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Tuesday, 1 October 2002.

Very mild morning today. Warm. We had our frost a day or so ago. Now it's back to Indian Summer.

Monica and her sister dropped by last night. We talked about the mine. Theresa may be voted out of her position as Chief. The position has a three-year term. One can be re-elected, with no limits. As is typical with folks on the West Side of the Bay: they resist strong leadership. Some are circulating a petition to have her recalled.

The West Side differs from the East Side when it comes to bargaining with the large corporations. On the East Side all the Bands united and bargained as one. They stalled the Quebec government and Quebec Hydro for twenty years – until Quebec realized they actually would have to deal with the Cree. On the West Side, DeBeers is just picking off one family at a time.

Theresa says she doesn't take the hostility personally. It's not unusual for her people. And anyone else in her position would get the same deal. She won't back down. Someone has to stand up to DeBeers.

In all likelihood, the Attawapiskat River will have to be re-routed. The mine is about 5 kilometers to the north of The River – about 40 kilometers upstream from the Village at the mouth of the River. Theresa is fighting to get some issues up front – before much more work gets done. Paramount is the preservation of the land around the Village at the mouth of the River. I suggested that in the end, the village would probably have to be moved. The question was: would DeBeers make enough of an offer to the Band? And I suggested: Not if they could possibly help it. Theresa agreed. The Elders in her community are solidly behind her in fighting to preserve the land; her opposition doesn't come from them. What no one is talking about, however – and what I worry about – is what happens when/if the whole area becomes unfit for habitation. Who finances the transition? That question may have been more or less addressed on the East Side – with Quebec Hydro. It hasn't happened on the West Side. And, at this point, it isn't likely to happen.

A group of Elders is visiting from Waswanipi. They came in last night – on the train – and will stay for a week. They had supper at the Parish Hall last night and will be eating there several times this week. We will have a service in the Church Friday morning – in Cree. I told Elsie I was helpless. She agreed.

From the CBC, a northern Ontario joke: What's a traffic-jam in northern Ontario? Being stuck behind a logging truck that's going 90 mph and being unable to pass! Another: How do you know you're in Northern Ontario? When your snow blower gets stuck on the roof.

The Ministry of Transportation Office in Moosonee called. The machine was working. I was there by 1 pm. THEN the machine was NOT working – and refused to do anything for as long as I was standing there. Tomorrow I'll be there at 8:45 – when they open. Evidently, when the machine works, it works in the early morning. This is now after my ninth try. Everything has to stop while the Ministry of Transportation gets its act together.

The Elders from Waswanipi had lunch today at the Parish Hall: sandwiches and a totally gourmet soup, ending with ice cream! There was a young man – in his twenties – minding them. Turns out that he's a canoeist. Spent some of this summer on the Broadback. I was all ears and questions. He had been very close to my old stomping ground on the upper Rupert and Eastmain. He didn't exactly follow the Broadback. There is a traditional route that parts

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from the River and then rejoins it. If I were still canoe tripping, and if I had maps, I would have gotten that route off him. That's just the kind of information I used to glean from the old reports in the Archives in Ottawa back thirty years ago.

If I am lucky the computer will arrive tomorrow. Also, if I am lucky, I'll be in the house when Federal Express delivers it. They seem to have something of a monopoly here for finicky deliveries. Or, they act that way. If I do not happen to be in the house when they show up (unannounced) they may just send the thing back to Cupertino. I, of course, get stuck with the freight both ways -- plus the second delivery, if I still want the machine. I know I'm an American, but I do appreciate competition (which is generally absent here) all the more with each passing day.

Wednesday, 2 October 2002

I was at the Ministry of Transportation Office at 8:30 am. Virginia Wabano was there at 8:45 -- 15 minutes early. We had jbe's inquiry on line before nine am. The machine worked. No attitude on the network. Ten minutes later I walked out with an Ontario Driver's License. Virginia had psyched out the entire Canada/USA interface! And she cared enough to come to work early that morning.

Saturday, 5 October 2002

The Elders from Waswanipi had their last day yesterday. They leave on the train this morning. Yesterday was a full day. Some of Thursday's activities had to be compressed into Friday. That was because a guy got drunk and holed himself up in his house with a rifle. The entire neighborhood near the house was evacuated. Streets were closed. Fire Engines rumbled from one end of the Island to the other. Eventually a SWAT team from Timmins arrived -- at which point he capitulated, wisely and maybe a little more soberly. No blood was shed. But it's all the Island can talk about.

