

## MY VISIT TO DAVIS INLET

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My journey to Davis Inlet was an adventure in itself, from boarding a cargo passenger jet just before dawn, being snow-bound in Goose Bay, to rising in darkness once more to continue my trip by way of Labrador Airways.

It was a happy relief to see Sister Joan Baldwin and another teacher but that soon died when I realized that I had to get on an A. T. V. with them. The road conditions were no encouragement for my first ride, nor did it dispel my fear of falling off the bike.

I had many experiences I would like to share. My first week and a half I suffered from culture shock. Then gradually I began to get oriented.

During my second week the caribou season opened, and the village came alive with activity. The whole topic of conversation was the hunt. It was so easy to get caught up in the excitement as the men returned with the caribou.

The elders hold a special place of honor in the village; thus, they are provided with meat by the hunters. The women have the task of preparing the meat once the hunters return. Joan and I were among the women with this unenviable task. I learned that Joan certainly knows how to skin a caribou!!!



*Photo: Peter Power: Globe and Mail*

Sharing is a very real part of the culture of the Innu people. It is not unusual to see women on the road with broom, mop, and bucket, even a clothes washer, all on loan for the day. I experienced the people as being friendly, totally unsophisticated, possessing a quiet nature and a sense of humour. Many of them live in conditions that are unimaginable, yet I never heard them speak of their hardship; for them it is a normal way of life.

To share with you my experiences during the liturgies would be impossible; I can only say that they are a people of deep faith who are very much at home in the Lord's house.

Hallowe'en came, but the boat had not arrived with the candy that Joan had ordered. However, the children did not lose out. We bought candy at the store and made up a hundred loot bags. We even reached the point of giving cookies to the late comers. The evening finished with a party at the school where men, women and children came in various types of costumes. Joan and I both dressed up, with me dressed as Santa! No one knew who we were, not even the teachers.

Joan has a wonderful staff at the school; they are friendly and hard-working, willing to share their table as well as to give a helping hand when needed. While Joan was at a workshop at Wabush, the girls offered to stay with me at night and then invited me to their apartment for a night or two. I certainly appreciated their concern for me. One weekend we hosted three high school students from Nain who came to practice with students in Davis for the Newfoundland and Labrador Drama Festival. On Sunday night they put off the plays to raise funds for their trip. Joan and I enjoyed the play very much.

Before I left Davis, Father Fred McGee O.M.I. arrived. One of his jobs that week was a clothing sale at the mission. I was delighted when I was invited to help in the preparations. After several days of hard work, we opened for the elders first. They had an opportunity to buy without being caught up in a large crowd.

Sale opening for the general public was unbelievable! The crowd pressed against the door making it almost impossible, for Father Fred to open it. Finally, they came rushing into the room, picking up clothing as they went. I was almost taken off my feet! However, all was done in good humor and with pleasing results.

My last experience before leaving Davis was to drive the skidoo to the airstrip to pick up Joan. Under her earlier instruction I had learned quickly how to operate the machine and had a successful trip.



*Davis Inlet Hilltop View  
Photo: Anne Campbell*

I was very fortunate to be in Davis at a time when so many exciting events took place, even if there were sad ones as well.

The people there have certainly made an impact on my life. They have taught me to have a deeper appreciation for the gifts which God has given me and which I am inclined to take for granted. A day doesn't pass that I don't think of the Innu and pray that God on whom they are so dependent will continue to provide them with the basic necessities of life during the long cold winter months ahead.



*"If I could be of service ... in any part of the world ...  
I would gladly do all in my power. ~ Nano Nagle*