boys would either go with their fathers to check snares or traps or they would go out to set their own.

The girls were often involved in beading or sewing. They sewed most of their own dresses according to their desired style. A special joy was to sew together all the pieces of leftover fabrics to make lovely quilts. A few of the girls had also learned to knit from their mothers. But we soon realized there was very little social life for anyone not wishing to become involved with alcohol. We wondered if these young girls, aged 10-16, would enjoy getting together in groups to knit and sew or even try other handicrafts. They seemed to be very gifted in this area.

We realized the need for some positive, wholesome social activities for the young people and decided to start boys' and girls' clubs on Friday evenings. I did woodworking projects with the boys. We made miniature log cabins, birdhouses, wooden stools, wooden candleholders and other things. The candle-holders were sent to Winnipeg where they were sold and the proceeds used to purchase more supplies for future activities. Elna did sewing, knitting, beading and other projects with the girls. We soon added a bit of homemaking into these evenings: baking cookies, cakes and raisin bannock, or making popcorn and hot chocolate which provided a snack at the end of the evening.

Girls' clubs gave the girls an opportunity to learn sewing (above), *knitting, beading and baking.*

△٩•ㄣㄣ ▽ㄅ^ᑭㄅ•ᓀ◁•-

Boys' clubs included woodworking projects to build miniature log cabins, birdhouses, wooden stools and candleholders.

ᑭ•△•ㄣㄣ ◁ᓄ- ٩ᐧᐢ ▽ᓄᒋᑐ◁•-

What was uppermost in our thoughts and prayers was to find a way of sharing Christ in an informal setting. A time of devotions and singing was always part of these classes. We also included a short period of instructing Indian syllabics since some did not learn them at home. Thursday evenings we had Bible studies for the adults, but the children took this opportunity to satisfy their curiosity by running in and out of the building. Rather than trying the impossible—getting them to sit still—we decided to have junior worship service during the same time in the other classroom. Interest and attendance was always high, especially during the winter months when the weather was too cold to stay outside. These evening sessions took the place of the earlier Sunday school classes which we had started on Sunday afternoons but found difficult to continue because of all the other services on Sundays.

During the summer several young people from southern Manitoba would come to help us with a week of Vacation Bible School which the youngsters always enjoyed. They also looked forward to the summer Bible Camp for Native children at Camp Assiniboia. The children had to pay their own camp fees but transportation was subsidized.

Women were often left at home alone with the children while the men were away for days at a time on the trap lines. Their main social life seemed to consist of going from house to house drinking with their friends. We felt they needed to experience another type of social life so Elna invited them to gather for an evening of fellowship. As commitments of faith were made, they also began to take leadership in singing, scripture reading and prayer. A few women would bake cookies or a cake to provide refreshments at the end of the session, while others were busy sewing and knitting. Most of the women knew how to knit socks and mittens but had never knit bulky sweaters. At that time, the Department of Adult Education sent out a supply of bulky wool with graphic patterns for knitting. The women could not read English, but could count the squares on the graphs. Knitting according to a pattern gave them a great deal of enjoyment.

For years the women had been sewing dresses and shirts for their children and cotton dresses for themselves. Like their daughters, they preferred sewing together patches for fancy quilts. Much of the sewing was done by hand or by hand-operated sewing machines. As the sewing increased, the demand

Cooking classes for women provided an evening of fellowship and a chance to learn skills in homemaking.

ᒍᓕᑦ ᑐᒥᓂᐅᑦ ᐅᑭᓚᕐᓂᖅᐸᓪᓕᐊᓂᖅ

At sewing classes women learned to knit bulky sweaters and to make fancy patchwork quilts.

ᐃᕐᓂᖅᐸᑦ ᐅᒃᑭᒃᑯᓂᖅᐸᑦ

for treadle machines grew. We were able to get a good number of these from southern Manitoba where electric machines were by now preferred and widely used.

Many wood-burning cookstoves were obtained in the same way so the women could try out their newly acquired baking skills at home. The use of cookstoves and sewing machines gave them a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction since they could provide more creatively for themselves and their families. In various ways these activities became functional substitutes for their former lifestyle.

11
Constituency Support

A call to serve our Lord and Master of necessity involved a sender. There needed to be a financial base to keep food on the table in the absence of self-employment. There needed to be prayer support for carrying on in a world that is controlled by many discouraging forces. There needed to be moral undergirding from those who understand and perhaps have even walked a similar road.

All this we have experienced in the churches that make up the Conference of Mennonites in Canada where we also have our membership and which provides our financial support. For 35 years, each month except one, the allotted allowance was there to take care of family needs. In that one month the sum was delayed because the Conference budget had not been met. Over the years there were times when the Board wondered whether it should move to an individual soliciting base, but they never did, for which we rejoice.

To get prayer support, it has always been extremely important to keep in touch with the constituency. One very important event which provided such contact was our ordination at the annual Canadian conference on July 1, 1956, at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. The actual ceremony was conducted by Rev. David Schulz, bishop of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church in Manitoba, where Mennonite Pioneer Mission had its origin.

With ordination, the work of the church on the local level could move ahead, especially in the urgent matter of marriages in Pauingassi. A good number of couples were living together and were faithful to each other, but no one had been available to officiate at marriages. Now I was able to provide this service.

The many invitations to visit supporting churches and relate what was happening were joyous occasions. As we shared the working of the Holy Spirit and as we got to know each other, the churches from across Canada became personally aware of a task that was as much theirs as it was ours. We had the privilege of visiting most of the Canadian Conference churches from

Ottawa to Vancouver a number of times. The greatest concentration of visits came in Saskatchewan in the spring of 1963 when we held 44 services in one month. These visits were not for soliciting money; they were for sharing the struggles and the joys of our work, and giving God the glory for his presence and direction. This information drew attention to the state of the budget and to the needs of the people we felt called to serve.

We have always been very grateful for the trust which the constituency and the Mennonite Pioneer Mission Board have shown in giving us the opportunity to develop our gifts in whatever situation we found ourselves. This has helped make our experience such a meaningful one.

However, there were times when everything seemed to go wrong and depression set in. Shortly after our return from sabbatical in summer 1963 was one such occasion. The mission plane had been sold during our absence and the school, which had been private, had been transferred to Indian Affairs. In both cases we were not asked for any advice but only informed of the decision after the fact. Then we were expected to do double duty all summer. It was our responsibility to get a teacherage built by September for the teacher's family, yet still keep up with all the regular demands. In addition, I badly hurt my knee during the building program. Because of all this, we were very much at the end of our rope.

On September 20, 1963, I wrote a letter to the office and vented all our hurts. A summarizing comment was, "We sometimes wonder if we are paddling the right canoe."

Just ten days later a two-seater plane landed. As the occupants disembarked we counted three people and immediately recognized two of them: Henry J. Gerbrandt from the MPM Board and D.P. Neufeld, executive secretary of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. My first comment to Elna was, "Oh, oh, I made that letter too harsh."

Yes, they had come in response to the contents of that letter. We had an intense but rewarding time of discussion and then a fishing trip, which culminated in a fish-fry they never forgot. No one from the executive had been to Pauingassi for six years, so their visit was highly appreciated and long overdue.

From letters and cards we received, it was evident that people were praying for us as a family and for the work we were doing. Time and again they encouraged us not to give up: ". . . be

H.J. Gerbrandt from the Mennonite Pioneer Mission Board and D.P. Neufeld from the Canadian Conference office in Winnipeg visited Pauingassi in October 1963.

ᐁᑕᐢᐃ ᑲᐢᐸᐢᐊᐧᐣ ᓂᑲ· ᑌᐱ ᓂᐯᐢᐧ

steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58). An elderly woman wrote a letter that was difficult to read because of her handwriting. She said, "I cannot do very much. My hands are so crippled with arthritis that I can hardly write, but I wanted to tell you that I am praying for you."