We did a service in the morning. Hymns and readings were in Cree. The rest was from Morning Prayer. Then, lunch, with a killer soup. Then, a fiddler. Then, the Feast: Moose Stew, all kinds of fish, all kinds of goose, dumplings, potatoes, stuffing, bannock. Even veggies -- for the virtuous. The wedding for Ricky & Corinne is on for this weekend. Several of their Elders -- from Waskaganish -- were also at the feast (while the kids rehearsed the Wedding at the Church with Raymond.) Since I am not doing the Wedding, I got to go to the Feast. Tough job.

The BBC World Service (via shortwave) last night had a report from a Cree community on the East Coast. -- I think Waskaganish (which used to be called Rupert House.) The reporter interviewed some people regarding the impact of the Hydro development. I didn't hear the whole thing. But what I did hear got it right. There is an enormous cultural shift going on, as the land gets used for non-traditional purposes. Whether it's mining or hydro, the Cree can't use the land as they had used it. They can no longer hunt or fish. They have lost the underpinnings of their culture. So they're asking: Where do we go from here? Complicating the shift is the ancestral veneration of the land. The land had always been something that each generation had used for a while and then passed on to the next generation. The next generation is the owner. The present generation is the custodian. That really can't happen anymore -- at least not in the same way.

Also, many of the villages are on the Coast of the Bay, located at the mouths of the rivers. Where the river has been dammed, the entire water flow and ecology is now different. (Here, at the mouth of the Moose River, since the installation of the Otter Rapids Project, there are enormous new sand bars, turning into new land. Before the dam was built you could paddle

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your canoe up to the bank of the River just outside the Rectory door. Now there is a half-mile of lowland with growing alders in front of the old riverbank. The River is changing its course. And no longer is there such good fishing in the River itself.)

Eastmain and Chisasibi, on the East Coast, are both villages located at the mouths of dammed rivers. Waskaganish, on the Rupert River, will be another in a year or so. Everyone in those villages understands that if a dam ever breaks, that will be the end of the village and all the lives in it.

The agony for the leaders in these communities is knowing that, yes, there is compensation. At least – on the East Side – the Cree are getting paid for their loss. But is it worth it? No one knows the answer, because no one knows where future generations can or will go. All the leaders know, now, is that future generations will not be able to go home. That is, they will not be able to return to the land of their ancestors, because that land will not exist. Is this the point of departure, then, for a new adventure for a people who were ancestrally nomadic and had mastered the art of living in this harsh environment – and who may very well overcome other possibly more difficult challenges ahead: challenges that have defeated other cultures? Or, is it a betrayal of the traditions and values of the Elders – and an abrogation of a way of life? That's the question every leader and decision-maker sleeps with – every night.

Early this week the Gulf Coast in the States got a hurricane. Last night we got some wind – not much rain. Today is supposed to be stormy, though not as bad as last night. School is on vacation all of next week. Many families will be heading out of town to their camps today – both north (up and down the Coast) and south (up River.) We all hope nobody has any problems....

Monday, 7 October 2002

Clear night last night.... Northern lights were excellent. Today there is a constant 30-40 mph wind from the southwest. Temps are in the 40's and 30's – and falling. Driving rain, sleet, hail, snow – a wintry mix. No accumulation here, although schools are closed in Cochrane. (Moose Factory is on vacation this week, anyway.) On our mid morning walk around the back yard, Gwendolyn wanted to pick off another few mousies. (She already has bagged several.) I would have nothing of it. She sulked. Hopefully no one is out on the Bay today. Even the planes are getting through only now and then. It's a good day for lots of tea and porridge. I met Elsie at the Post Office and took her back to her house – armed with groceries.

Thursday, October 10, 2002

Computer arrived yesterday afternoon. MS Office & FileMaker Pro are loaded and work fine. Norton needs updating. Retrospect doesn't work at all. Lots of scrambling to be done when Broadband starts up. The kid in the cable office said that could be any time now. Moving files was a snap – thanks to the network. After a few tries I even remembered the password to get into the old Power Book. I hadn't had to come up with THAT since last summer!

