

ROSE & AGNES GORMAN - BERWICK, N.S.

Agnes - When we get compensation, I don't want it myself. See, I am 78 years of age now; I can't spend it. I want it to go to some of the young Indian girls who are to be teachers, doctors or lawyers. I don't know why they can't now.

Lil - You know what they're doing now; they are going to stop paying for our college education. They are introducing this new policy; I don't know if it's going to come into effect this Spring sometimes or when. That is the most important thing I think.

Agnes - Education..I don't know what we can do about that.

Lil - This is what the majority of the Indian people are saying, when we get compensation, we want to ask for education rights that Indian children continue to be educated. This is one of the important ones. This is what everybody agrees on.

Rose - Now, what about the land claim? What do you mean...is it just different parts of the land?

Lil - No, this isn't the individual land losses because some of the Indian reserves didn't lose any land like us (Chapel Island); we didn't lose any reserve land. But this claim is for the whole province of Nova Scotia.

Rose - This will have to go back an awfully long time.

Lil - Yes, we have been doing this research for almost five years and now we are presently writing up our brief to be presented to the government.

Rose - Altogether, how many reserves are there in Nova Scotia?

Lil - I am not sure if it's 78 or 48.

Rose - It must be 78.

Lil - There's some where nobody's living on them and there's some that are surrendered lands but we still did research on them you know we say that they were illegally surrendered.

Rose - But that is another thing. How could you tell, I mean that that was Indian land if you went to the court to the town hall, they wouldn't let you see the records way back. You'd have to have a lawyer.

Agnes- Stu Killen did that.

Rose - I know but if the person there knew what they were up to, they could call those records from you, you see. They would have to be speeded up.

Lil - We did a lot of research on the Indian Affairs records and from all these places where deeds are kept, but I know what you mean. We did research on centralization; I guess you

know about that; it happened in the 40's when Indian people were going to be moved into two reserves where all the Indian people of N.S. were going to be moved to. All this material was screened first by IAB.

Rose - Oh yes, I remember that.

Agnes- Why was that?

Lil - Well, the government meant well by it I suppose. They wanted to centralize the Indians, build schools, hospitals for them.

Agnes- And how were they going to make their living? Were they going to take care of them?

Lil - Yes, oh the promises that they told the people because I did interviews on that. They threatened the people, told them you have to move over or you wouldn't get help. You had to pay for your own doctor and hospitals. You have to pay taxes and all this and you have to go. And the promises were: We will give you a brand new house, it will be completely finished and we'll start you off in your old occupation. If you're a fisherman, we'll give you a boat and all the fishing gear; a farmer would be given a start. This is what they told the people but it wasn't true.

Agnes - Because the Indians don't make their living the same way .. Like in Truro, those girls they all go downtown and do domestic work.

Lil - A lot of people moved.

Agnes - We're a lazy bunch anyway in Nova Scotia.

Lil - Yes, I found this out from the older people; they say the younger people are lazy.

Rose - Well, they didn't have to rush the people.

Agnes - And they don't want to help either all they need is their welfare cheque, go down to the liquor store, that's all.

Lil - I don't think that's true for all of them.

Agnes- No, not all of them.

Lil - I know a lot of men want to work but there's no work.

Rose - And now there is sort of a backlash against the Indian, all because they see what they hear on the radio and all, you know, same with what they did with the coloured in the States there. They wanted this and they put the backlash on them and they got nothing, you know, they only got killed. Some of them couldn't fight the government no matter what they did to try and there weren't enough of them. Well, I don't blame the coloured because down South a coloured person wasn't allowed to ride in the bus in the front. You couldn't walk

on the street, if you were walking on the sidewalk, he'd have to get off the street.