The work of many praying hands is powerful. As the church in Pauingassi developed, it too became aware of a powerful prayer base in the supporting constituency. This was very important to the people.

Various individuals who heard of the work also came out to experience firsthand what was happening. In many cases, this was the first contact they had with another culture which was seeking to live out the implications of the Good News. Our visitors also became guests of the community as we took them to visit a number of homes. If there was a service during the time of their stay our guests were also expected to take part—to give a testimony for the Lord or to share a Bible verse.

The experience of those from the constituency who came to relieve us during our holidays provided an extended opportunity to rub shoulders with another culture. For some, this resulted in

a long-term assignment which was greatly welcomed. In all cases, the spin-offs were such that when they went home, they shared their experience with others.

Special needs of equipment often captured the interests of individuals, youth groups, women's groups and sometimes whole congregations. They made special efforts to supply the needs. By doing so they experienced an extra blessing and felt that they were able to be part of the mission endeavour.

Together with constituency support also came the specialized support of our families from both sides. They very much longed to have us close to home where we could interact with each other, where they could be in touch with our children and enjoy them during their growing-up years. This was not possible, except for limited periods of time. Whenever a brother or a sister was able to come and spend a week or a weekend with us, it was very meaningful for us, for our children and even for the whole community.

Visits by our parents were always very special occasions as well. We knew how much our mothers disliked the plane rides, but they were willing to endure them occasionally in order to visit us and others at Pauingassi. For our children it was particularly exciting to have their grandparents come to our home. On one occasion when my parents were visiting, one of the church leaders directed his attention especially to them. I had the privilege of interpreting the following words for him: "I want to express my appreciation for letting your son come to live with us and share the Good News." My parents were greatly moved.

Some of our friends came out for occasional visits, while others who were not able to make it during those fifteen years said, "You just didn't stay long enough." There were also those who felt they would fly only if they could keep one foot on the ground. Usually only the men braved the northern climate, but once in a while one of them would bring along his wife or child; that was special for our whole family.

Over the years, our families and friends remembered us with many letters and care packages. What a delight these were for our children and what an encouragement for us as adults! The Lord knew exactly when we needed some uplifting and used one of his children to give us the encouragement.

I remember one afternoon when I came home with the mail

Elna's parents, Henry and Elizabeth Friesen from Homewood, Manitoba.

ᐊᓇᒪᐁᐃ·ᑭᒪ ᐃ·ᐊ·ᐣ ᐅᓂᑭᐃᑯ

The Henry Neufeld family with Henry's parents, Henry and Agnes Neufeld from Leamington, Ontario.

ᐊᓇᒪᐁᐃ·ᑭᒪ ᑲᑕᓯᐊ·- ᓯᑲ· ᐅᓂᑭᐃᑯ

which included a parcel from a stranger. In it was a lovely soft baby quilt for our youngest child with a card that read, "Just a bit of love." That "bit of love" meant an awful lot to us for that day and many years to come. As we remembered, it helped us through many trying times. Women's groups presented us with hand-embroidered pillow cases and tea towels or lovely hand-made quilts. They all expressed love, support and encouragement to us and were gratefully received. We praise the Lord for our families, friends and the whole supporting constituency.

12
Cherished Treasures

With a call to service must also be total commitment to answer, "Here am I, Lord, send me." That call came in a general way when we felt motivated to go north; we followed it. That call came through Alex Owen when he specifically invited us to live with them, to teach their children and hold services. That call came when Mennonite Pioneer Mission formally accepted the invitation to send us on behalf of the Conference churches.

The North is where we felt the Lord leading us in spite of isolation and all we would encounter. We were thankful to have not only each other for encouragement but also our little sunshine, Carol Joyce, who was 14 months old. In addition, we were in the midst of a people who were asking for our services. Back home we had a family and a Conference that were supporting us. What more could we have desired?

In his book, *Facing the Field* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1959), T. Stanley Sultan talks about a call and an absolute dedication to that call in spite of culture shock, foreign language, absence of extended family and similar difficulties. All of these we had already experienced so we knew his writing was authentic.

Life was busy, to say the least, as we endeavoured to cope with family needs along with the community needs. Our log cabin, built on the shore of Fishing Lake, had a million-dollar view. It brought us a great deal of satisfaction, even though finishing the inside was on the bottom of our priority list. This changed when our director insisted that we paint the walls to help brighten our day. How wise he was! For me this was not as critical as it was for Elna because she was more confined to those four walls.

Our first Christmas in Pauingassi in 1955 was special in a number of ways. It was the first time away from our parental home as well as the first Christmas among the people with whom we now lived. Another special aspect was that we were expecting

an addition to our family near the end of January, so Elna and Carol would be leaving soon after the New Year. We were hoping for a boy but would be happy with either gender, as long as the baby was healthy. Carol had been born prematurely and would not have stayed with us if oxygen had not been available. This had been so alarming that we wanted to make sure we would not run short of time with our second child. We bade each other farewell for an undetermined period.

Five days each week I kept my ear tuned to the CBC radio message service. This was the only contact we had besides the weekly mail service. Day after day, week after week, there was no message!

Each morning I spent in the classroom; during the afternoons I concentrated on getting kitchen cabinets built plus doing visitation and other duties. In spite of all the work that needed to be done, this proved to be the loneliest time of my life. I received new insight into the forsaken feelings and doubts which John the Baptist must have experienced during his imprisonment. I was not in prison, but it was desperately lonely!

For Elna, although she was in her parental home while waiting for the baby, time also became long and heavy. But the one we were waiting for was in no hurry. Finally on February 3 came the long-awaited day and Gerald Henry made his appearance. However, since he was born on a Friday afternoon and CBC had no message service on weekends, I did not get the news until Monday. By the time Elna and the children came back home on February 11, I was nearly bushed from that six-week trial.

For life to return to normal was very pleasant because separation from the family had been difficult. Being apart from members of the parental home created its own problems, but we were now in our own home.

Contacts with white people were so rare that non-natives almost looked strange to our children. In the absence of all regular modes of transportation it seemed odd to get back to the city and to travel on highways. At the beginning of holidays in the summer of 1957, Carol, aged three, would duck whenever we met oncoming cars. She thought she would be hit.

This vacation was arranged to include a family wedding and to coincide with the birth of a new addition to our family. Lila Janice arrived on August 18. How proud Carol and Gerald were

to hold that tiny bundle in their arms! How great it was for our family not to have to be separated again for an undetermined length of time.

Gratefulness for a healthy family was constantly in our minds as we experienced the children's progress day by day. The Lord had been so good to us! We possessed such great wealth in the form of our children; it was beyond our comprehension. During March 1960 we realized in a special way how precious they were to us.

We were awaiting the arrival of our fourth child so Elna took Lila with her to the South while Carol and Gerald stayed with me in Pauingassi. Although I was busy teaching, they spent time in the classroom with me and also enjoyed sharing in all my other activities. I greatly cherished their companionship. Since we had two girls, Gerald was hoping for a brother, and a boy it was! Rodney Keith, a very healthy looking fellow made his appearance on March 19.

The joy we experienced was short-lived. Before the day was over the doctor realized that something was not in order. Rodney was turning blue and hope for his survival was dim! Elna found it too difficult to phone me that evening. Only the next day, after

Gerald, age 4, on snowshoes.

ᒣᐳᕮ

she had prayed her way through, was she able to telephone me with the alarming news. Our friend Jake Gerbrandt, with his private plane, picked up me and the children at Pauingassi and flew us to Elna's parents' farm near Homewood.

Anxious days followed as we prayed for healing. Pray as we did, we could not find real inner peace until we were willing to change our prayer to, "Lord, your will be done." Then we were able to accept God's way. When the baby was transferred to Winnipeg, the specialist said Rodney Keith had a congenital heart condition but he would consider surgery to make a correction. When surgery was postponed one day after another, we felt it was a stalling tactic.