Mornings now come with frost. The puddles often have a thin layer of ice. The usual drizzle often has sleet or wet snow.

Thursday is hospital rounds day. I'll do it this morning with Monica. Because of the head cold, I've stayed away from the Elders this week. But things seem improved, so I'll venture out today. I have the parish list organized now into a directory. All contacts are now in one Master File that includes (besides Parish information) diocesan contacts, personnel, and vendors.

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Friday, October 11, 2002

Warm, today. Temp rose into the fifties! Not a cloud in the sky all day. This is what the fall is supposed to be!

New MAC works well, though there are some software issues. I'll bet the operating system changed slightly after Norton and Dantz cut their disks. I'll tend to it when I get hi-speed access to the net; it can wait. Up here, if you want it fixed, you fix it yourself.

I can now actually see who's in all those lovely pictures people have sent me. This is not to complain about the laptop. The laptop did eight years of devoted (and daily) service. And I expect it to keep cranking for many years to come. But it's only a laptop.

David Fletcher -- Treasurer --came by and broke coffee for an hour. We covered a bunch of issues, besides parish affairs.

ONE: My hunch about monopolies was correct. The only delivery service that comes into Moose Factory is Purolator. All the other delivery services (UPS, FedEx) have to hand off their stuff to Purolator. But Purolator subcontracts out to 'Gateway Enterprises', which is a band of locals. THEY are the folks who bring deliveries from Moosonee to Moose Factory. They are tough to deal with. (They also are the folks who load vehicles on and off the train. I had to deal with them four times on that project. Either they just didn't show, or I had to wait HOURS for them TO show. They just don't know how to be helpful.) When I mentioned this to David, he resonated. Evidently everybody has the same problem; and there's nothing to be done about it. Gateway is the only show in town; and they know it. This is unfortunate, because, as Moosonee grows, competition will move in. And then the locals won't have a prayer.

TWO: David is great grandson (or great-great grandson) of John Fletcher. John got his first name from John Horden – the first Anglican Bishop in Moosonee. That's around 1840. John Fletcher was a local shaman or medicine man. Under Bishop Horden's influence he joined The Church.

The Cree name for those indigenous religious figures is different from the term used to identify characters like me. We whites are called, literally, 'flag-boss'. That's because the first missionaries, reportedly, were the first English to have/carry flags. I suggested that, if the missionaries were the first to bring flags that was because they paid for them. It would make sense for the Hudson Bay Company to ignore such matters, because there was no way they were going to make money off a flag. So, the missionaries were associated with flags. And the guy with the collar was the 'boss' – 'flag-boss'.

The missionary priest was never confused with the local religious figure. There is no overlapping in terms of understanding or nomenclature. That's because the missionary was not associated with any of the ordinarily expected spiritual gifts or powers such as divination, prophecy, or exorcism. Also, shamans were not community figures. They were associated with – and part of – specific family groupings. Every family had its shaman – in fact, a good one and a bad one. The good one did the work. The bad one kept other bad ones (people and spirits) away. It's sort of like keeping a vicious dog in the junkyard. Not very pleasant, perhaps, but others will not venture so near.

The Cree were nomadic. The social structure was (and in powerful ways remains) the family. Community meetings and meeting places are a recent invention. Moose Factory has been mingling with white people for a long time. It's very different in the outlying villages. That makes sense to me as I ponder the dynamics, as reported to me, at Attawapiskat and the

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difficulties that community is having with DeBeers (and everyone else from the outside world.) It's a different social system. I now see this family dynamic operating in the weddings and funerals we have done since I arrived in August. It's not that the families are antagonistic to me and other authorities in the church. It's almost as though we are not entirely relevant to the task that needs to be done. So the families have endured me and done what they need to do. When I turned down a couple for a wedding because they had not given sufficient (as per requirements) notice for the projected wedding date, I was described (to someone else) as intrusive, not helpful, and idiosyncratic.

This emphasis on the family as the primary social unit (as opposed to village or church) leads me to ponder on what, then, was accomplished by the different Bands on the East Coast of James Bay. Patiently they waited out the Quebec Government and Quebec Hydro until they got a deal they could live with. They had covenanted to deal as one unit – not as separate Bands. How different this is from Attawapiskat where the Chief is under significant attack from some families who want to do business with DeBeers at any cost. Other families have already been paid for their family 'rights' to specific parcels of land. Unless things change in Attawapiskat, DeBeers will be able to divide and conquer. The Cree are vulnerable to that, although evidently they maintained their solidarity on the East Coast.

