

MICHAEL PAUL - ESKASONI

A Mohawk was killed in Chapel Island I heard.

Lil - Yes, many people have told me that story.

I heard that he was buried in La bloese Island (Ambroise Island).

Lil - People have told me the different places which they heard that Mohawk was buried but the most people have told me that he was buried down by the shore directly below the big cross on Chapel Island. Then I read a story by Dr. Rand; I guess you've about him. He tried to convert the Indians one time ago. Well, he says that in the year 1869, the Micmacs told him that a Mohawk was killed and he was buried in Chapel Island. When the Micmac was telling him this story, he said a couple of years ago, which means that this had happened in 1867. Well, anyway, the Micmacs found his grave and it had a sign board on it which said that there were twelve of them who had no evil intentions and need not have been fired upon. Rand says the young Micmacs who had shot the Mohawk man went against the orders of the Chief. It said Chief Tomah. He must have meant old Grand Chief Tomah Denny. The young Mohawks were spying on us. This is what a lot of Micmacs have told me. They were bothered by what they called the AH WISK- OOK (Mohawk spies).

Do you know where MOG LAK-ADIE is?

Lil - Is it called New Campbelleton? The place where the Indians used to go to pick blueberries.

Yes. The Micmacs were bothered by the AH WISH OOK there. They threw stones at their wigwams. Sometimes a stone would land by a person's tea cup while he was having his tea. They couldn't get away from them. When they moved to another location, the Mohawks followed them. I don't know how they finally got rid of them. At about the same time, the Scotch people came to the Micmac village and they demanded why the Micmacs were throwing stones at them. The Micmacs explained to them that it wasn't they who were throwing the stones but that it was the Mohawks. The Scotch people were surprised.

Lil - The band of young Mohawks who used to come down here in the summer time, came to torment us or to instigate war. They were not sent by the Mohawk leaders. This is what I heard. I guess the young ones wanted a war. I heard this from one of my interviews - that man killed in Chapel Island was the Chief's son and the story goes that the Chief didn't send his son down here. I guess that is why there was nothing more done about the incident.

Mike)EL-NOPSE COOK signified the Peace Treaty that was made between us and the Mohawks. We don't have them anymore. What will happen if the Mohawks want to attack us again and we didn't have the EL-NCPSE COOK?

Lil - Old man Andrew Phillips told me a little bit of what the Peace Treaty says. The Chief's Assistant or BUDOOSE, as we call him, reads the EL-NOPSE COOK. He takes a big shell and he says "If we ever need assistance like in times of an attack by our enemies, the BUDOOSE will blow on this big shell and the Mohawks will hear it and come to our aid." I don't know what this means because I know that if he blew on that shell, it couldn't be heard by the Mohawks as they lived so far away; but I suppose they had messengers at the time. From what I read about the EL-NOPSE COOK, when a messenger was sent out on some official business, he was given certain kinds of beads to take with him. He took these to all the Indian villages or sometimes he went to Old Town, Maine where the capitol of the WABANAKI Confederacy was located. At one time, we were allies with the PENOBSCOTS. They also had a good relationship with the Mohawk people. Also when a Penobscot Chief died, the messenger was sent here to Nova Scotia. They wanted us to help them in electing their Chief and vice-versa. Indians were united at the time. There were four tribes in the Wabanaki Confederacy.

Do you remember when Indians used to make canoes and snowshoes?

No, but the Indians from Newfoundland used to make them. There was an Indian here who moved from Newfoundland; his name was Jeddore. He used to make canoes and snowshoes, even sleds. Have you ever been to Newfoundland?

Lil - No.

I was to Newfoundland one time. I went on a selling trip taking axe handles, but I couldn't visit Conne River Indian Reserve because of the snow storn that they had at that time. This was in the early spring. I wasn't dressed for winter weather at that time; I didn't even take my overshoes with me, so I was unable to visit the Indians then.

Lil - You must have taken a lot of axe handles.

No, I just wanted to see Newfoundland.

