

Paul Stevens - Chapel Island Reserve

Lil - I understand that you moved away from Barra Head ~~xxxxxxx~~ just before or during centralization - where did you move to.

- I moved to South River.

Lil - While you were there - did you hear stories about centralization A lot of promises were made to the people. Did you hear any.

- I didn't hear about it, I was busy getting settled and so forth. Later on I overheard some stories. By the time I moved to Shubbie centralization was already underway. It was a busy place - men were working as carpenters, working at the mill, digging ditches. There was a lot of work there at that time. We worked for 50¢ an hour. 4.00 a day.

- I didn't hear too much about centralization beforehand - because it was underway by the time I moved there. People were already living in new houses. I moved there about three years after it started. I moved away in 1938, we didn't move to an Indian reserve.

Lil - you moved outside the reserve.

- Yes, we moved to Marshy Hope. We lived there for three years. Then we moved to South River. From there we moved to Shubenacadie We moved in with my wife's cousin. Eventually we were given a little house - it wasn't very big. We stayed there until that following winter. Then we got another house - somebody had vacated. We lived there until 1950. In 1951, I bought a house in Truro and we moved down there. We stayed in Truro and eventually a new house was built for us. We stayed there until 1963. My wife died, one of my daughters got married, my son moved to Boston. I was taking care of my grandson at that time so I put him in the Residential School. I went to visit my daughter in Boston. This is where I found a job and I worked there for about two years.

Lil - My father told me about a brief of grievances that the Barra Head Indians made up - he thinks that this brief which was presented to the government before centralization was the result of centralization - ~~xxx~~ He said Paul and Noel Stevens and Richard Nevin s helped me with this brief. Is this true.

- Yes. I took that same brief to a meeting in Restigouche and I read it at a meeting there. I was a councillor at that time.

Lil - What kind of a meeting was this.

- We asked for more help ~~for~~ for the Indian people and as a result we are being helped today. We unlocked the door.

Lil - How much relief were you getting

- We were given relief only in the ~~winter~~ winter, 2.00 a week. In the summer you had to make your own living by making baskets, axe handles.

We never got too much relief in the past now it's much better.

When I was young we didn't too much relief. A man had to work hard.

You ~~had~~ had to work every day. I worked hard because I had a big family to support.

How much was relief back then.

- You only got relief during the winter months. In the summer you had to earn your living by making baskets.

- Lil - Getting back to that brief you fellows made up. What did you call it.

- No, we never got too much relief in the past - now it's good. When I was young people had to work hard to make a living/ I had a big family and had to support my family by making baskets or whatever work I could find.

- You didn't live too well but you had to work for your living. I was sick one fall. I couldn't be taken to the hospital at that time. I was getting 5.00 a week I was getting more because I was sick, The other Indians were getting 2.00 a week.

Doctor Jack MacDonald of St. Peter's was my doctor at that time. He was a senator in Ottawa. He told me there's talk in Ottawa of how the best way to help the Indians in the Maritimes.

Because the Indians here were living in poor housing conditions at that time and there was a lot of sickness, T.B. etc. and when anybody was sick in that house he passed on the sickness to his family. He said, your house would be so nice that they would have bathrooms. They would be painted inside.

I asked him when this was going to happen.

Lil - But he must have been talking about centralization.

- Yes, he heard this in Ottawa because he was a senator. I told this to the people what the doctor told me my they doubted me at that time and I had doubts myself. And still when centralization it wasn't followed through according to what the doctor told me. The first houses built at that time didn't have foundations they were dug then they were filled up. But they finally had foundations and finally basements were dug.

Lil - The houses didn't have bathrooms.

- No. I still say, the Indians didn't get their - what was supposed to be done to them. This policy was there already or the specifications for the kind of houses they would get because Dr. Jack told me of this beforehand. This was already made up in Ottawa. This was decided on in Ottawa.

Lil - It was administration at the local level I suppose. They didn't follow it through accordingly / In Barra Head the Prospers were the first ones to move.

- I don't know - I had moved away before then.

Lil - I've always wanted to ask you since you used to be a councillor if you were the first Councillor elected in Barra Head. I heard you and your brother Noel were the first councillor and Peter Prosper was the Chief.

- Peter wasn't a chief at first. There was no chief. In the beginning it was just the two of us Peter and I. just two councillors Our chief was Gaberial at the time.

- But finally Peter became chief.

Yes. I was running against him at that time. He became elected.

Lil - You had an election.

- ~~M~~ Yes. I was elected. It was understood at that time whoever got the most votes would be the Chief councillor.

The brief of grievances that you and my father and others made up.

I understand that a man from Ottawa saw it and he liked it. So Father Keats advised my father to have it read at the Grand Council meeting in Chapel Island that following summer at the Indian Mission.

He told him since this brief of grievances ~~was~~ pretty well spoke

~~xxxxxx~~ <sup>for</sup> - all the <sup>INDIANS</sup> reserves in Cape Breton. Well, anyway this brief was read to the Grand Council Assembly that summer - It was read and signed and it was sent to Ottawa. As an answer to it - my father thinks centralization was implemented. This was the help that they asked for. An answer arrived Grand Chief received the anser and him and a few other men signed it. They agreed to the centraliztion plan. This was without any or hardly any consultations with the majority of the Indian people.

- This is why Stu wants these interviews. He says centralization took away the traditional livelihood of the Indians and forced a large number of them to become dependent on the government. It Made us lose our initiative. People who lived in Barra Head they were self-sufficient. Some of them were anyway - e.g. the Prosper were good farmers. They had a lot of farmland - a lot of animals and they grew a lot of their vegetables.

- Yes. Everyone had farmland and everyone planted.

Lil - People also did some fishing and trapping.

- We fished for eels etc.

Lil - So the people who moved to Eskasoni - they lost this way of life - there isn't enough farmland there etc.

- Not only farming but how many young people can make baskets today.

Lil - How long did you stay in Shubbie.

I stayed there for five years and 17 years in -----

Lil - What kind of houses did the people have in Shubbie.

- They were the same as Eskasoni - 2-story houses - they didn't have foundations. After a while they started making houses with foundations. The insides were finished. They used boards on the walls instead of gyproc. The insulation at first was sawdust.

- Lil - No wonder the Indians call their old houses fire traps.

- They finally stopped using sawdust and another stuff arrived - it was just like shavings

Lil - What was this insulation called.

- Shavings that come off wood. ~~xxxxxx~~.

Lil - Did they have a mill in Shubbie.

- Yes.

Lil - Was there a community store in Shubbie.

- It wasn't there when we first moved over there. but it was put there later on.

and the offices were made. A lot of people moved back to their reserves. e.g. Afton people and others.

Lil - Not too many people moved from Truro.

- No -

Lil - I guess it's because a lot of them were working in town.

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