I asked David if he thought there ever was the possibility that the denominational cleric might ever be perceived – and referred to – in the same way as the shaman. David thinks no. I have my doubts, however, if/when the parish leadership becomes really indigenous, although, admittedly, the change would occur only over several generations.

Sunday, October 13, 2002

There was snow over night. It is wet and will melt soon – or so I say, at six AM. Tomorrow is Canadian Thanksgiving Day. St. Thomas' will celebrate the Feast next Sunday – after people have returned from their adventures. Thanksgiving is not such a big thing up here as it is in the States. But there will be plenty of vegetables lying around the Church next week.

So far there is a person missing. A fellow – a little older than me – was reported missing or late returning from hunting.

I registered and/or updated: Dantz, Apple care, Apple OS, Filemaker Pro, Norton, MS Office. It took all afternoon. (The Apple download took two hours.)

Monday, October 14, 2002

The snow never really stopped all through the day, yesterday. It was wet snow – mixed with rain. There was no accumulation – just wet and nasty weather. Lots of people were returning home from their camping and hunting trips yesterday in the middle of the storm. Some, like Bobby, anticipated the weather and returned a day early, but there were only 35-40 people in Church Sunday morning.

The older man who had been reported missing is back in town and fine. The alarm about him was in error – though he WAS late getting back.

As people were leaving Church after the Service and in the midst of all the snow and sleet and spray – and everything else -- I asked one parishioner: "Is THIS what you people call Indian summer?" Not skipping a beat, he replied: "No, it's White Man's winter." I should have known better.

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This morning (3 AM) there's not a cloud in the sky, and it's cooler. Less than half an inch of snow has carpeted everything.

Today is a holiday: Thanksgiving Day. Columbus Day is unheard of up here. The kids go back to school tomorrow. They have had a delightful break of over a week – many traveling.

Tuesday, October 15, 2002

Somebody was in the yard last night – a four footed person – or at least that's what Gwendolyn kept trying to tell me. She was quite upset about it.

Sunday, October 20, 2002

More snow last night. I posted the August and September journal installments on the web. Since I am still funneling everything through a jury-rigged AOL account some stuff just doesn't get through – on the first try.

I spent an hour or so with an elderly gentleman this last week. He reminisced about his days of trapping. His style pre-dated the present age of skidoos and high tech. He would carry a 22 and a rifle and an axe. Not much else. Since his overhead was low, his profit was good. The guides I remembered came out of his generation. Little did I realize that back in the 60's I was intimate with a dying breed. No amount of words can describe what these people were capable of. And they are not being replaced.

Picking up on David's train of thought of a few days ago I quizzed Monica yesterday on Priesthood – of the Cree variety. She immediately picked up on the subject, guessing that if the Cree did develop an ordained and indigenous ministry it would have to be on a model very different from white man's priesthood. The white/missionary priest is associated with a social structure that's just essentially foreign to the Cree. Church and community, as social units, are just not as real as is the extended family. What has made St. Thomas' strong for years has been its mixed-breed (metis) leadership. For one who considers herself a REAL Cree, however, the mixture of culture characterizing St Thomas' (or at least its leadership) presents an environment distinct from what brings Cree family members together. I wondered if the Australian concept of 'lay-presidency' ever appealed to aborigines in that world, because it just might allow for holiness to be enrolled – without bringing in the baggage of a white/missionary priesthood.

I, of course, insisted that it SHOULD be possible for a group of people to gather around an altar in worship and to select one of their number to preside at the Feast. Yes, that would be theoretically possible, but that presiding figure would be different from any white priest in the past or within recollection.

Advocates of TOTAL MINISTRY might resonate with all of this. The thing about the Cree is that they seem to be coming in by the back door. That is, they are moving towards a reconstructed priesthood, or ministry in general, not out of theological concern (a theology of the ministry of baptism) but out of their perception of white society's dysfunction or, more positively, out of a yearning to recover their own culture.

Now I have to have a conversation with Jacob Sealhunter up at Chisasibi and find out what he says. Jacob is the only indigenous priest in the diocese.