Lil - I wanted to ask you another question. I have never read this anywhere; I just heard about it. I heard that when an Indian village was set up anywhere, the wigwams were set up in a circle, four or five in a circle. The reason for this was so that the wigwams could be heated by one central fire which was located outside in the center of the wigwams. Ditches were dug and stones were used to make a stove pipe which led to the center of each wigwam. Then sods were laid over the pipe. This system worked like the furnaces of today. The fire had to be made with a certain kind of wood which didn't give off too much smoke, and the people in the wigwam could also keep a fire going for cooking their meals. All the men in the wigwams took turns keeping the outside fire going.

This was like steam heat.

Lil - Old Indians have told me that Indians invented the furnace. This is what Michael Googoo from Whycocomagh told me; he heard this story from his father.

I've tried that system one time. I used a stove pipe. I made a fire place out of rocks outside and I dug a ditch and laid the pipe in it to my wigwam. Don't you believe it if anybody tells you that a wigwam is cold. We lived in a winter wigwam when we used to spear eels in East Bay one time. We kept a fire going all night. We had a banking around it with spruce branches.

Lil - I know some winter wigwams were set up on log foundations and I've often heard my father say that you have to build a wigwam a certain way so it won't be smokey inside.

Yes, if it's too broad, it will be smokey; but if one side is slanted and a little lower than the other side, it wouldn't be smokey.

Lil - Sarah Denny told me that you remember a little bit of the dice game that the Indians used to play called WAB-NAK-KIN.

Yes, they used to throw the dice on a blanket but I don't remember how many dice they used.

Lil - They must have been like Waltes dice.

Yes.

Lil - When Sarah mentioned this story to me, I remembered reading stories of that game that the ancient Indians used to play. One time ago, a Maliseet or Penobscot came down to Nova Scotia for a visit and he was playing that game with the Micmac and I guess he literally lost the shirt off his back because it said he was betting his jewellery like wrist bands, ear rings, etc. I guess they had all kinds of games when they had visitors from the other tribes.

I've never seen this WAB NAK-ENK; I only heard stories about them. I don't remember the name of the Chief who brought back the Peace Treaty beads from Caughnawaga. A lot of men had attempted that trip, but for some unknown reason they didn't make it.

Lil - I heard that my great great grandfather and a man named Mull Pi brought back those Peace Treaty beads.

Where are they now? A BUDOOSE is supposed to keep them.

Lil - We are looking for them. I don't know what happened to them; They only disappeared in 1967.

I've seen them when I used to live in Barra Head. Old man Andrew Alex (Budoose) showed them to me; he even read them out for me, but I wasn't interested at the time. I only remember him saying that if the Mohawk want to declare war on us, we will show them those P.T. beads.

Lil - Did the Indians help each other more when you were younger, and did they share their game like deer, fish, etc?

Yes, when one shot a deer, he had to give some to the elders. Yes, this is what the Indians did at one time alright, or in the wintertime when wood was needed by some old person. Men would get together with a team of horses and cut wood, haul it, saw it and take it inside the house. This was called a frolic. At planting time in the spring, people helped each other out, mostly hoeing for some old person who needed help. Indians helped each other but today, no. Indians in Membertou are well organized and they get along well, that's what I think anyway. When John Noel Paul and I attended a funeral there recently, we observed the people. People coming to a wake brought food with them like bread, cakes, etc. They don't do that in Eskasoni anymore.

Lil - I've heard a lot of similar stories here in Eskasoni. The people here say that a lot of the old culture ended here during the centralization period.

I'll tell you something about centralization. One time we had a meeting here. Ben Christmas was a scholar. He was present. The Indians here in Eskasoni wanted additional land to be bought because the woods here were depleted and they wrote to Ottawa. And I remember we received an answer from Ottawa. Old man Peter Paul Denny read the answer. The Indians from Eskasoni received an okay from Ottawa to buy additional land but Alex MacDonald and the Grand Chief, Gabriel Sylliboy changed all of that. This is why they picked this place to centralize the Indians because of the additional land that was to be bought for the Eskasoni Indians. The additional land bought was the land starting from Moose River to John Bull's. The old Eskasoni land started from Moose River right to where the Oyster Farm is today. It is true that some Indians moved here but a lot of them moved back to their old reserves. I say - the ones who moved back and the ones who stayed on their old reserves, were wise. Membertou Indians didn't move and not too many people moved from Chapel Island, just the Prospers, and Whycocomagh. The Grand Chief left. Why did he desert his church in Whycocomagh?

