

# Pentecostal Pastor Reaches Inuit People in Canada's Arctic Circle

**Bill Prankard and his wife, Gwen, have seen thousands come to Christ through their preaching in the northern territories**

When God called Bill Prankard in 1972 to take His word from "sea to sea and to the ends of the earth," the Canadian pastor didn't dream that meant raising up Inuit spiritual leaders north of the Canadian Arctic Circle.

"I experienced the Holy Spirit in an incredible way at a Kathryn Kuhlman meeting in 1972," said Prankard, 58, an ordained pastor with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.

"Right after that, God gave Gwen, my wife, and I Psalm 72:8 as our ministry mandate to take the gospel to our own nation first and then to other countries—'He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.'

"So we left the church we were pastoring, preached all over Canada—from 'sea to sea'—then on our first trip up north of the Arctic Circle, we fell passionately in love with the Inuit."

On that first trip in 1973, a church was established in Povungnituk, in northern Quebec, within a few days. An elderly Inuit man who had never heard the gospel asked Prankard why he hadn't come sooner and pointed to a white cross marking the grave of his wife, who had died just months earlier never having heard of Jesus. It changed Prankard's whole life perspective.

“That man’s plight touched me so much that I made a commitment then and there to bring Jesus to the Inuit,” he said. Today, 90 percent of Povungnituk’s residents are reported to be born-again believers.

Prankard’s commitment has taken him and his wife across northern Canada. The couple has seen thousands of Inuit converted and hundreds brought back from the brink of suicide and addictions. Today, they frequently visit all the Inuit communities they influenced and hold huge conferences for them once or twice a year.

“In many of the communities, almost everybody’s born again. It’s a real book of Acts revival up there. White men introduced the Inuit to alcohol and drugs and destroyed their culture,” Prankard told Charisma from the Ottawa headquarters of Bill Prankard Evangelistic Association (BPEA). “Now the government leaders are Inuit Christians, and they hunt and fish the way their ancestors did because their minds are clear.”

In Nunavut, a new Canadian territory that was formerly part of the Northwest Territories, many of the government’s leaders are Inuit Christians. Louie Arreak, the wife of James Arreak, former director of finance for Nunavut Territory and an associate of BPEA, led an unprecedented revival in 2002 during which a mighty, rushing wind reportedly swept through a church in Pond Inlet, Baffin Island. David Aglukark, a land negotiator representing Nunavut to the federal government, is another one of the Inuit spiritual leaders Prankard has nurtured through the years.

These and other transformed Inuit Christians help Prankard minister to nonbelieving Inuit. Nain, a town of 1,500 in

northern Labrador, is renowned for its animist beliefs and high suicide rate. BPEA workers distributed groceries for a complete Christmas dinner to every family in Nain in December 2002. The ministry is currently building an outreach center there for troubled residents to visit at any time for prayer, encouragement or practical assistance.

Manitok Thompson, minister of education and human resources for Nunavut, said Prankard is widely accepted by the Inuit because he respects their culture and wants to empower the people rather than condemn or criticize them. "Whenever Bill holds a meeting, people from all denominations come because they know he'll give a positive message filled with hope," she said.

Recently, Prankard began taking his team to remote northern Russia to spread the gospel to the thousands of Inuit there. "Their culture is very similar to that of the Canadian Inuit, so they can relate to what our workers are saying," said Prankard, who visits Russia twice a year.

Although Prankard's passion is to reach the Inuit and other northern peoples, he started the River Outreach Centre in Ottawa in September because he believes Canadian revival needs to start in the nation's capital. The charismatic church already boasts several hundred members and a school of evangelism. BPEA hosts two TV shows, and Prankard preaches in churches around the world, from Ireland, England and Sweden to Korea and Japan.

**Josie Newman**