

# Charlie Labrador

Interviewed by Chris Callaghan, Dec. 13, 2000



Q. What is your full name?

A. My full name is Charles Wilfred Labrador and most people call me Charlie, they say everyone across the land knows Charlie.

Q. And what was your Father's name?

A. My fathers name was Louie Labrador.

Q. And your mother's name?

A. Beatrice, her maiden name was Jeremy.

Q. And do you remember what your grandparents names were on your father's side?

A. My grandfather on my father's side, he was Louie, and his wife was Mary Lou and they was quite old people.

Q. And your mother's parents names?

A. My mother's parents names – her dad was Joe Jeremy. He was a relative of the Luxi's from Kedgie. Her mother was named Lallia, she was a Paul from Lequille and they are descendent from Chief Ben Pictou, he was an old gentleman who was the Chief of Lequille at that time. So they was all relatives. I stayed there at the little place at Lequille, and they was basket makers and craft makers. I knew them all. There was Joe Penoile, he was a fiddle player and his wife's name was Christina and her sister, one of her sisters was named Sarah Fawcey. Her picture is on a book that a lady over here had written.

Q. Darlene Rickers book?

A. I think so. Then Rosy was my great great grandmother. Rosy Paul. I have pictures of her home. They was self sufficient old people, you know. Far as their education goes, as today's European system, they had very little. But they were experienced in survival. Same as me, I haven't got no college education, but I have a lot of knowledge. I have been here and there and I've travelled a lot.

Q. What year were you born, Charlie?

A. I was born in Bridgewater. 1932, in July.

Q. And did you grow up in Bridgewater?

A. See, my Dad was in Vimy Ridge and after he came home he was suffering from well, I'll say, broken promises. And he had his leg off, and had it off a couple of times and gangrene set in, and gangrene set in, and the medicine at that time was not that good. So today he could have been saved, but well the wounds and things like that. Then when he was over in Vimy Ridge he lost his two brothers. Was four of the boys went over and two came back. John Labrador and my dad come back, and the other two boys lost their lives there.

Q. What do you mean when you say your father was suffering from broken promises?

A. Well, as of today, they said that when you come home, you will have this and you will have that, and he said – we will build you a fine house, and he ended up living in a tar paper shack. And far as any welfare, it was practically nothing. Practically nothing. So it was something that worked on him all his life and after awhile it just takes the best out of you. So that's how it is. I guess today we are still trying to survive off of broken promises and things like that. Well, with me I have adapted to the system a wee bit better. I lived everywhere, I lived in little shacks and houses and lived in little bungalow with just mother earth to the floor. I stayed on the shores of Smith's Cove. I was in the film of the Last Porpoise Hunt of Smith's Cove.

Q. The one that Dr. Leighton made?

A. Yeh.

Q. You were just a little boy then.

A. I was very little. But I still remember some of it.

Q. Well, tell me now. How big was your family, first.

A. My family was my sister and I.

Q. Just the two of you.

A. That's all.

Q. Now, would your family normally come to Smith's Cove for the summer?

A. Yes, I would come with the old people. The old people would come there from Lequille and so they come down there to sell baskets to the Digby Pines and they could pick up shellfish and the fishermen would give them certain amount of food. And so my grandmother worked at the Digby Pines and there was a lot of food that was given away and people would bring in clothes. Not to fit me, but it was all done over. Everything was done over. And my mother had one of those little sewing machines with the crank on that you turned, so she would cut up the old clothes and make clothes for others. This was part of our life and we got kind of use to it.

Q. Where were your mother and father living at this point when you were spending your summers at Smith's Cove?

A. When I stayed at Smith's Cove my father had passed away. But my mother and I and my sister, we lived everywhere. We lived in Molega around the Wildcat Reserve and then we lived in Annapolis. And we lived on the Bear River Reserve. And we stayed with the Meuses up there, Willy Meuse from Bear River and we stayed with the McKewens up in Bear River. So we travelled a lot.

Q. How would you travel from place to place?

A. My grandfather had an old car. It was one of those cars that you had to crank to get going. And it would take all day to go from Wildcat Reserve to go to Bear River because we stopped in different places and things like that. But we got there. And the roads was quite rough at that time. But that's how we travelled and sometimes by train.

Q. So in those days was your mother...I gather your father died when you were fairly young....so was your mother depending on relatives and people she knew to help support?

A. Yes, after my dad died, we moved back with my Grandfather, Joe Jeremy, and we stayed with them people a long time.

Q. And where did they live?

A. They lived on the Wildcat Reserve down in Molega. My Grandfather was a craftsman and he made the first mast hoops for the Schooner Bluenose, the original schooner Bluenose. Matter of fact, he made them all, that's the first original, that was the mast that held the sail that powered the ships. And I had helped him to make some, what little I could do, but he use to take them on his old cart to South Brookfield and put them on the train. They would go from there to Lunenburg. And then they was put together a little bit better with bolts and he supplied the mast hoops for a lot of sailing vessels.

Q. What kind of wood would he be using?

A. He used the young part of oak. It had to be white oak. So he also made the hoops for little sailing vessels too. They was only little ones, but the ones for Schooner Bluenose I think must have been forty (40) inches. So that gave him employment, and then he made pick handles and shovel handles for the old mines. There was a mines running over our way. The old Molega Gold Mines. So he cut the wood for what we call scaffold poles, that was for underneath, and he never got much for it but it was survival, you know.