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Marg Lewis called yesterday or Friday. She is on sabbatical (from School) and is staying at Temagami. (Word that I am up here is getting around....) She plans to be up on the Island maybe in January, visiting with teachers in the village school. Her husband, Dick, and I go back to the fifties. I remember her from somewhere in the sixties. Maybe next summer Moose Factory will be invaded by a flotilla of red canoes. Richard directs Wabun – where I worked for years.

Saturday, October 26, 2002

I already managed to hash up the computer's operating system. Something got mixed up in the 'Directory Hierarchy' – or something like that. I booted from a utility disk and fixed the problem. But then nothing I could do would get the machine to boot from its own onboard operating system. Finally I reinstalled the operating system from scratch. I had two options when I did that. I could do a 'clean install'. That is when you erase everything and simply put the hard disk back to what it was like when it left the factory. The machine will then work perfectly. But, unless you saved it somewhere, you just lost ALL your data. I didn't want to lose the data – about 50 GB so far. So I opted for the second concept, which was simply to add another copy of the operating system and sort of put the previously used operating system into a kind of cocoon.

And it works. It took six hours yesterday for all of that to get accomplished. Now, however, I am down to kilobytes in unused disk space. I can't trash the old – now unused – operating system. The machine won't let me. And I hadn't figured on all of this. I had loaded a lot of the CD's (which work nicely in their new home somewhere on the disk.)

There are new/additional hard disks on the way. And that will give me another 280 GB in storage space – which will help. THEN, I'll be able to store the music in the (nice but bulky) AIFF mode, and there will be lots of room for operating system and applications on the onboard disk. Then I'll do the 'clean install' – not a challenge on a MAC. The data will be safe (tucked away on the new disks.) But I'll have to redo the whole registration/update routine. Hopefully the cable guys are true to their word, and I'll have high speed Internet access by the time I get to that. It IS nice to have Haydn trios cooing softly in the background while you work. But who would have thought only a few years ago that such things could consume a parson's Friday morning on James' Bay? I could have called Apple's 1/800 number. (I pay them a bit every year to hold my hand in such digital crises.) But this is how I learn. If I can just break something a little bit – not a whole lot, then I'll learn how to fix it. And in fixing it I figure out how it works. OS X is an elegant piece of work.

Otherwise, the week has been taken up with Elders and visiting them in their homes. You are an Elder, I am told, when you hit 60. But I also have been told that, even though I am 60 by now, I do not qualify. I'm still too bratty. Elsie has been my guide in these visitations. However, Elsie gets lost about as much as I would, if I were alone. But, bit-by-bit, I'm learning who's who and where they live. It's a slow process. House numbers, street names, postal addresses, even phone numbers are inventions of the new generation and therefore irrelevant to the Elder generation. (Most of the phone numbers on the Island are unlisted, anyway. I don't know why. People like Elsie know everyone's phone number. Marion knows everyone's Postal Box Number. Everybody knows where everybody else lives --except for me, and sometimes, even Elsie.) My questions about such details are greeted with patient amusement and curiosity. I get asked all kinds of questions about the sniper in Maryland (and everywhere else, it seems.) Evidently, being an American, I should be the expert on such behavior.

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Elsie is perfect on home visitations. She knows everyone. She catches up on the news and brings plenty of her own. And it's all done in Cree. She should be training a cadre of others who might like to do this kind of thing. It brings a real lift to people who are isolated, lonely, ailing, and depressed.

Gradually people are returning from the bush. And they're bringing in plenty of food: moose and goose. The Xerox people were getting frantic, because a check had not yet arrived. Nothing could get done until David, the Treasurer, got back (with a moose.) Corporate America (or Corporate Canada, for that matter) has a tough time with such a point of view.

All of Moose Factory Island is divided into three parts: Federal Lands, Local Services Board Lands (the locals call it Provincial Lands,) Moose Cree First Nation Reserve Lands. The Rectory in which I live is on Provincial Land. The house abutting me to the north sits on Reserve Land. (The locals call the cluster of houses on the Reserve lands the Village.) On the Reserve is a High School. However, that high school serves only those who actually live on Reserve land. The rest have to go to Moosonee for high school – at some expense to the taxpayer. And often it takes a while to make the trip. I asked Elsie how that arrangement got set into place, and I'm still not clear about what happened. However, I gathered from her, that education now at least is more accessible than it was – particularly for those not living on the actual Reserve land. Two things I learned:

ONE: In her younger days, if a woman without Band status married a man WITH Band Status, the woman received Band status. That, then, would qualify the children for benefits for which the Cree might be eligible. However, if a Cree woman of Cree Band status married a man who did NOT have Band status, the man did NOT receive Band status by virtue of marriage to a woman who DID have band status. Also, the woman LOST her band status. And all children and descendents henceforth would be ineligible for Band status. Elsie lost her Band status when she married.

