

Mrs. Caroline Brooks,  
Truro, Nova Scotia  
(Whycocomagh)

I remember what happened from a long ways back from 1910.

Lil - you moved over here? How did the Indians make a living one time ago - did they move around from place to place and did they live in wigwams.

- Yes, before St. Anne's mission there was hardly anybody in Whycocomagh Reserve. They all go to Mabou and Port Hood. They go there to work and make money in preparation for the St. Ann's Mission. They made butter tubs and they made baskets whis is what our parents did. This is how they made a living and people will only dress at the St. Ann's mission in Barrahead. We would go to Barrahead and there were no trains. There was a train going to St. Peter's but I don't know how many trips it made in a week. We would get on the train or we would go by boat. We went across on a small dory. My brothers and his wife and their 8 children and I. We would fill up the boat. This was a large boat it could sail and it also used oars. We took a short cut. They would take the boats throught the short cut. We would stay over night in Malagawatch. When we arrived first thing we would do is cook our meal. The eels are very good in Malagawatch. When we arrived first thing we would do is cook our meal. The eels are very good in Malagawatch. We went through Alba. We spent the night over, Sag Newell's, he was still living at that time. My mother wouldn't make our dresses until she got on the boat and also she made little shirts. She would sit in the back of the boat. She would finish her sewing by the time we reached Chapel Island. It took us 3 days. We travelled for 2 days and on the third day we landed in Chapel Island. There would be a boat there belonging to every family. We got our water from the other side (Barrahead Reserve) I remember it well. Until 1910 they changed the (gomodi) place where the boats berthed. They had to leave their boats on the other side (Barrahead Reserve side?). This was Barra Head. When we landed in Chapel Island the men would get the poles for the wigwam at night. There used to be a big wigwam on the island (Council wigwam). This is where the men nesk ka wault digek and they had a big

banquet. The women would bake bread in the (pep nok) (iron pots). They would take these to the feast. They would make tea. In the afternoon after the mid-day meal this is when they did the neska ka woult dig eh. This is Tuesday after the procession. There would be some that were Chiefs, captains. They did different jobs. There were no cars, no gasoline boat, there would be just boats. And the ones that arrived by train at St. Peter's who were on their way to the island. Peter Cremo had a big boat he would meet the people in St. Peter's. The ones who came from Whycocomagh and the ones who could go all the way to Chapel Island they would leave their boats in Barrahead. Not everyone had a boat. An old lady, Esther would stay home to take care of the cows. She would tend the cows while we were away.

Lil - When the men were (neska ka wah ditch) (banquet song) did each man from one reserve have a different song or did they all sing the same song?

- All the reserves were represented. Each one would sing a meska ka wet song. The men would take turns singing. Then they would have the banquet. Women would bring bread and butter. This is what I remember. And each time a new group of people arrived a cannon would be fired. This was aimed towards the sea. People would keep arriving, by two days all the brichbark wigwams were standing up. If you wanted to save your wigwam poles for the next year if you lived to the next year that is - you would put them away. They used to store their poles in the graveyard - people would mark their bundles with their names on them but usually the next year they wouldn't be there or some would be missing. Not too many people found their bundles intact. It seemed like water was scarce. The water was of a reddish colour - you can't drink it - it tasted funny. Monday and Tuesday we had the stations of the cross. The little crosses were set up from the church to where the big cross was located. That cross toppled down in 1910. I remember when they used to do the Indian dances. I was amazed to see the dancing ring still is showing (hollowed ring) but it's been a long time since they did the Indian dancing there. I have been attending the Indian mission. I never missed even when my children were very small.

The people would danced on that ring. I think the last time that they danced on that dancing ring was at the celebrations held after Gaberial Sylliboy was sworn in as Grand Chief. I think this was in 1910. It was a long time ago anyway.

Lil - Grand Chief Denny died in 1918 so it must have been after that.

- Well, anyway there was a big celebration. A banquet was held.

There was a big wigwam that was built last summer. The entrance faced towards the sea. The old wigwam that I remember seeing it's entrance was towards the dancing ring. When the men were having their banquet the men sat around the dancing ring. This is where they danced and sanged. We had enough prayers back then.

Children were taught catechism to ready them for their <sup>R</sup>first communion.

The Indian choir would practise their hymns. Then there was a big house this was the cook's residence. This is where the priests ate.

There were more priests than now who used to come for the mission.

They came from all over. My parents got married in Chapel Island.

After the mission my mother was taken home to Eskasoni. However, she didn't stay long because she didn't like Eskasoni because she said that food was scarce there.

The only thing they had in abundance was potatoes and turnips and other garden vegetables. My mother didn't

like meal cake. They had no flour. At that time they didn't have

flour just corn meal. People ate a lot of beans. My mother didn't

like the meal cake and besides there were too crowded in the house

that they lived in. So my mother left for Whycocomagh. She walked

all the way to Whycocomagh. She crossed over at Christmas Island

but she didn't get on a boat. She said she ran and finally made

it to Whycocomagh. My father arrived at about the same time. I

remember when my older brother Joe got married. He married Annie

Googoo of Whycocomagh. Their wedding was held in our little house.