- Lil - And they had separate restrooms from the white people. I know my brother was in Florida one time; he was in the American Navy and he was in some public place and he wanted to go to the white restroom. Well, he didn't know the difference and the proprietor stopped him and told him he couldn't go in there. His white buddies got very angry and they all walked out of there.
- Rose- Yes, that's what they did and they wouldn't allow them to come in the front door of their homes; they had to go in from the back. They are still doing that today yet. Now this George Wallace is running for the State, he was very bitter against the coloured and now he's come up a little better because he was shot you know. He even used the axe on them, chased them out of his restaurant. He wouldn't allow them in.
- Lil - I remember those times because I was living in the States back then.
- Rose- Yes, a human being couldn't eat in a restaurant. That's terrible. Now, that's the same with the Indian down the store; they get leery when they see an Indian coming in because they are afraid that he'll steal something.
- Agnes- When an Indian girl goes in a store here, they'll keep their eye on her. I can't blame them because we have a bunch in Cambridge; they used to go out with five dresses under their coats.
- Lil - It's not just us, I know--I read papers.
- Rose - Well, they have to when they couldn't get the work or something. What else could they do when they get a dollar a week or something like that - not enough to live on. You can't blame them sometime for stealing you know.
- Lil - Well, anyway our research is over. We got this money from IAB to do this research and now we're finished this March and they're making that brief now. What I am doing now I guess is getting proof that Indians have never received compensation. This is what Buchanan asked of us, so I ask the Indian people if they ever received anything from the government in the way of relief or medicine, doctors, hospitals and what Indians get from the use of the land. I ask them how their parents, or husbands made a living. They made a living from the land, right? Indians had their own ways. They had everything, e.g. their own medicine, we're saying they had their own education systems. Before the white man came, we divided up our territories into 7 districts. This province here was divided into 4 districts and these were big territories. Then the other three were P.E.I., New Brunswick and Gaspe. In each district was a district Chief and they had one grand chief and the Council held a meeting every year and men were allotted hunting territories. And we got all this now. See these numbers here, 18, 19, 20, 21 belonged to the Annapolis Band.

Agnes - What's Kings's Co.? We vote for King's. Annapolis and Digby, that's who we are voting, but we don't vote in the Indian elections.

Rose - You know, they wouldn't allow us to vote in the Indian elections at Cambridge, why is that?

Lil - I don't know.

Agnes- And we're registered Indians, I am 1201. Can you find out?

Lil - I guess so, but I am not going to promise anything, but I don't know why.

Rose - We used to vote every election but this time we couldn't. We went down to vote but they told us it was illegal for Indians living off the reserve to vote. Well, that's not fair because we all belong to the Annapolis Valley Band. I didn't see any minutes where were disqualified.

Agnes- I talked with a fellow there, not John Buchanan but another one. I told him we should have the oil rights of Sable Island. He said "the Indians have never been on that Island." There used to be land out that way. So he said "can you prove that there were Indians on Sable Island?" I said, "can you prove they weren't."

Lil - What did he say?

Agnes- Well, he said "that's a good question."  
We shouldn't sign off unless we get 3 percent, stick with those Eskimos up there and get all the resources.

Rose - Well, I don't think you could name a place where they have construction on the Indian land. I mean, where white people have built like Ca een on Scotia Gold, I mean things like that.

Agnes- Well, all this land used to belong to the Indians, didn't it?

Lil - Yes.

Agnes- Well, when they had the war, the soldiers that came over here were given so many acres for fighting for the British Empire. So that is how come they had all those grants.

Lil - Well, we have proof now that Indians are aboriginal from those diggings.

Rose - But where did the Indians come from in the first place? That haven't proven that.

Lil - I guess no one will ever know where they came from.

Rose - Because they have found different things in the South now.

Agnes- Well, when they came, they found the Indians here first.

Lil - Well, some people think that we are probably one of the last tribes of Israel. Abraham is it, or Moses?

Agnes - Is it Kane?

Rose - No, there were 12 tribes. They scattered all over. One of them, like the dark person was from Kane and they claim that the countries that they lived in like the Japanese and Chinese and others from Southeast Asia. And some from America you find them nearly all kinds and the Indian down there in South America is just like the Indian only they wear different kinds of outfits. They have straight hair but most of them down there wear hats and shawls and they sell their baskets and handwork. They come down to the towns.

Rose - What is this for, the Aboriginal Rights? We have that now.

Lil - Well, we have proven about that first question of Buchanan through Anthropology- historical fact - and the diggings like this summer in Wreck Cove. All the things they found prove that Indians were here 7,000 years before Christ. And also in Debert.