TWO: When she and her husband were getting their children through high school, the children – being of no Band status – were ineligible for educational programs put into place for those OF Band status. That meant they had to go elsewhere for their high school education. The parents had to pay tuition as well as transportation costs. For some reason the government assumed the cost of room and board. That means that many of the people of my generation, if they received a high school education, received it at their families' expense.

Raymond and his wife Marion have a similar story. When Marion was sent off to Residential School, her Band status was taken from her. She was told she was no longer a Cree. Only many years later did she get her status back.

I finally got the truck's Ontario Registration Plates. I had told the insurance broker back in Blue Hill last July that I probably would not get the Ontario registration up and running until October. Both she and I knew I was simply lying. These kinds of projects just don't take that long – Murphy's Law notwithstanding. Being generous, however, the insurance people in Maine gave me until the end of the year to make the transfer of Maine to Ontario insurance -- understanding that Ontario insurance cannot take effect until the Ontario Operator's License and Vehicle Registration are secured. Well, it took this long. The actual process was a breeze. It was done in twenty minutes. Living in an 'outlying area' (the term used by the bureaucrats) has its advantages. When push comes to shove they do cut some serious slack. For instance, I had neglected to acquire the proper Customs form for the truck when I crossed the Border. Evidently you are supposed to GET THAT THERE. A very nice Customs Official, in North Bay,

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prepared the necessary documents – all by fax. I think he just could have told me to go back and get it.

I did the truck's registration routine yesterday. That meant that I had to go to Moosonee, again. The docks on the Moosonee side of the River have been pulled out – for the winter. When the taxis arrive at Moosonee, we have to clamber out on to a rock on the shore. Usually the ice starts hugging the shore sometime in November. From that point on, until the ice is safe for vehicular travel, the only way off or onto the Island is by helicopter.

Also, after a bit of sputtering the Ministry of Health decided that I could, after all, have a Health Card. (Health Cards are important things to have when you talk with medical people.)

Today there is a yard sale followed by a lunch kind of thing at the Parish Hall – put on by the ladies. I am told that I will be there. Lunch! Tough job. Then, tomorrow evening there will be a Chinese Dinner at the Parish hall – to raise some money. Another tough job: I am on the team producing the event. I have been entrusted, so far, with getting some of the stuff from the store. Fortunately I have not been asked to cook anything. Bobby is the leader of the team and I guess Executive Chef. I can't wait to discover how he will approach Chinese cuisine.

The weather is warm again – positively balmy. This morning there was a light mist and drizzle. I was walking around outside, at 3 AM, in a tee shirt.

A few days ago Gwendolyn had found part of a moose in the back yard in the early morning around 3 AM. I think she had found something like a knee joint. It was pretty fresh and also pretty messy. When she brought it to me, I took it and threw it into the trash. Fortunately none of the ACW ladies were around while this was going on. It WAS messy. Today, she found another bone. This bone is really quite acceptable. (Right now she is enjoying it immensely in bed – my bed.) I think she has a friend or admirer out there somewhere who brings her groceries. She is finding all these treasures in the back yard where they appear – like manna – over night.

Monday, October 28, 2002

The Chinese Dinner last night went like a breeze. Bobby has some serious organizational skills. (He must; he runs the Community Center.) All the food was donated and prepared off-site by generous cooks. Us schleppers were due at the parish hall at 4 PM. We set things up. At about 4:30 food began to arrive in different containers. The containers conveniently fit right into the steam table. Our main task was to get all the right portions into the Styrofoam containers. Everything was set up on a take-out basis. We divvied the food up into 100 containers. Mealtime was scheduled for 5 PM. At 4:45 people began to show up. No problem; no waiting. They just paid, took their containers (some, as many as a dozen) and left. By 5:15 we were down to six containers. The schleppers divided the spoils. By 5:20 we were cleaning up. By 5:30 we were done. At \$10/serving and 100 servings sold, the Church made \$1,000 net for the evening. Not bad for 1.5 hours work – and not very hard work at that.

