

208-525 Albert Street,
Waterloo, Ontario
N2L 3V5
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Dear Don:

As I mentioned in my July 27 letter, I'm begun to put down some of my ideas about what might be done at Shingwauk University. I've turned first to a possible format for annual reports and fundraisers for the endowment.

Mother's letters from Fort George clearly indicate the special significance of the Christmas season for the Anglican missionary world. They lavished it with all the love they had to give and truly celebrated it as a time for giving and sharing with the native people. In the far north it wasn't just with the children but with their families as well.

Perhaps you should consider using early December as a time to report to and remind people about the endowment. I think you might build on what was established on the commemoration and launch day for the endowment. I'll make a few suggestions (and offer some more artifacts) to help carry through on that theme and, hopefully, sustain interest in (and maintain contributions to) what the fund is doing.

First of all the setting should reflect the past we all drew so much comfort from. Here, I can help. You should use a Christmas tree as a focal point (safely beyond the reach of people wanting mementoes). I have a very large collection of decorations, many handmade. They include old light reflectors (and the lights to use them on), some old glass from my childhood as well as replica glass, metal bells and other items that speak of the past. I also have two collections of painted white pine cones which Marg McLean told me were the essential decoration on the Shingwauk Christmas trees. That's an item that you can constantly update as necessary and, hopefully, eventually do your own versions of in fire resistant paints. I'm sure the children in the school helped to make them along with paper chains which Dad told me they had at home in England when he was a child.

Looking at some of Mother's old pictures of Christmas trees both at Fort George and in the early days in the Sault should give you an idea of what was done. The wild spruces that everyone used were quite airy and had long leader branches. (Annual pruning creates the bushy ones we use today.) The wild ones provided great spaces for hanging decorations in so that they really could be seen. If the fire laws permitted, using a real, wild tree could actually give the impression of taking people back in time to all those old '40's and '50's movies like *It's A Wonderful Life*.

Hugh Hamilton's 57 and I will be on Oct. 9 so we're the same age and from the same background. We've talked about the physical celebration of Christmas itself when we were young -- how it was

less materialistic but more meaningful at that time. We both share similar memories about how special it was to see lighted Christmas trees in people's livingroom windows at night prior to the advent of outdoor lighting. The tree -- and how it was decorated -- spoke of the sincerity of the commitment of us at that time to the season and its celebration.

I'd like to think my mother's seasonal magic could go on being shared as much as possible for as long as it could be. We did not have a great deal to work with when I was a child but Mother sure knew how to use what we did have to build wonderful memories. I will always love her for it -- poverty is never easy but she overcame it with her Christmases.

Candles were always a part of our Christmas although they weren't always lit. Perhaps you could develop a scenario including a tree, some tapers and some of our oldest table pieces in a safe setting. You'll find virtually all the old things I refer to in my afterword to Mother's book in my collection. Maybe I can rescue a few more if Joan hasn't sold them.

A Christmas gathering that Shingwauk School would have been comfortable with included everything that I talked about in my July 27 letter relating to the tea Celia suggested. You would simply transfer the food to the Christmas setting. Let people go everywhere else during the season for the fresh veggies and dips. Let them come back to Shingwauk for what used to be. (Wouldn't it be wonderful if the old chief's final, full realization of his "teaching wigwam" was, in the end, simply *Shingwauk* with no words after it? No "mission school," no "college" or "university," just *Shingwauk*.)

Another tradition you might revive is the iced Christmas cake cut and served during the gathering. You might even sell tickets for one as a door prize or just have a draw if people pay to come for the food. Dad always made his own colored icings and used rolled up waxed paper, cutting the tips in different sizes to produce his Christmas and winter scenes. No fancy frilled icings, just straight line drawings but great scenes. Everyone loved it.

I have no answer for the final detail of tea in actual cups; I don't know how you'd deal with that today. You certainly couldn't borrow them from Kresge's as Mother wrote about in her one letter from Shingwauk and I suspect that if you tried using fancy china ones people would just pinch them. How we have fallen in the face of the greed we're all now immersed in. Perhaps you could eventually acquire a cheap institutional china or pottery set. I suspect you could also offer commercial egg nog in seasonal plastic glasses and just wink a bit at the church past. Although the home of my childhood was dry at Mother's insistence, Mrs. Hayes did serve sherry to her guests at Christmas.

In such a now unique setting I think you could go a long way toward continuing to honor the best of the past while talking about the work of the present and the hope for the future. If you feed the media and keep the conversation interesting, they'll always come. They might even pass on something, too, if you could talk a bit about the setting and how we all sheltered in the warmth of it during those very cold December winters we all endured in northern Ontario when I was a child. We truly lived the sense of sharing in the wonder of the setting and all the special foods.

I know the native children at Shingwauk did not share in everything that we knew within the church community. The former students you talked to were quite right to tell you they don't remember the fancy baking we ate. However, they should be told that they would have shared in that world if they had come to see us after they graduated. (School regulations governed what they were allowed to do and where they could go while they were students; we were all bound by them.) Mother treated all her company the same and welcomed everyone equally. Dad was genuinely delighted when Gladys Otway came to see him earlier this year. I also seem to recall that people from the north came to visit Mother and Dad over the years -- I think members of Sam Iserhoff's family (as Mother's book notes on Page 30 he named his daughter after her) but I'm not sure. There were others but I don't have their names.

What's most important for us all to remember is that we're celebrating the best of the spirit of the past in the present and that we're all sitting at the same table sharing the same food together nowadays. The trestle tables and the tin plates are gone but the extra attention given to the children at Christmas years ago isn't. Let's make sure that we always keep that alive.

What you use the special setting and sharing of food for will depend on you. However, with people in a good mood you'll have the best chance you possibly could to bring them up-to-date on what the endowment is doing, what it wants to do and where it currently stands in terms of its present funds and future financial needs. The Christmas season is a good time to get decent media coverage for your good cause if you handle it right. Share, be interesting, graciously answer questions and don't deflect tough ones -- give the most sincere and genuine answer you can. If you don't know the answer to a particular question always say you'll try to find out and get back to someone. That return call can open more doors in the media than anything else you might try to do.

I can only hope that the endowment will help to record and keep available the full story of the Anglican mission school past with all of its complexity slowly but steadily being brought forward for consideration. Really knowing where we've come from not only helps us to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past but, even more importantly, lets us incorporate the best from the past into our planning for the future.

My favorite novelist is a rabbi named Chaim Potok who writes about Jewish children growing up in New York during the '30's and '40's. In *Davita's Harp* he talks about some people being "possessed of sacred discontent." In the key line at the end of the book he writes: "Be discontented with the world. But be respectful at the same time." Perhaps *Shingwauk* can come to stand for that ultimate human quality of sacred discontent in learning balanced by respect. If my parents' endowment can share in an illumination of the past based on that concept it will have done what I hoped it would. That concept is, for me, the apotheosis of learning.

All my best to you all.

Ken