Early on March 27 the doctor phoned and told us that Rodney had died. Like a beautiful flower in the meadow that is crushed underfoot, so our cherished treasure was gone, but gone to be with the Lord. We had stood by many a little graveside at Pauingassi seeking to bring comfort to the bereaved. Now we were the ones in need of comfort. This gave us new insight into what it meant to let go when the Lord intervenes.

We realized later that Elna had been in contact with measles—perhaps even had a mild case—during the early stages of her pregnancy. This was probably the underlying cause of the baby's condition. At the same time we often asked, "Why Lord?" To this day we do not have a complete answer. At the funeral it was said, "You will have a greater longing for Heaven because part of you is now there." How true that statement has proved to be. The compassion shown by the local people was heartwarming, yet it was the loneliest spring we have ever experienced.

In the fall of that same year a single teacher came to board with us in our home. This was a change that had been in our prayers for a long time. Edna Dalke was a delight to have around and, since our daughter Carol was formally starting school, we were happy that we as parents were not her only teachers. She was so intent on learning to read that during the previous year she had already been involved with school activities at home.

With the extensive program in which we were involved, it was not easy to get away, but at various times we as a family did slip away for an overnight camp-out. This was good for all of us. It provided a real time of relaxation, at least when we did not have to fight too many mosquitoes. At one point Gerald com-

mented, "I'm so happy there will be no mosquitoes in Heaven." We could all agree with him. As the children grew older, we were able to undertake more and more outside activities. What a joy it was to catch our own fish and fry them over an open fire!

In the winter of 1962, we lived with some tense feelings: our next child was due in April. Would we have a healthy child this time? As the due day came closer, we decided to go to Homewood on April 5. I was planning to fly Elna and Lila there with our own plane.

On April 2 I was driving down the hill near our house with the snowmobile. When I got on the lake, the machine stalled. This was very unusual. To my astonishment I found Gerald tangled in the track! I had not noticed that he and another boy had secretly hung on to the snowmobile. A row of bolts in the track had ripped a good chunk out of his left calf. The gash was over 12 centimetres long and three centimetres wide. He looked at it and said, "Das wird wieder zuwachsen" (It will heal again). He knew he was in the wrong so he did not shed a tear.

I carried him into the house but shielded him from Elna for

Henry walking the portage with Carol, Gerald and Lila. Portaging often meant carrying some of the children.

ᐊᓇᒪᐁᐃᑦᑎᒪ ᓂᑲᓐ
ᐅᓂᒃᓵᓕ ᐸᐃᑦᑎᓂᐦ
ᐁᑲᑭᐁᐦᐊᓐ ᐊᓐ

fear the shock would set her into labour. To relieve the situation, the teacher and I flew him to the nursing station in Little Grand for the night. I called our friend Johnny Kehler to see if he might be able to pick up Elna, Lila and Gerald in the morning, since our plane was too small. Weather was good so they got out to the hospital in short order. Gerald's leg healed remarkably well. To this day he carries the scar, but otherwise has suffered no ill effects.

Arlie Crystal made her appearance on April 16. Three days later Carol accompanied me when, because of the coming breakup season, I flew our plane south to see Elna and our little one.

That year spring breakup was late, which gave us an opportunity to fly back to Pauingassi in a commercial plane on April 28. It was a nasty, cold day; the ice was still hard. As the plane came to a stop, the pilot decided not to shut down the motor so we got out into the breeze of the propeller. Elna held baby Arlie and I took care of the others. Our dog, Skippy, had been determined to get into the plane when Carol and I flew south; by now he was more than delighted to see us. He was jumping all over Elna. Trying to ward him off, she stepped backwards. It was in the nick of time that I noticed she was heading for the rotating propeller. What a tragedy that would have been!

Our team of three was delighted to have little Arlie around. Their comment was, "My, but God was good to give us such a sweet baby." She was strong, healthy and so content. It would have been very difficult to care for a sick and weak child if we were to continue the work entrusted to us.

Our first sabbatical was for one year beginning in July 1962. During this year, we spent some extra time with our family in Ontario, a week at the Mennonite World Conference in Kitchener, six months at Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, three weeks of deputation work in Ontario, one month of language study at Red Lake, Ontario, and a month of concentrated deputation to all the Conference churches in Saskatchewan. It was an intensive and enjoyable year, yet we longed to get back to Pauingassi which we had learned to love and call "home."

Activities with the family and the community increased as the children grew older. Our family unit also seemed to grow closer as time went on. The children were very much part of all the activities, the Sunday school classes, children's clubs, visitation,

Children testing the water before the ice is all gone.

ᐊᐱᓄᒋᔭᐠ ᐁᐱᒪᑕᑲᓂᐊᓕᐦ ᑕᐸᐦ ᒥᓂᐁᐦ ᐸᑭᑕᐊᖅ

Lucy Owen often came to do things with the children.

ᐱᓕ ᓴᓂᓐ ᐅᑭᐱᐃᐦ ᒋᐊ ᓂᓂᓗᓂᓂᔭᓂ

and so on. They also enjoyed playing games with other children, reading Bible storybooks with them, putting together jigsaw puzzles or just simply chatting and laughing together. But once in a while we wanted to have just a quiet evening without guests.

We built a log playhouse for our children in which they spent many happy hours with their friends. In summer they often went berry picking; wild raspberries and blueberries were plentiful in the area. One day they came home all excited. Together they had built a tree house in the bush, using soft spruce boughs for the floor. Unless there was heavy rain, they played up the hill on the school playground almost every summer evening. In school, ours were the only white children in attendance. Although this created a minority situation, they were usually able to cope with the small problems that arose.

The strong desire that Elna expressed from time to time to give birth with the local midwives in attendance suddenly became a reality! We were expecting another treasure in March 1965 and had made reservations for Elna to fly out on the 9th to spend her confinement with her parents as she had done previously. We thought we had made all the necessary preparations; even the birth announcements were ready. They were made of birch bark and needed only the name, date and weight added after the delivery.

Saturday, March 6, was cleanup day as usual. We were also getting the last things ready before Elna would leave. This included her crawling up into the attic for a few supplies. I stayed up late to prepare for Sunday services. The next morning Elna was restless and got up early while I continued to enjoy my sleep. At about seven o'clock I woke up. The first words I heard were, "This is my day!!" "Oh no," I thought. I had never been in favour of having her deliver at home. Two of our babies had needed extra medical care immediately and I was not willing to take the risk.

I tried the radio to see if we could get a plane but there was no signal. In any case, it was snowing heavily with poor visibility so it would have been impossible to take her out. We could not even contact the nurse at the station, because she was staying at the Hudson's Bay Company post where her husband was employed.

To expedite the situation, we took our children to stay with the teacher's family, sent the teacher by snowmobile to contact

the nurse, notified a couple of local midwives and started to read the book of instructions for home confinement. We tried to remain calm as we sterilized a pair of scissors and got out the flask of sterile cord that we had among our supplies. Progress was rapid and reading had to be substituted with action. At 9:50 a.m. the nurse called to say she was leaving right away.

Contractions were regular and at exactly 10 o'clock we had a baby boy, David Merle, on our hands. I was proud to be able to tie my own son's cord. We were very grateful to have the two local women with us. The nurse arrived at 10:30 to take care of the later stages of delivery. When we told the children that God had given us a boy, Arlie, age three, said, "Then God came right into our home." Our gratefulness for good health and protection poured out. This time Elna's parents came to stay with us for a week to give a helping hand.