Lil - Indians were fooled at the time. They were promised a lot of things if they would move to Eskasoni.

I remember Alex MacDonald and the Grand Chief came to the school house. They talked about all the good things that were offered to better the Indians. Houses would be built for them; jobs were promised; and if you cleared your land, you would be paid. This didn't happen. Just the same, they worked for a while. People worked for \$3.00 a day. Alex MacDonald was a smart man and he moved away after he made enough money for himself. His children are not poor today.

Lil - All of the Indians were going to be moved to the two reserves - Shubenacadie and Eskasoni. The promises given were that a new house, completely finished would be built for you, the only thing you had to do when you arrived was to turn the key to your door. You would be paid for clearing your land. You would be started in your old occupation. If you were formerly a farmer, you would be given a start, giving the things necessary to run a farm like animals, farm implements, barn. And if you were a fisherman, you would also get all the equipment needed for fishing and also you would be given a boat. You know, it's no wonder some people fell

for these promises. Alright, a lot of people were well off, e.g. the Prosper from Chapel Island were self-sufficient, making their livelihood from farming. We say that the government didn't fulfill it's promises and broke up the Indians. The Indians were smart at that time from all the reserves, although they didn't have grand houses but they were able to support themselves some how and some were well off. All those things went on the reserves you know, the feasts, games, prayer meetings, Indians helping each other out by the frolics that they used to have.

When the people arrived here, all those things I've mentioned ended. They didn't help each other, they couldn't fish or hunt, they couldn't cut pulp - there were too many of them. Well, they did these things for awhile but soon they were depleted because there were too many people; Indians couldn't help it then - they had to depend on welfare. Wilfred Prosper has told me the changes that took place when the work started to get scarce here. He said "I observed the other men as well as myself. When I ran out of groceries, I had to go to the Agency Office to ask for a work order. When I received this work order, then I had to go in the lineup for groceries." He said, "I was ashamed of this work order. I watched the other men with me, they also felt uncomfortable. Then eventually, we got welfare cheques instead of work orders and gradually a change took place, men started accepting this new way of life, thereby losing their dignity and pride. So centralization made the Indians lose their initiative and made them more dependent on welfare. Indians lost their ambition and their Indian culture. They were raided by the R.C.M.P. when they were playing Waltes. They couldn't even practise their Indian culture."

So, we are including this in our land claim, what happened to the Indians as a result of centralization. We are saying that the government brought about what we call in English cultural genocide.

- I worked in Bedfore, N.S. for a while. I asked John Battiste of Chapel Island to come with me. I told him that there were a lot of jobs available there. They were building a new highway. He said that he didn't want to go there because he heard it was a rough place. I told him, "you mean to tell me you are afraid of a rough town, a big man like you?" I told him, "I am going, I don't giva a damn if they are so tough that they go around chewing steel." I worked there until Christmas. I didn't go back. I moved to Eskasoni in 1924. That is the year when Father Pacifique came to visit and he erected the cross here.

Lil - Did you marry? Did you build a house?

I got married in 1927. I built a log cabin. Later on I built a house. I got some logs and I had them sawed at the mill. I wasn't going to build here. I had picked another lot but my father-in-law sold me this lot for \$11.00.

Lil - How did you make a living?

I made a living by cutting props in the winter time or I speared eels. I used to live in East Bay. I had a camp there. I speared for eels until the cold weather got too severe. I got a living from that. I sold the eels for 7¢ a pound. In the spring I cut pit props and ties. I made axe handles. When I finished making abosut 5 or 6 doz., I took them to Christmas Island or East Bay. In spring, I took them across to Big Pond. I brought back groceries like flour, etc., anything I wanted.

Lil - Did you get any welfare?

No. Eventually, people started to get welfare in the winter - for two months, in February and March. People received \$5 a month.

Lil - Did you have a choice in picking out your groceries?