Old man Stephen Sapier was staying with us at the time. He was

kicked out of Stephen Morris's because he was too messy. He was

very old. My mother found him on the road and brought him home.

We took care of him until he died.

My father was given land. Old man William Gawa was his father in

law. There was all kinds of livelihood - people made baskets but

there was no flour. If you wanted something sweet you mix

the meal cake (monce a dak)\*mix it thoroughly\* by this method the

meal cake would taste very sweet. My father stole a piece of the

meal cake one time - it was only about the size of a quarter. This

is what the boys could get just bits and pieces of this meal cake.

A lot went on in Chapel Island one time.

Did you ever hear stories of when the leaders had a meeting on the island and the feast that was held afterwards?

- yes, they were dressed up in Indian clothes.

Lil - They had a dance afterwards I heard.

- Yes.

Lil - Did the women also dance?

- Yes, they were also dressed in Indian clothes. They danced on the dancing ring. That was a big circle.

Lil - Did you ever hear of widows doing a dance. This was a special dance when a woman became a widow during the year she and the other widows would do a dance and people would offer them gifts. I am not too sure of this but one time a woman told me a story and I think that a woman would be offered gifts while she was dancing, people would put their presents on her back.

- I have never heard of this. I don't remember from 1910 on this is when I started getting interested in what I heard and listened and watched.

Lil - Did you ever hear of that rock which is on the island. It used to be called gil sak a dek. Before the rock was placed there the Indians used to have a service there right on that spot. They used to build a big fire there and offer their sacrifices. The Indians used to throw in their things in the fire anything that a person loved most he would throw it in this fire as an offering to their God. The smoke going up was called peg id den am a dig ek.

- I've never heard of that one. That must have ended a long time ago.

Lil - When the first priest came to the island, did you ever hear stories of when the Mohawks used to pester us by throwing stones at our wigwams?

- Yes they came to Halifax at Keſſecque but I don't remember. I came to Truro in 1914, and I am still here my people have all died. Yes, there weren't too many of them but they were old, they must have been healthy. Take old man Francis B<sub>e</sub>rnard and Uncle Charlie's father, he was old. They must have been healthy or they must have had some way of curing themselves when they were sick because there were no doctors in Whycocomagh.

Lil - and they didn't have operations?

- No.

Lil - Do you know any Indian medicine?

- Yes a little. Pagosi and kave ka sos and eptch away this is what the old Indians used to cure themselves with. When a woman had a baby she was given treatment. Glos tok a ka wot. This is what the old people used, they boiled them. This goes in the blood stream and it purifys their blood. This is what they used to cure themselves because there were no doctors. I don't recognize the other side anymore. <sup>(WHY COCOMAGH)</sup> When I was a girl I would skate across to the other side. I would take 2 or 3 tubs to sell at the store. I would buy kerosine and molasses, tobacco. I don't remember how much I got for these tubs but I would skate back to Whycocomagh again. The grocer would buy all the butter tubs you take him. His name was John K. MacDonald. ~~He got a woman from Philadelphia.~~

Lil - Can you tell me how the Indians cooked his food?

- Yes. (no den a mak en) by means of a fire outside and one inside the wigwam. Then they used to make their bread in a cast iron pot which they hang over the fire. They cooked eels, but you always had to pay for milk in Barra Head. I think it used to cost 5¢ a quart. The woman used to come around the island selling milk,

butter, sour milk and cream. It's amazing how much you could get from a cow. Then the Indians used to cook what they call (4 cents) (fried bread) they cooked these in a frying pan. Or one would make bread cooked in the sand because the fire kept going all night. They burned hardwood. In the morning when you hollowed the sand and you put your bread in there. The bread would be cooked nicely risen and brown. They used to stay on the island for ten days and they cooked all their food on the fire. Tea, potatoes they took a lot. They didn't have tents or cabins they all lived in birch bark wigwams. The Indians strived hard to make a living at one time. You didn't know what a deer was. They butchered their cows for the winter next and they knew how to keep it fresh. They also had a place to store their potatoes. What is the name of this? The way we were born ourselves we didn't have a doctor. The baby would be delivered, women would get together, each one would take her <sup>L</sup> bunch they would have a banquet - a picnic. They would go in the wigwam every now and then. Lil - Did they have a wigwam for this purpose.

- Yes, there was a big wigwam. Men would have a banquet, men would sit outside the wigwam, the woman would bring bread for the meal. Afterwards the men would nes ka wod dig ek. The woman would be busy on Saturday making bread. After procession on Sunday the banquet would start. They even played ball - big men would play ball. I remember my uncle Mr. Big Eye he was burned there. He threw in a cinder in the butter tub and it exploded. The explosion didn't spread anywhere it just caught fire and I remember Joe Morris he was burned by the cannon. They got hurt by that cannon that is why they finally left it alone. I remember my uncle Mr. Big Eye would be walking down the pathway carrying a nog sa ga teo a. This coal was still burning - he would yell to the woman to keep away he would

say, "watch out, get out of the way."

This is all I can tell you right now or do you have any more questions written down?

Lil - I wanted to ask you about the greeting that was given to the visitors from the mainland, when they came to Chapel Island? I think it's called kwa dull lok da dim.

- I don't remember. I have forgotten, that was done a long time ago.

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