The fall of 1966 brought another change for our family. Classes from grades one to six were being taught in school. Carol had already taken her grade seven by correspondence and, being a very studious child, we felt the need to send her out for grade eight. Age twelve seemed too young but there was no alternative. Friends in Winnipeg offered to take her into their home for which we were most grateful. In spite of missing the family, Carol enjoyed both her stay there and her schooling.

Grade nine found her at Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI) in Gretna where she could live in the dormitory with other students. It served her need very well. Whenever she was away for school, she had only one item on her Christmas list: a ticket to come back home.

Being the outdoorsman he was, we did not have the heart to send Gerald away so early. He enjoyed fishing and hunting and trapping so much! Besides, there were many chores he was taking care of, especially when I needed to be away from home for longer periods of time. Consequently, he took grades seven and eight by correspondence and received some excellent help with his school work from the teacher.

For grade nine, however, there was no choice. He would have to join Carol at MCI. The day we had to part was difficult. But the children were very brave so we had to be brave with them. After expressing a number of times how lost I was without Gerald to give me a hand outside, one day Lila piped up, "Dad, I can take his place." She came through with flying colours!

Baby Merle tied up in the Tihkinaakan *(baby board).*

ᐅᐸᐊᑊ ᑲᓯᐃᑊᓂᓂ ᑎᑭᓇᐢᑲᓇ*

On January 1, 1970, Elna, Merle and I flew our plane RPY to Elna's parents on the farm. From there we were to go to a staff meeting, then get some dental work done. The trip took us away from home for three nights. Lila, age 13, and Arlie, age 8, wanted to come along but our plane was too small. They had no fears of staying alone to keep the home fires going.

On another occasion we had to be away only one night. We had full confidence that they could handle it, and they did! In fact they seemed to feel more at home with Native people than with white people. Arlie used to hide behind the door of her bedroom whenever white company arrived, but cheerfully welcomed any Native person.

During these years away at school, Carol and Gerald spent many weekends with their grandparents at Homewood. This was their "home" away from home. Both sides very much appreciated the opportunity to become acquainted in a new way. As the family grew older and we realized how much we needed each other, we made the comment, "When the third child has to leave for school, then we will go with them," and we did.

As our departure time drew closer, we began to realize acutely how we would miss all our special picnic places, camping sites and fishing spots. We hoped we could experience each one just one more time. To climb into the triangular-shaped tree house near the shoreline where we picked *mahkoosimanan*

(low bush cranberries) touched a rather soft spot.

As a family we also made our final visit to friends at Little Grand Rapids. It was a beautiful afternoon. On the way home we were in the middle of the upper rapids when I noticed a slight vibration in the motor. We got up the rapids without trouble and opened the throttle for the rest of the trip home, a stretch that I had travelled hundreds of times.

About five kilometres up the lake, without any further warning, the connecting rod suddenly went kaput. The aluminum boat had a 1.2-metre stern with a 35-horse power motor. We had two paddles and about seven kilometres to get home. Fortunately the moon came out that night and there was a slight breeze from behind. The girls held up the canvas to catch the bit of wind but, like Moses, their arms got weary. Gerald and I also got tired arms trying to keep the paddles going.

Finally at midnight, we pulled in at our dock with many tired muscles but good feelings. Needless to say, this mishap greatly interfered with plans to visit any other favourite spots. It would take weeks to get the repair work done and our departure time was near.

School on the local level was not always adequate for our children's needs. However, the contact with another culture and the many pluses of being in contact with all that nature provided, compensated for the extras they missed at school. Our fears of them being shortchanged were very much unfounded. The benefits of learning another language and growing up with another culture far outweighed the disadvantages. We are very thankful that they have never shown resentment for having grown up in such a setting. On the contrary, we have felt only appreciation from them.

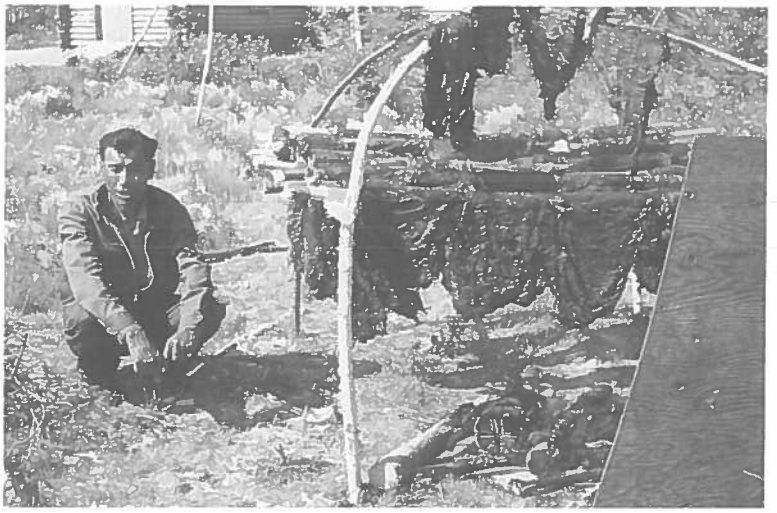
13
Meeting Needs

Food supplies that could not be obtained from the land were hard to come by because there was no store on the settlement. To take care of our needs, we placed a major order in Winnipeg to be sent out by caterpillar train on the winter road. The cat train came into Pauingassi only once during the season, usually in March, bringing out all the necessary freight for the community, such as food, building supplies, and other goods. For us, this basic order of food had to last for a whole year. It was therefore of utmost importance to order good quality; otherwise we were stuck with a distasteful flavour for the rest of the year. Odds and ends were purchased at the Hudson's Bay Company at Little Grand Rapids or brought in when we were out for holidays.

One time we ran short of supplies in the fall. Since travel during freezeup was not possible, we were without meat for six weeks. Not being vegetarians and having no fresh produce of any sort, we really missed the meat. Locally fish were not biting and rabbits were hard to catch, so it was macaroni and ketchup, ketchup and spaghetti for a while. When meat finally did arrive, we could hardly get enough of it!

Elna's parents annually participated in a butchering bee on the farm. At that time they also butchered for our family's needs. To make best use of the meat when it was fresh, we tried to get it as soon as possible in winter when it would remain frozen. This was very necessary because we had neither a refrigerator nor a deep-freeze. Cupboard space in the warehouse served well as a storage place. When mild weather set in, the rest of the meat was canned for use during the summer months. Even bones were sawn up and canned for soups. The home-smoked hams usually lasted until the end of June and kept very well. In summer we canned our garden vegetables and the many wild berries we had picked in the area.

Locally, food was not preserved except for moose meat and white fish which were dried over a smouldering fire. Growing



William Owen drying moose meat.

ᒪᑐᓂ ᐁᐸᖏᕽ ᐃᓕᓴᖏᑦ

and storing potatoes, as practised in the past, had been discontinued. The main bulk of their food, therefore, was purchased at the Hudson's Bay Company post in Little Grand Rapids. This meant hauling everything under very difficult conditions: thin ice in the fall and deep slush in the spring for a distance of 12 miles. Enduring hardship seemed to be a special gift entrusted to the local people as they struggled for survival.

Summer appeared to be the easiest time to get around. It meant travelling by boat to the rapids and walking two-and-a-half kilometres to the store. The more supplies we needed, the heavier was the load we had to carry back to the boat. The thin ice in fall meant walking far around to find an area that was safe to cross. Narrow stretches sometimes could be crossed only on hands and knees with two long poles to distribute the weight.

Wintertime meant walking all the way if one did not have dogs, but in place of a backpack one could always pull a small toboggan. Slush created the greatest problem. Other factors were much easier to cope with. When all the water had run off the ice, it was easy to travel because the obstructions were gone. However, when the ice began to candle, one could break through without a moment's notice. By this time of year many creeks

were already open water. To take care of these two situations the people would pull a canoe with them. If the ice should break up, they could rescue themselves with the canoe or they could cross a creek that had already opened up.