Yes, but we had to get our groceries in a certain store; we had to go to Christmas Island. But it was only \$5 that you received. You know, what you could get with \$5--100 lb. bag of flour, tea and sugar. You could get a lot for \$5 because everything was so inexpensive then. I remember one time I went to get my welfare order. I took two doz. axe handles with me. I put them on my sled and I went to Christmas Island. I got my order of \$5. I got a 100 lb. bag of flour, tea & sugar. I asked the man if I could leave my groceries there because I was going to Iona. He asked where I was going and I told him I was taking my axe handles to Iona to sell. He bought them from me and I bought an additional 50 lbs. of flour and other groceries. I had quite a load to take home. I came home 10 o'clock that night. That is how I had to struggle for a living in the past.

Lil - You didn't have a horse?

No, I met some men there with horses and they knew I was there but yet none of them offered to drive me home.

Lil - Do you know any Indian medicine?

I don't know too much Indian medicine.

Lil - What is this medicine the Indians call PEGO AK?

PEGO AK is good for wounds or if your skin is breaking out and takes a long time to heal.

Lil - I thought that PEGO AK was another name for plaster.

You could use it as plaster but you have to use balsam. When your skin is having a hard time healing, you put some of that gum on a piece of cloth and you put it on the wound and leave that on until your wound heals up.

Lil - Indians were able to cure excema one time ago but I don't know if anybody living now is able to cure it.

I don't know how to cure excema but just the same I could make a salve for it although I don't know all the ingredients.

Lil - The reason why I couldn't figure out what PEGO AK is, people tell me all the different medicines they mixed and yet what they made in the end, they always called PEGO AK. So Pegoak is either

salve or plaster, but I am beginning to think it could be both from the information you have given me.

I don't know too much Indian medicine but I know how to cure heart trouble. I've cured my son, Peter of heart trouble.

Lil - I wanted to ask you how the reserve was run one time ago, I mean the entertainment part or socials. For instance, can you tell me the festivities that they had at Christmas time?

One time ago, the people used to have a meal on Christmas Eve. They took food to the place where the prayer was held, usually it was the school house. They started going there about 11 o'clock at night. The prayers started at 12 o'clock. The prayers lasted until 1 o'clock. After prayers, the meal was served. Then again on Christmas Day, they did the same thing. The festivities lasted all day and in the evening the night festival started. On this night, people with names like Stephen and Noel were honored because of the fact that it was their name feast day. A flower was taken to these people. This was an all-night affair. When you entered a house, the pot was ready, the table was all laid out. After the meal and Indian dancing, you go to another house for the same thing again. My gosh, people love to eat and they had the capacity for it.

Lil - And they loved to dance.

Yes, this was Indian dancing. (He sang one of the chants for me).

Lil - These Christmas festivities lasted until January 6th, the last day was the feast of Epiphany. Isn't that right?

On New Years Day evening, the people honored were Louie's. This is when the Christmas season ended.

Lil - Do you remember when they had a dance, I guess today you would call it a masquerade dance, but the people who played the parts of King & Queen, cat, devil, doctor, priest, were chosen by the drawing of tickets and these people acted out their parts at the dance. I am not sure if this dance was on New Years Eve or the Epiphany.

Yes, I remember a little bit about it, but I wasn't that interested in it but I do remember a King had to be chosen.

Lil - What about the Lenten season and Easter. Was catechism taught during lent?

When lenten season started, the children were taught catechism. There were teachers picked for these instructions. We attended school at the teacher's house. We attended school all day. These instructions lasted until the Lenten season was over. Then on Fridays during Lent, you gathered switches and you took these to one of the elders. He would say a prayer and then hits your hand three times.

Lil - I suppose you had another prayer service on Good Friday.

Yes, and I forgot to tell you about New Year's Day. They had a prayer

meeting and a meal. This is how the Indians worshipped one time ago, then they gave each other a New Year greeting.

Lil - I interviewed a lady in Membertou and she told me that one of these Holy Days, people used to have a Peace greeting ceremony.

She must have meant the greeting we give each other on New Year's Day. This is what I think, anyway.

Lil - I asked her that already and she said no, but maybe she didn't understand me.

Well, a New Year greeting could be interpreted as a peace greeting.

Lil - I wanted to ask you about the festivities that they used to have at Chapel Island one time ago. Tell me about the old Council wigwam and what went on at the meeting and festivities afterwards. I heard that they sang chants and danced.

Indians at one time had a Mission for 10 days.