Rose - And then they found that burial ground in Pictou; I don't know how old they claim that to be; I think one of those scientists said it was only 300 years old. This man was digging a sewer and he came across some tin or something and when they dig it out, it was copper that the French had used I think and they they found skeleton bone. If you go down there, you'll see all the knives and all those things that they used in those days. Also the little utensils look like birchbark and then things that they wove. The dresses look like they were made from rushes or roots.

Lil - What kind of rushes? Do you know?

Rose - I don't know but they look to me like roots. They have a book there about that history. I heard that they want to take those things from those people.

Agnes - You know the cat tail roots, the Indians used to use those for potatoes.

Lil - I didn't know that.

Agnes - Oh sure, they had to live off the land.

Rose - I read in the digest about all those plants and roots, anything around you could use for food. And you know, those little burrs that stick on you, well they peel those little seeds off there and cook them.

Agnes - The people of Nova Scotia are different from those out West. I've travelled out west three times. They have beautiful farms out there and they work them the government a couple of calves or cow or something and the Department furnishes everything for them, all the tools, etc. Some wealthy Indians out there.

Lil - How did your parents make a living?

Agnes - We had five acres. This land was bought from Mr. Dodge and we had a farm and we grew few vegetables and mother had a cow; we had a house that dad built. My father used to fish and he used to trap for foxes and mink and all that kind he made his money on.

Lil - Where was this?

Agnes - Right here. We own five acres here. That's why we have to pay taxes now because we don't live on the reserve.

Lil - Where did your father live before?

Agnes - Bear River Reserve and mother was from Falmouth or Newport around there. She was a Brooks. See that hunting territory in your book there. Joe Brooks, No. 25. That's where she lived. Is that Indian land I wonder?

Rose - That's government land because our grandfather lived there; he was a ranger for the fishermen on the lakes down there. He lived there and I guess today he would be what you'd call a squatter. You should go and interview our cousin who lives in Stillwater; his name is Dick Sayres. He is a war veteran and he has a nice little home there. He came home on the same boat my brother came home on. And for three years he didn't get any compensation or anything from the government so finally the priest in Windsor asked me to try and locate him and to find out about pension and they wanted to build him a home because he wasn't on the reserve and the Indian Affairs that time wouldn't do anything. Same here, they wouldn't do anything for us. When my Dad was sick, we came home to take care of him. They wouldn't even give him tarpaper for the roof to keep the rain off. So as soon as we built here, made a home for him, well, they jumped us for taxes right away. For three years the sheriff told me he'd sent us a dispossessed notice. "Now", he said, "make a test case out of this. Don't pay your taxes." So we didn't for three years. Naturally they sent us a dispossessed notice so I sent the letter up to Mr. Rice. He was Superintendent then, so he came down and told them that we never paid taxes here before and why should we pay taxes now. So I told him you kicked my father around cause when Dad was sick the county wouldn't help him because he was an Indian; the town wouldn't help him because he was up here in the county, and the Indian Department wouldn't help him because he wasn't on a reserve. So they just kicked him around like an old football. Well, they wanted me to pay taxes and I said that I wanted to be on welfare when I get old so that's why I am on medicare and all this now. That's why I don't want to say too much. They might take that away from me. Do they get that on the reserve?

Lil - Yes, but I just found out that some medicine isn't paid for by  
Rose - MSI. I went to a meeting in the Nelson hotel with Margaret Francis and her daughter and I asked about these bills because they sent me a letter at Halifax and they told me that the government wouldn't pay my bills because the Chief's wife in Truro, she

said "you stick with the Indians; go and tell them you're an Indian; you are not paying a cent." Well, they did it. They wrote right back and said "you are not a registered Indian; You don't live on the reserve." So they said that I'd have to pay and I've been paying right along till I got Medicare when I was over 70.

Lil - Was your father able to do Indian work?

He made axe handles and baskets and he could make snowshoes.

Agnes - I made baskets when I was younger. Let me tell you a funny story. We went up to Eskasoni. I taught school up there in 1919. So Dad went up hunting in one of these high mountains. He went and set snares and traps. Some of the Indians there skinned the fox and just left the carcass there.

Lil - You taught school in Eskasoni?