I participated in all the above conditions except crawling on hands and knees. Therefore I had a lot of empathy but no remedy. Having travelled in all seasons, I knew that summer was my favourite choice, that is, until we got our power toboggan for winter use. However, for the Pauingassi people this latter mode of travel was not yet an option.

The ideal situation would be to have a store on the settlement, but how could this become a reality? Who would want to invest in and/or operate this kind of undertaking? These and countless other questions came to us as we saw the people's continuing struggle. One thing we were sure of: the Mennonite Pioneer Mission Board would not be able to operate such a venture. It would have to be an undertaking separate from the mission.

From other communities we knew that a store operator for whom self-interest was of number one concern would be easy to come by but of no advantage to the community. One thing was

John Crow and Fred Owen pulling the canoe on ice in spring.

ᓇᒥᐊᑊ ᓴᓇᐤ ᐁᐳᓂᓇᒪᓂᓂᐧ ᐁᐱᒪᑕᑲᐊᑊ-

sure: the store would have to carry itself financially, but the manager would have to be a person of integrity with the needs of the people at heart.

Year after year dreams of this kind went through our minds as we searched the Lord to show us a way. On numerous occasions these needs were also discussed with the MPM executive.

At various times the local people voiced the same concerns. Eventually they asked for help to explore such a venture. Requests for a school and for housing had been successful, so why not this one? Just to see their ongoing struggle was a continuous reminder of the need at hand. We also remembered the many small projects that youth groups and churches had undertaken.

In 1967 Christian Investors in Education (CIE) asked if we had a project in which they might get involved. CIE is a nonprofit organization that seeks to provide help in areas of education where no one else assists. Some of the projects in which they had participated were helping Bible school students in South America pay for their schooling and bringing a young man from Paraguay to study co-ops, then letting him return home to operate the same.

As one of their group members approached me, I could hardly wait to elaborate on the need for a store. This was the only project Elna and I had at the time and we felt it was very much in the area of education and service. As we parted that day I was filled with joy and anticipation. There seemed to be some hope on the horizon for the prayers and dreams that we had been dealing with for almost ten years.

The group needed some time to research the feasibility of such a venture and to check if it really fit in with their constitution and goals. There was ample interest but the group as a whole could not be motivated to action during the following months. Although there was a delay, the matter did not die. In fact, it only needed a bit of time to grow.

In March 1968, two representatives of CIE came to look things over and get some firsthand information. Very enthusiastically we once more shared the dreams that we had for such a project; we offered them an old log cabin—it was the former home of the late Alex Owen—where a beginning could be made. They purchased this for a nominal sum.

During the coming months a lot of talk about this store continued both in Winnipeg and at Pauingassi.

When a consensus was reached, the project got underway. A building was in place even though it needed a fair amount of renovation. The business, established as the Pauingassi Trading Post, was officially opened on February 19, 1969. The dreams, prayers and efforts of many years had become reality.

Although small, this venture was a good beginning. People were able to buy groceries plus other odds and ends right on the settlement. What a joy to see the people walk down the path carrying bags of supplies! Women and children seldom got to Little Grand. Now they had the opportunity to do their own buying. This in itself was an education.

As the need arose for the store to expand, that also became a reality. All in all, we felt very indebted to CIE for taking this project seriously.

Using the caterpillar train for winter freighting did not become an option for the store. Even though the cost of freight was considerably lower, the investment required to bring in such a large shipment of provisions in advance was too costly. Therefore, they employed Silver Pine Air, based at Pine Falls, to fly in supplies as needed. Although the use of planes had increased a great deal over the years, this brought them in on a more regular basis. Silver Pine Air served Pauingassi settlement very well throughout our 15 years. They could now fly patients to the hospital or provide service for the trappers on a more regular basis.

Along with the dream of the store was always the hope of getting a Post Office so that the mail could come directly to us. This, however, was not to be. Under no circumstances was the Post Office willing to look at such a possibility. As a compromise, we were able to get a mailbox in Pine Falls and have the airlines pick up the mail for us at their convenience. The store became the official pickup base for all who wanted to change their address to Pine Falls. It was wonderful to see just one more new venture develop on the settlement.

14
Lifestyle

For Native people, hunting, fishing, and gathering have always been the predominant means of survival. They had no major problem moving throughout the wilderness within the area in which they were living. However, with the shrinking of that land base and the heavy concentration of people in the small areas of the reserves, this nomadic way of life is fading out of existence more and more.

When we first arrived at Pauingassi, it was still very much in practice. Families would paddle out in the fall and return on open water in the spring. Now and then the men or some youth would walk out to the settlement for further supplies and to sell their furs. Furs they brought in were beaver, muskrat, otter, fisher, marten, lynx, squirrel, mink and weasel. Meat from the beaver and muskrat was always food for the family.

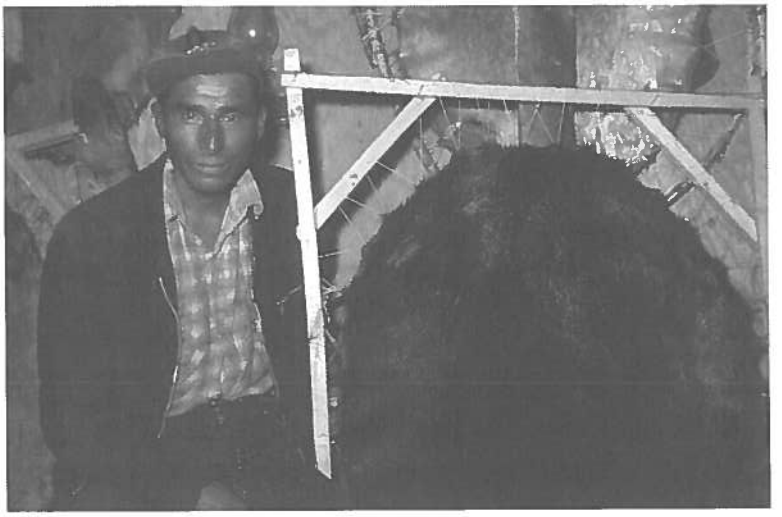
The mother would take care of the family needs as well as skin the animals. A great deal of care needed to be taken to do a good job of the skinning and the stretching. I recall walking into a home one day and hearing the woman talking from the back room. I noticed that her voice was rather muffled, as though she had something in her mouth. As she came into view, sure enough. She was in the midst of skinning a muskrat and needed a third hand. So she was holding the back leg of the rat with her teeth. In this way her hands were free to do the job.

In the wilderness they were close to wood for the fire. The forest was also a place where the children could snare rabbits to supplement their diet. It is the joy of any child to be able to contribute to the family needs. Throughout the years we have also observed that for them to go out into the wilderness is a very rejuvenating experience.

Fishing at Pauingassi has always been for domestic use only. The few times when they could go commercial brought a great deal of satisfaction because jobs were created. They were also kept well supplied with nets for the rest of the year. With fishing and hunting of moose and water fowl came a strong concept of

Alex Pascal checking the fishnet as Gerald and Lila Neufeld look on.

ᓇᑕᓴᐃ ᑭᒋᐢ ᐁᑲᓇᐊᕐᓵᒥᐊᕐᓂ ᖃᐅᐅᓭᐅ ᓂᑲᐅ ᓭᐊᐃᓭᐊ



George Pascal displaying a beaver pelt.

ᐊᓴᐃ ᐅᑕᒥᑲᐅᓂᓇᐅ ᐁᐊᕐᓵᑕᐃᐁᕐᓂ

sharing. These were the basic commodities they had harvested for centuries. To hear someone say, "I lent him some fish," sounds very strange at first. However, we soon realized that the whole concept of sharing is a base of security. This means that a meal will always be available as long as there is food within the clan.