Lil - I suppose that they took enough food.

Yes, and they speared for eels there and the people coming from distant places were taken care of. And the Council appointed men to look after the Island. Policemen were chosen and they did a good job. People were not as destructive as today and also they were more obedient, but today if a policeman was too strict in trying to maintain law and order, I guess they would kill him. There was a prayer held every morning and also in the evenings. The priest was there and when the time came for inaugurations of the Council men, there was much feasting, speech making and dancing. There was a dancing circle on Chapel Island, as a matter of fact, it's still there. The Indians called it KIKTO'QOIMIKTA'SIK. You could still see it today. The man who was singing the chants for the dances stood in the middle of this circle. They did the Indian dances, then there was a Council wigwam right by that circle. A lot of people gathered there, some to watch and others danced. I used to dance there myself. The meetings used to be held in the Council wigwam. Business affairs were discussed and also the inauguration of captains and other officials of the council. After this was over, then a meal was held there. After the meal then the dancing started on the dancing circle.

Lil - One of the Council men then started the chants or NESK-KA-WET song.

Yes, the Chief or his men, started the NESK-KA-WET song. He starts dancing at the same time. Then when he finishes, he spreads out his hands and he says to the audience, "I greet you all with a kiss, my brothers."

Lil - Who sang this song, a Cape Bretoner?

Yes, Andrew Alex, the BUDOOSE used to be the one who sings this song and Tom Julian from Afton.

Lil - Did Tom Julian sing a different chant.

Yes, I just couldn't get his chants. Yes, he was a good singer. I loved to hear him sing. I remember one time I attended the Christmas festivities in Afton. I arrived there in time to attend the prayers and meal at the school house. Then that evening, the house to house celebrations. The feasting and dances of the men honored that night, Tom Julian sang the chants for the dancers. I couldn't dance that evening. I was contented to just sit and listen to the old man. I really enjoyed his singing. My friends tried to get me to dance but I wouldn't but the next night I danced. The friends that I went with at the time are all dead now. We danced around the stove. We had a dancing competition. There were many dancers, one by one they were eliminated until there were three of us left - Lamb oge, Tom Doctor and myself. Finally, there were two of us, Lamb oge and I. I eliminated Lamb oge and I danced twice more around the stove. Bob Paul and my other friends were carrying me around the room and Bob hollered out "The title has gone to Barra Head."

Lil - Do you remember hearing stories pertaining to the welcoming ceremony given to dignitaries from distant places. This was done in Chapel Island.

Yes, that ceremony was given to Mohawks and before the canoe was pulled up, to the shore, the most strongest and courageous man of the Micmac men has to wade out to greet the Mohawks. This is QUED-DULL OK DAT IN. There is one story that I heard from an old man I guess you've never heard it before, It's the story about the Mohawk and Micmac war. Did you ever hear that story?

Lil - Yes.

Did you ever hear the story on how the war started.

Lil - No.

I asked this question of an old man one time. He said that the Mohawks and Micmacs used to get along real well one time ago. They would live in one camp; they worked together; they went out in the woods to cut wood and to hunt together. One certain day, while two little boys were playing, one Mohawk and the other, a Micmac saw a white squirrel and they started throwing stones at it. In the process, the little Mohawk boy was hit accidentally and he died. He was hit with a very small rock, nevertheless, it killed him. When the men came home from hunting, they were met with this tragedy. The Mohawks were indignant and were unwilling to forgive the incident. I don't know if they killed the little Micmac boy but this is how the feud started. Gradually, the Mohawk were driven out and eventually driven all the way to Caughnawaga. This was Sackalin Morris's story. So these EL-NOPSE COOK signified the end of the hostilities. I guess we don't have them now.

Lil - So I guess the purpose of their trip to Chapel Island was to renew the Peace Treaty. Some old people who have told me of the QUED-DULL-LOOK DAT DIMK, mentioned that the special greeting was given to the people who came to AN COOK AG JIK which sounds like renewal to me. They mentioned Mohawks but now I believe that the people referred to were the Mohawks.

Yes.

Lil - They must have brought additional beads to be added on to the EL NOPSE COOK. This is my opinion anyway from reading about the WABANAKI Confederacy.