Yes, in 1919.

Agnes - How is it that little girl you are with doesn't go to school.

Lil - She quit school in Grade X and she just finished upgrading in the vocational school and she'll be going to a hairdressing school in the Fall.

Agnes - She should try for something because they have every facility in the world now, whites and the Indians.

Lil - We have more opportunities now but some of us don't take advantage of it.

Rose - That's right. You've said somethin there. If they have a little more goal to them but the majority of them who lived on the reserve never had the chance.

Agnes - Everything was handed to them.

Rose - And the Indian parents wouldn't allow their children out to do this and that and when they did send them to school, they claimed the school didn't teach them anything so they sent them to religious schools. We say they didn't have a chance but they really did. I don't care who it is, they all have a chance in this world to do something.

Lil - Now they want to discontinue helping the Indian kids, the college kids.

Rose - Well, is that due to inflation?

Lil - Probably.

Agnes - Because they are cutting out the hospitals.

Rose - I don't see why..now Eskasoni is a big Reserve as well as Truro. They could have a college somewhere between Shubenacadie & Truro, you know, if they could have the money to build a school where the girls could study to be nurses or doctors or dentists. They could have buses to commute them to school.

Rose - Another thing I can't see them teaching is the Indian language. It's a non-Indian world today. We don't have any factories or industries.

Lil - I think Indian language is worth preserving.

I have interviewed a lot of old people and I have learned a lot of the old ways of the Indians. I guess you know the Indian was never stuck for anything. He could improvise, e.g. making cooking utensils out of birchbark.

Agnes - The Iroquois out West use the cow or buffalo stomach, dry it like a bladder and cook in that. They displayed that in New York at one of the shows down there. They drop stones in there to heat it and the Indians used to take those hot baths. You make a big hole, put rocks in it. It would turn red hot then white hot and then put spruce boughs over the rocks. They'd go in there and sweat.

Lil - This is what we did too.

This is your own house built with your own money?

Yes, the mortgage is all paid for. We've taken care of the repairs ourselves.

Lil - You've never received any help from the government?

Agnes - No. The only thing that he got was those slips just a couple of months before he died. We'd get \$13 worth of food. They'd give you salt, salt pork, etc. and he used to exchange some of this for tobacco.

Lil - This was every two weeks, wasn't it?

Agnes - Yes. Boy he had a hard time of it. He used to go around at labour and when he got sick they wouldn't help him, of course, we had an Indian doctor here in town and he came. I always paid my expenses at the hospital when I went there. I had to pay for all my medicine and my travel from here..Halifax, and my it's getting high. The last time I was charged \$35 return and the waiting time on top of that, so I couldn't afford that; so the doctors here at that time were sending all the different people to their own localities so they could get this Medicare.

Agnes - You should lay claim to the Isle de Haute. They say it belongs to the French now. Years ago all the Indians from St. John, N.B. and all the different localities near here used to go there for the summer vacation like and meet with the Jesuit missionaries there and they used to cook dogs for the missionaries. They thought that was an honour and then they used to perform all the marriages and the baptisms and different things like that communion for the Indians and they used to stay there a couple of weeks and after everything was all over they used to go back to the different places over France or wherever they came from... the Jesuits, so we should lay claim to that island.

Another is the Kedgie Park, all of it belonged to the Indians. They should have a park there for the Indians to go there and enjoy themselves too.

Rose - One thing is, the revenue coming from that land should be coming to us.

Lil - To be compensation

Agnes - What are we going to do with it when we get it. Is it money?

Lil - Well, they are going to ask the people. But at this presentation, when I was listening to him, he said that most of the people agree that they want education rights to be guaranteed through statute in Ottawa; more economic development on the reserves. But then they are going to have meetings, tell people what is happening, and what they are going to do about the Aboriginal Title Claim.

Rose - Well, let the people know ahead of time, like the Indian News, because by the time we get the people, meetings are all over.

It would be wonderful now, if some of the compensation is going to be on education. I was wondering if they got anything from this land because there is no construction, industry, or things like that. The Park is the only thing that is bringing in money now. If they wanted to, they could get a certain percentage of this money and divide it into the bands to educate their children or something.

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