Harvesting wild rice was a major source of income, depending on the water levels and weather conditions each year. In the past rice was a traditional commodity but now it is harvested to meet the demands of a delicatessen down south instead.

Nature had always provided all the needs of the people: food, water, wood, tools, moss and medicine. Tools were made of whatever was available in nature like bone and wood. Medicine was gathered from the bark of trees and herbs that grew along the banks of streams and rivers or in the woods.

Moss, which grows in abundance in muskegs, had a variety of uses: material to chink a log house to keep out the cold wind; a functional substitute for sanitary pads; and a soft bed for an infant tied up in a *Tihkinaakan* (baby board). When the soiled moss was taken from the baby, it was thrown out the back door where it decomposed and became part of the landscape in a short time. A fungus in the moss is a form of penicillin, which prevented babies from having trouble with diaper rash. However, with the introduction of disposable diapers, a big problem was created. It takes half an eternity to decompose these and it is a taboo to burn faeces. Consequently, these diapers, together with a host of other items that technology has introduced to a hunting and gathering society, have become a curse to the eyes and to the land.

The use of the *Tihkinaakan* is very practical and efficient. It can be set in the front of the canoe while the mother helps paddle or it can be leaned against a wall or a tree while she does her work. If the board does fall over, the protruding arch would prevent the child from falling on its face. Trinkets for the child to play with are hung from this arch. In winter a blanket can be wrapped around the *Tihkinaakan* to keep the baby warm; in summer a cheese cloth can be used to keep mosquitos away. In both cases there is still ample space around the child. The mother can carry the board on her back and still move freely, while the child remains in an upright position and never slips out of its blankets.

Dora Bushie and her daughter washing clothes at the shoreline.

ↄ·ᵌ◁ ᓭb· ▷Cσᓴᐧ ᓪᓭᐱ* ▽ᑭᓭᐱᑭσ9◁·-

Baking bannock on an open fire.

>C◁·σ* <9·ᓭbᓪᐧ ▷ᑭᓭᓴ·ᐧ

Three little ones enjoying life in their Tihkinaakan *(baby board).*

ᓂᓪᓕᐊᓂᒃ ᐅᔾᔨᒋᑎᖅᑕᓪᓕᐊᓂᒃ

After living with Native people for a while, we began to realize that the rigorous life of the wilderness had developed a people that could stand up to tremendous extremes. They could be chilled to the bone so they shivered like a leaf on a tree one minute, then immediately crowd within 25 centimetres around a stove that was glowing with heat.

Stoves in general are used to full capacity, that is, they are heated up to such an extent that there is never a need to clean the chimney. The best stove is a tin one that is airtight and gives intense quick heat. When the house gets too hot the door is opened. Stoves with thick metal construction and brick lining take too long for the heat to penetrate. Tin stoves burn through quickly, but that creates no major problem, even when holes are burned through three-quarters of the way around.

While I was still teaching, I recall what I experienced many times when I was on my way to make a fire in the school. The fire in the neighbour's house had gone out for the night and by morning it was cold—and I mean cold! The house had no ceiling; between the airtight heater and the roof jack were over three metres of stovepipe. As I walked by at a distance, I knew that the neighbour had made a good fire to warm things up as

fast as possible. In fact I knew that the stove was literally jumping because there were about 25 centimetres of flames coming out of the top of that roof jack. The house never burned down!

Our worldview deviates from the Native person's in a number of ways. To see someone with a mouth muscle pulled far to one side is abhorred like the plague because it is classed as evil medicine. They believed that someone had put a curse on him. We simply recognize it as the result of a stroke; a blood clot has formed in the brain to cause the muscles to droop.

Along the edge of the large clearing we discovered what appeared to be a miniature settlement within the larger settlement. A series of houses were built with small logs about a metre high. Some were longer, others shorter; each one had a small door at one end. On closer examination we realized that each house was built over a grave, the size depending on the age of the person buried there. At various times we would see trinkets placed inside the door.

To keep a little boy's nasal passages clear, the parents used to pin the tip of an otter's nose to his cap. When congestion due to a cold set in, they often wiped his nose clean with their hand when nothing else was available. I recall a woman using a siphon action on one occasion. While I was checking for something in my medicine bag, she sucked the clogged nose clean with her mouth and deposited it into a spittoon.

The beard is the first thing to be cut off after a moose has been killed. It is hung on a tree as a token of thanks to the Creator for his provisions. "Thank you, I need this to feed my family." Bones of fowl and smaller animals are often tied and hung up for the same reason.

On Fishing Lake is a small island called God Island. We were told that you must never point a finger at that island. If someone does, a big wind will blow up. One day when I was travelling on that side of the lake with one of the elders, I wanted to check which one of the two islands situated close together was God Island. He motioned with pointed lips to the appropriate island.

Traditionally, the door of their homes is always open to the neighbour. Everything is public. Whoever goes by just walks right in without knocking and states his reason for entering. There is no such thing as privacy. If people go on a visit, a good deal of story telling may go on. On the other hand, silence is no

threat. There may be long periods of silence without anyone feeling uncomfortable.

The Native language revolves around the verb. Different prefixes and suffixes are added to indicate the intended direction of the action; for example, "I see you" or "you see me." The extra form called the fourth person—"he is seen by him"—has a great advantage. The language is beautifully descriptive, very adequately dealing with all aspects of that culture. In addition, it is also open-ended to describe vividly the newly added items. For example, peas are rabbit droppings; a helicopter is that which comes straight down, and so on.

Because of the public nature of the society, social rules are built into the language. These regulate privileges and responsibilities as well as marriages, that is, who can marry whom. It is a very patriarchal system with the man bearing the totem (clan name). According to this system, a man cannot marry his parallel-cousin (father's brother's daughter or mother's sister's daughter). This holds for first cousins as well as remote ones. On the other hand, he can marry his cross-cousin (father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter). A person, however, cannot marry someone that carries the same totem. This is considered incest.

As in the case of any other society, there are changes and deviations from the set norm. Not all the changes that have taken place over the years have been for the good.

15
Bidding Farewell

In 1954, shortly after we arrived at Little Grand Rapids, the interpreter at the store asked, "How long do you expect to stay in this neck of the woods?" My answer at the time was, "I do not know, but I want to stay as long as the Lord wants me to." That answer repeatedly came back to us in our last year of living with the people. As we searched with the community, our family and the Mennonite Pioneer Mission Board, we discerned that this upcoming move was the Lord's will for us.

The church in the Pauingassi community needed to expand more on its own. We had walked with them through the years of preparation, of discerning what the implication of the gospel might mean in light of their cultural background. We had been with them through the years of commitment to a life of faith and discipleship, of taking a public stand in baptism, of intensive preparation to take over the operation of the church.

All this was done in complete faith that formal ordination would follow, that authority would be invested in them to carry on with all the rights of the church as we understand it. This preparation and investment of authority was given in spite of the lack of formal education or ability to use the English language. We had full confidence that this was the right way to go.

In spite of the loneliness we experienced in the early years, Pauingassi had become very much home for our family of seven. We had come to appreciate their lifestyle in the midst of a life of service. We had learned so much from nature and, above all, from a people who followed the ways of nature. It was a culture vastly different from our own but one which had a lot to offer. We greatly cherished this.

The uprooting which had taken place in 1968 when we were asked to move to Little Grand had been necessary to help us systematically prepare ourselves for departure in 1970. With the academic limitations of school we felt it best that we move with our children when it came to the point where three of them would need to be sent out for further education. Could we expect

someone else to take care of our family? We felt that was our responsibility as well as our privilege.

The Mennonite Pioneer Mission Board looked at the needs of both the community and our family. They felt that some of the development in the church would take place better in our absence because of the many things that had happened over the years. They also saw the importance of the needs of a growing family.