I am told that Halloween gets done in these parts. In preparation I've laid in several tons of candy bars. I've been asked what kind of costume I will use. I really haven't had time to work on that one. Maybe next year.

Tomorrow Cliff Dee arrives. He is the Regional Dean, and priest at Kashechewan. He will conduct a vestry/parish séance tomorrow night. Hopefully some 1-5 year goals will come out of that. Then, on Wednesday evening we have The Celebration of New Ministry at the Church. The ACW ladies are gearing up for a covered dish supper Wednesday evening – before the Service

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(which may or may not, then, start on time.) I took extra time at yesterday's service and laid out MY dream: an indigenous (and likely Cree) priest. No feedback, ...yet.

This afternoon I laid in some groceries, as I am Cliff's host for the duration. I even got fresh orange juice! Northern Store is hard to navigate in right now. They have a new manager. He is young. He is energetic. He reminds me of Roger. He has retailing in his blood. Suddenly, the shelves are clean and attractive – the ones that are stocked, that is. Eighty percent of the merchandise is stacked up in different piles on the floor. The staff is frantic. The train comes in tonight. The crowd comes tomorrow. I couldn't find any dishwashing detergent. Oh well, there's always the dog.

Gwendolyn got me up at 2 AM this morning. A bit early, I'd say. But for her it was 3 AM. She hasn't set her clock back yet. I don't know all of what she did outside in her predawn outing. I DO know she rolled in something.

Thursday, October 31, 2002

The Regional Dean arrived Tuesday morning and left only a few hours ago. Because the diocese is sprawled over so much territory, the regions have to carry out a lot of their business in their own areas. Also, because the diocesan staff is limited, the Regional Deans pick up a great deal of the administrative slack. Cliff Dee was here to help make the 'Celebration of New Ministry' happen. It happened.

We had an open Vestry meeting Tuesday evening. Twenty-four people showed up. Most were on time – at 7 PM – remarkable for The Cree, who do not always take the clock absolutely seriously. We didn't finish until after ten. And some lingered beyond that. For three hours, with only one break, just about everyone talked about his or her memories and feelings about the church. From the meeting came material we used in the next evening's service in the form of a covenant. Also, one of the number does strategic planning for the local Band; and he has come up with a plan of action for review at next vestry's meeting in a couple of weeks. We're rolling!

About the same crowd showed up at the service the next evening (Wednesday.) Cliff and I had tuned the thing so that it significantly deemphasized jbe and did emphasize the parish. Virtually all the principals of the congregation were there. And the service was in large part a celebration of their commitment.

Most of the crowd was St. Thomas' folk. There were visitors, however. The organist from the RC Church in Moosonee was there. Also, Theresa, from Attawapiskat. She will be flying home today. And there was a local Chief, as well.

I learned from Cliff that traditionally the Cree did not have Chiefs. They settled their business by consensus within the extended family grouping. It was only with the passage of the Indian Act in the early twentieth century that they elected Chiefs, to comply with the law.

Tonight is Halloween. There still is some candy left for the urchins. I am told they take Halloween quite seriously, so I am prepared. In some of the communities north of here there have been Halloween celebrations going on several nights running. One night is not quite enough. All ages have to get into the party.

It has been snowing all day. We have a couple of inches of powder now. The Church Van wants a week in a warm garage with a friendly mechanic. We'll probably drive it over to Moosonee, where there IS a garage, sometime in November – whenever freeze-up finally occurs. I bought

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boots, long johns, gloves, and wool hat, today. Cost of that little project was \$200. A winter coat is on order. That's another \$500. Warm clothes are not cheap.

The mosquitoes seemed to have retired now till spring. They don't mix easily with falling snow, though with the first flakes maybe one or two will still buzz around to get one last snack. One of my correspondents requested that I expound, yet more greatly, on the subject of mosquitoes. The rest of you poor souls didn't stop me in time. And I may well resume the thread come next spring when the little beasts remind me (again) of their presence. So here goes....

Mosquitoes in these parts are a hardy bunch. One good frost may slow them down. But it won't stop them. Exactly when they get started in the spring I don't know. It will be soon enough. They are aggressive. They fly up your nose. They crawl into you ears. They get in your eyes and mouth. They get in your pants. They bite everywhere. And they bite through everything.