To stand with the community in their struggle to find a way of operating that was comfortable for them, Vic and Norma Funk accepted the call to come into the community after we left. They would move into what had been our home but not into what had been our role. Their coming was a great encouragement to both the community and to us.

In this way, a deliberate rounding off of our stay was set in motion. This involved physical functions as well as leadership in the church. Every effort was made to have the activities continue in the direction the community wanted to see them go.

As a family, there were many places we wanted to visit to bid our final farewell. After all, we would be able to take only memories with us. Over the years material possessions had accumulated, as they tend to do in every family. Our unanimous decision was to take only bare necessities with us when we left. This would reduce the amount we had to transport by plane and would make our move less cumbersome. Of course furniture would stay in the house. Odds and ends were sold at a yard sale which went over very well in the community. Even with that decision, we realized in later years that this teddy bear and that doll carriage and some other items really should not have been sold. The memories were too precious!

Sunday, August 2, 1970, was a special Sunday. Since we had made reservations to fly out the following day, it was our family's last Sunday to worship with the community. How could 15 years hav gone by so quickly? We had come as a family of three and now were leaving as a family of seven. How could we leave the place we loved and the friends we cherished? These were our brothers and sisters in Christ, a relationship that had developed because of the love of Christ and because of their complete acceptance of us into the community. God had revealed himself in a traditional way throughout the ages. In spite of our many human weaknesses, God had used our presence to bring glory to his name, even to the point of preparing to ordain local

people to the leadership of the church. We cannot praise God enough for that privilege!

Both the morning and evening services were emotional experiences because everyone knew that the next Sunday they would be on their own. It was not possible to fathom the anguish that they felt in this regard since they did not verbalize their feelings. However, evidence of it was felt everywhere. In fact, it was too painful to speak about because this was an unprecedented move. To work oneself out of a job brings with it its own emotions, yet to actually do so was a tremendous privilege for us—the opportunity of a lifetime!

That afternoon, Elna and I went to every home to bid farewell. Many a time we had entered there on a friendly visit, on business or to deal with some illness. It all seemed so final now. One particular plea was that we might not forget their language; by now our entire family was able to communicate in Saulteaux.

In St. John Owen's home a special type of tension was evident because he had been chosen from among the four leaders to take leadership. Among other things, he said, "Now everything will go to the dogs, the way it used to be, except for the church. We will carry on with the services." Those were comforting words.

August 3 was the day! Our desire was to fly out as a family in one plane, but that was not to be; Silver Pine Air came with two smaller planes. We cleaned out the house and signed the church record book with the following words, "Beginning of a second sabbatical, also termination of our Pauingassi stay. They have been blessed years. The Lord has blessed. Praise His name!"

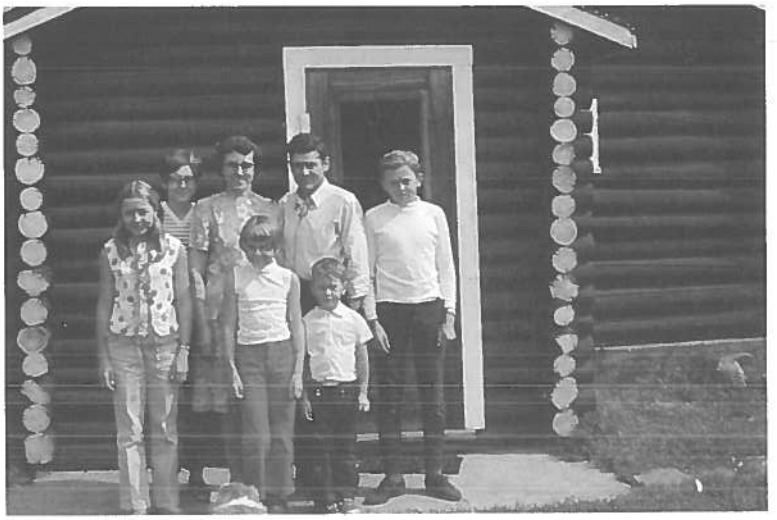
As the planes arrived, many people gathered to see us off. All went smoothly as we again bade our farewells, but we noticed the absence of several people. They either stayed home or went off into the bush because our departure was too hard to face.

Our two younger children, aged five and eight, went with us; the older three went in the other plane. When we stepped off the solid rock shoreline onto the float plane that was moving with the ripples, we suddenly realized that we were without a home. The anguish of leaving hit Elna and me with full force.

As the plane taxied out in preparation for take-off, the pilot was uneasy but understanding and compassionate as he realized

Saying the final goodbyes to the Pauingassi people.

ᐅᐸᐊᑉᑲᓴᖅ ᑲᓇᑲᑕᒪᖅ ᐸᑌᓗᐊᑉᐠ ᓂᑭᐱᖏᓂᒥᓂᓇᓂᐠ



The Neufeld family on August 3, 1970, the day they moved away from Pauingassi (back row, from left)*: Lila, Carol, Elna, Henry, Gerald;* (front)*: Arlie, Merle and their dog Skippy.*

ᓂᓇᐃᑉᐠᐟ ᑲᑕᓄᖅᓴᖅ ᐊᒥᑌᓂᑭᑭᓄᐢ 3, 1970
ᐅᐸᐊᑉᑲᓴᖅ ᑲᓇᑲᑕᒪᖅ

we were choking in our tears. As we lifted off the water he wondered if he should circle to take one final look. "No," I said, "just go straight south; there is no turning back."

Wounds are created in various ways but by the grace of God these wounds also heal. A scaffold is needed to build a house, but when the building is finished, that scaffold is removed. In this setting we were but the scaffold.

16
Continuing Ministry

Since August 1970 when we left Pauingassi, many changes have taken place there, changes that could not be avoided during the space age. As Alex Owen had so wisely commented, "There is a new world out there and it is crowding in on us. Our children will have to make a change." And changes they have made! However, not all of these have been for the good. The need to say "no" to some of the intruding vices during such times of change is hard to implement.

With a natural increase in population and a decrease in death rates, the present population of Pauingassi has risen to 300. This increase created a need for more classroom space. In 1970 the Department of Indian Affairs put up its first buildings, a three-room school and several teacherages.

After some years the Department stepped back and let the South-East Resource Development Council take control. South-East is operated by Natives and is in charge of a number of reserves in the south-east corner of the province. It is a move towards self-government funded by Indian Affairs. A school committee on the settlement makes decisions, such as hiring teachers, in consultation with the South-East office. Some members of this committee are pupils we taught in the late fifties. South-East has also put up a new school building with a gymnasium and all the equipment that schools have nowadays.

Field trips to the city and intramural sports activities within the South-East Region have broadened the horizon of the children in many ways. This also holds true for older people on various committees who now get out to Winnipeg and other reserves. In spite of all these contacts and the presence of television, movies, videocassette recorders (VCRs) and telephones, adults and children still speak their own language in their own homes and out on the path.

For Pauingassi, efforts to obtain separate band status have been underway for many years. To date, the land transfer from the Little Grand Rapids Reserve has been made, the land has

been surveyed and a band office has been built in Pauingassi from which the members do their work. Funding still comes through the Little Grand Reserve. However, they do not have their own chief. This will come when the paper work regarding the land is finally finished between the federal and the provincial governments. Paid positions for the band also help create a number of jobs.

A nursing station has been in operation for some time but there is no resident nurse. The nurses from Little Grand come out regularly to open the clinic, while a doctor from Winnipeg also comes out on a regular basis.

Other types of employment, such as guiding sport fishermen, harvesting wild rice, trapping and local construction have remained about the same. Trapping is on the decline due largely to the decrease in demand for furs and because the younger generation is no longer attracted to this way of life. As a result, welfare forms a major part of family income.

With the coming of Manitoba Hydro in the early 1970s, the settlement literally brightened up a great deal. Earlier electricity had been produced by a diesel motor and the people only had limited service, that is, lights and small appliances. By 1987, the diesel motor was replaced with a power line from the outside. This brought further changes as far as electrical appliances are concerned.

Manitoba Telephone System has erected a 137-metre microwave tower so the settlement is hooked up to the world with private phones in many homes. On this tower, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) also has a satellite dish which brings in television. By now there are also a number of VCRs on the settlement. This brings in the good with an ample portion of the bad.

The language of the settlement has stayed very much with the Saulteaux, their mother tongue. However, the names of various objects, figures, days and months are expressed in English.

Transportation-wise, the dog team is obsolete. Snowmobiles are used very extensively around the settlement and at the trapline. Since winter roads have been improved so that freight can be brought in by transport trucks, cars and trucks are also finding their way into the area. It is very strange to see two or three of these vehicles at many homes on a settlement that has no year-round road. The commercial plane is used very extensively

to get to the trapline or to visit friends on another settlement. Various communities frequently organize baseball tournaments; then the plane is the only feasible way of travel.

The store has continued operation ever since it was started in 1969. At times there have been problems getting a manager, but it has carried on and performed a good service in the community. A second store has also been in operation for a number of years, although not on a regular basis.

The church has carried on just as St. John had affirmed back in 1970 when we were leaving. The presence of Vic and Norma Funk was very important as they stood by when the church was finding its own roots. One of the major events they assisted in was the preparation for ordination of the four local leaders. The stance as standby was of utmost importance while these leaders were taking their place in conducting services and defining the position from their vantage point.

Since 1964, when the first people made their commitment of faith, they had done very purposeful searching in the Word to understand the way of the Lord for them. As we walked together as well as participated in services together, a deliberate attempt was made to gradually pass on the leadership to them. At times Elna and I found it agonizing to see them struggle with the weight of this upcoming responsibility. Painful as it was, it was necessary for them to step out on their own.

Shortly after we moved and just prior to the arrival of the Funks, St. John Owen had been seen standing by the house where we had lived, gazing into space toward the south where we had disappeared. Now a lonely emptiness overwhelmed him without our presence.

However, with the help of the Funks a great deal of growth and gaining of confidence took place. On the basis of this growth the church community gave its blessing to the formal appointment of four leaders that emerged: Jacob and St. John Owen (brothers) and Spoot and David Owen (brothers). With this approval the ordination date was set for February 27, 1972.

Many events in life are based on previous occasions of similar nature. This, however, was unprecedented. Some other church groups in the North required their candidates to participate in a special time of formal training. Due to the circumstances in this case, we felt that the extensive preparations we had worked at together on an informal level were adequate. Furthermore, Jacob

St. John reading his Bible.

ᑲᑐᐢ ᑭᒋᒪᓂᐃᑲᐦ
ᐁᐊᓂᒋᓭ-

Owen had attended the ordination of Jeremiah Ross at Cross Lake in 1969. As an outgrowth of Mennonite Pioneer Mission's work in that community, Jeremiah had been chosen as spiritual leader of the Cree congregation at Cross Lake. Now the four leaders at Pauingassi were ready to follow in Jeremiah's footsteps.

For this important day in the life of the Pauingassi Church, representatives from other settlements and the supporting constituency were invited to celebrate with us.

The chapel was full as we gathered for that joyous occasion. There was singing, praying, praising and sharing of the Word by a number of speakers, including the ordination message by Ike Froese, former executive secretary of Mennonite Pioneer Mission. Participating with me in the laying on of hands were: Jake Tilitzky, chairperson of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada; Menno Wiebe, executive secretary of MPM; Jake Neufeld, worker at Little Grand Rapids; Simon Moose and Isaiah Quill from Pikangikum, Ontario; and Henry Hostetler from Red Lake, Ontario.

By this gesture of blessing, we formally gave authority to the four who had consented to continue the work of the church. As I laid hands on them I realized this was a transfer of authority which the Conference had first given to us. What a blessing to be fellow servants in kingdom building! The position of leader of the group and the authority to officiate at special functions was given to St. John. Each one of the newly ordained men then shared his commitment to the task of proclaiming the Word.

Ordination day on February 27, 1972, for the four church leaders in Pauingassi (from left)*: Victor Funk, David Owen, Spoot Owen, St. John Owen, Jacob Owen, Henry Neufeld.*

ᑲᐅᓇᑯᓂᒃ ᒥᓂᑲᓂᐢᑲᒪᐊᐣ ᓴᐣᓂᐸᐤ ᐅᒥᐠ ᐃᐢᐳᐟ ᑲᑐᐢ ᓴᒪᐢ ᐊᓇᒪᐁᐃᐣ ᑭᒪ

It was hard to comprehend that during our time of service we would have the opportunity of leading these men to the Lord, of baptizing them, then also passing on the authority of leadership to them. It was by God's grace alone that this was possible.

In the midst of the joys of that day were also comments by one visiting speaker that pointed to the intention of creating a split in the solid stand of the group—this split did come 14 years later. As far as the community was concerned the Funk's four-and-a-half-year stay was too short.

During one of our visits back into the community, the comment was made during a service, "We do some things differently now." How great it was to hear those words! It was very necessary that they find their own style. When some found themselves falling into sin, it was ever so heartening to hear that they had gone back to the church leaders and asked for prayer to make a new beginning. The leaders also baptized a good number upon confession of faith. A very conservative stance has developed with regard to the use of musical instruments in the service which does not permit contemporary types of music to enter. For some reason an instrument is linked with a serpent.

In 1979, while Jacob Owen was at a Native conference in western Ontario, he heard some individuals mention that they had a church worker living with them, but that person had left again. Consequently, they felt quite deserted.

Jacob then shared the following with them: "We too had a worker come live with us for a long time, but before he left, he passed on his authority to us, so that we could continue on our own." I was very moved when he shared this experience with me a year later. In the beginning it had been difficult for them to accept the responsibility; now this full responsibility was openly verbalized.

Over the years, the independent groups mentioned earlier continued to insist forcefully that true faith involves baptism by immersion. Until the winter of 1986, the church and the community stood firm. That spring about 60 individuals, the majority of them young people, were immersed in the name of Jesus, not in the name of the Trinity. Some of these had already been baptized by pouring. They have since then also been meeting separately with very lively, amplified music.

At times there is a real change in the community with regard to alcohol for which we are very grateful. The Lord has blessed

and is continuing to bless. What is painful is that this has come about in such a divisive way. The original group has dwindled in number and is suffering because of the effects of this split.

Although Pauingassi has not had resident support staff for many years, the people have not been left alone. On invitation, we continue to make anywhere from four to eight annual visits to fellowship and teach from God's Word. Every summer Elna and I also go in with other staff to teach Vacation Bible School.

What a blessing to be able to continue as part of the ongoing Kingdom building in Pauingassi. We give God all the praise, the honour and the glory.

Henry Neufeld was born in the Soviet Union two months before his parents emigrated to Canada in 1930. He received his early schooling in Leamington, Ontario, and graduated from Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC), Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1952.

Elna (Friesen) Neufeld grew up in Homewood, Manitoba. She earned her teaching certificate at Teachers' College in Winnipeg and attended CMBC for one year.

Henry and Elna were married in 1952 and taught in northern Manitoba for three years. Their work with Mennonite Pioneer Mission began in 1955 when they were called to the Saulteaux Indian settlement of Pauingassi. This book recounts their 15-year experience there.

After serving two years as pastor of the Springstein (Manitoba) Mennonite Church from 1971-1973, the Neufelds resumed work with their Native sisters and brothers as full-time itinerant workers under the Native Ministries program (formerly Mennonite Pioneer Mission) of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada.

With Winnipeg as their home base, they make up to 30 trips a year to northern Manitoba communities in their preaching, teaching, translating and pastoral ministry with Canada's Native people.