The topography around here is good for mosquitoes. On the West and South Side of The Bay, the ground falls about a foot a mile over sand and gravel and clay. A lot of water gets held back naturally. In earlier days the Moose Cree were called Swampy Cree – and for reason. The general area is one great sub-arctic rice paddy. That makes for simple travel – both in summer as well as in winter – one of the contributing reasons for the traditionally nomadic way of life of The Cree. It also makes life rather ideal for the mosquito. On the East Side of The Bay the land falls through a series of rocky terraces. A terrace may be concave rather than convex – just like a saucer. Water gets caught in the saucer and stays there stagnant in the dry season. Only with serious rains do the saucers get flushed out.

When I traveled by canoe we would always camp in mild weather on the smallest island in the largest lake we could find. The evening breeze would usually keep the great clouds of mosquitoes away – at least enough during supper. At night the tents were tied closed and were more or less bug-proof. On portages or small streams, however, there was no defense. Once, while paddling UP a creek in a light warm mist, I paused long enough to count over seventy-five mosquitoes on the back of one hand alone. My bowman did not appreciate my reverie. We got to the next lake just as soon as possible – after I finished counting.

In colder weather mosquitoes tend to stay close to the ground – a reality of considerable importance to Gwendolyn, who usually is closer to the ground than me. I may be generally unaware of the mosquitoes while she's being sucked dry. Also, first person over the portage may never get bit. Second person may get one or two bites. From the third man on, however, the mosquitoes run the show. By then they are irrationally exuberant. When I canoe-tripped there was always serious competition over who got to the end of the portage first. Last man always got bit worst.

The CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Company) has a repeater transmitter close by. It's one of TWO stations accessible by day. (At night, we get lots of stations – including WBZ in Boston.) The movement of the West Nile Virus FROM THE STATES has Health Canada, Communications Canada, and everything else Canada mildly hysterical. It's not one of our more attractive cultural exports. Remember, all those birds that summer up here, winter down south, and have plenty of opportunity to get bit by virus-carrying-mosquitoes down south. So, one of these days somebody around here is going to get West Nile Virus.

The mosquitoes are especially prevalent and energetic in Moose Factory after a day or so of North Wind. That's because the area just north of us lies between Moose Factory Island and The Bay. When the tide goes out, there can be a mile of exposed mud flat. The slope of the ground close to The Bay can be VERY gradual. Canoes skirting the shore sometimes get caught

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in the mud at low tide. They can move again only when the tide returns. One hopes, in such circumstances, that mosquitoes are the only worry. However, while storms and polar bears can be more exciting, it's the mosquito you always remember.

During the summers I noticed some other things about the mosquito. They are color sensitive. We used to count the number of mosquitoes on the differently colored checks of a woodsman's wool jacket. The jackets were usually black & white, black & green, black & blue, black & red. Black ALWAYS had the greatest mosquito-count. White ALWAYS had the least. (I always wore a white long-sleeved shirt.)

Some people are naturally more sensitive to mosquitoes than other people. I used to react to mosquitoes a lot less than I reacted to black flies. All bugs dislike smudgy campfires. There also are things you can do – or not do – about your skin. Washing in cold (lake) water is ok. I noticed two things, however, after my first HOT shower (usually in Moosonee.) One was that ALL my summer tan washed off. The second was that the mosquitoes suddenly discovered me again. By the end of the summer I had sort of forgotten about them, because they were biting A LOT less. As soon as I was clean once more, however, they bit. (There's a moral there, somewhere.)

Another thing about mosquitoes: specifically mosquitoes in the tent. After you have rolled in for the night...there always are a few in the tent, after you have closed and tied down the flaps. And unless you DO something, you WILL be THE HOST. HOWEVER, if you light a candle (without burning down the tent – and the forest) and spray just the right amount of bug-spray in the tent (without killing YOURSELF instantly with the poison and possible explosion) the mosquitoes will lose their otherwise excellent judgment and fly at just the right speed through the FLAME of the candle – at which point they will explode, spraying mosquito-bits in every direction. THAT truly is a sight for sore eyes after a long hard day. Very satisfying.

On that warm note, in the midst of our first serious snow, I conclude October's musings.