Q. What kind of wood would he make those out of?

A. That was made out of oak.

Q. Strong wood.

A. Strongest he could get. And it was only the outside part. The inside they made something else out of.

Q. I am really interested in all the things you learned from your Grandparents about living outdoors and making things, but first of all I want to ask you if you went to school at all?

A. Yes, I went to school in Molega I went to school until 1947 and then I moved from there to Bridgewater and I went there to school until 1950. And so from then on I worked in the woods. So I've got some high school and I guess my knowledge has been life. I have worked in saw mills, I have drove tractors, I have drove oxen, I have teamed horses, and as time went on I operated skidders, log loaders and whatever was to be done. And I run a trap line for fifteen (15) years for my mother and my grandmother. We stayed in the woods and so I helped to provide. And we only took what we needed. So that gave me the expertise of survival and so it was something that I had to do because my grandfather showed me when I was five (5) years old how to do trapping and set snares and things like that.

Q. What do you remember about that?

A. Well, it seemed to me that everything we got which was very little, we had to show it to the old people. And if the old people liked it, it was o.k. But if they said it was no good, even if they were joking, we didn't want it no more.

Q. Like for instance, what would you show them that they might say was no good?

A. Someone may knit us a pair of mittens, woolen mittens. We would show them to the old people and they would just tease and say, they're no good. You know, make us feel sad. Then they'd turn around and just tell us they was just joking. Everything had to be shown to them. Was respect for the old people. See, the old men, they was all honoured by calling them uncle. You know, Uncle Peter, Uncle Joe, and the women was Aunts – Aunt Sarah and Aunt Fannie and like this. So today, we don't hear people saying to the old people Aunt. The recognition and the focus of the elders, that's what it was. But within my travel now, I'm recognized as an elder. And I have worked with some members of the Grand Council. And I have set in with the Board of Directors, the Union of Nova Scotia Indians, I set in with them until 1977 then I put in my resignation. I was Chief of the band down there, what they call...they called it today the Acadia Band and I found that the political structure wasn't my walk. It's not my walk. I want to be real. Like our talk here today is real. Because that was my walk, like they say, you must walk the walk and talk the talk. So that's what I believe into.

Q. When you were a young boy growing up, did you speak Micmac?

A. Quite a bit. I could understand quite a bit. But as I got booted around and also travelled around I lost a lot of it. When I say booted around it was from the Catholic nuns. I escaped the residential school, but they use to come in the summer in order to send us to Sunday school and while our parents was with us, they used us good. Especially me. But soon as the parents went over the hill, the nuns would grab me back of the neck, and they would shake me and throw me. I couldn't walk with them, they would push me ahead and bring me back and they would shake me. And when I got into church, there was a corner there, they would throw me so hard into the corner I'd go right up the wall. You know, even with today, all I can do for those people is pray for them. As I have said, I have no enemies, I had one enemy, but I can work with that. That was me. I had to learn to work with myself. But I think of the people that survived the residential school, my friend, Donna Augustine, she has a song that she sings about the residential school. And so it is all true what she says.

Q. How did you manage to escape the residential school?

A. I guess with my grandfather. He said we are sending our children to the local community here. There is a school there and we get along good. So the Indian Affairs come and they come with their big car, and when they seen a kid they wouldn't go in the house and say we are going to take your children to Shubenacadie, they just grabbed them and threw them in the car. And so my mother, she had a long black coat. She cut that up and made clothes for us because Indian Affairs said you have no clothing, we will give you clothing. You haven't this and you haven't that. So she cut this coat up to make us pants and a jacket. So if they come back she would show them to them. And my Grandfather use to go peddling baskets sometimes he'd trade for money, sometimes for food, sometimes for old clothing. What the Micmac called it was "drixet". Drixet in Micmac means trade. And the old clothes would be brought back to the reserve and my mother would cut it up and make clothing for us. And sometimes they would give us boots and shoes. And they was a big too big, but we got by with them. And so with this, when Indian Affairs come, we managed to escape because they told us, they said if you leave us, you'll never come back. That means your spirits of the Micmac you may lose, or else your role of life here on the reserve you may lose. You know, I remember this and I thought about it quite sometimes.

Q. Who said that Charlie, was it the old people said that or the Indian Affairs people?

A. No, my old people said that. But the Department of Indian Affairs, they have been very rough for us. They had, well, next thing to starvation. Matter of fact, people did starve. With us, we had one house and they was two families. Lots of times little houses had fourteen (14) or fifteen (15) people into them, you know. And they was just one room. After awhile, my mother and my grandfather made us a bed. We had to sleep on the floor, you know, for survival. But it was the idea of how much respect the old people has given us. Today you don't see that. Because it is a push button world out there today. And so the old people respected us a lot, a real lot. I watched my grandfather repair canoes, and I helped him to make the mast hoops and he showed me some of the trade of basket weaving and how to make ax handles and pick handles and stuff like that. And how to pound ash and things like. I learned the things of some of his tools, and how to temper metal and things like that. Some food, how he prepared foods and how the old people made bannock. They still make it on Bear River reserve, up here.

Q. Is that bannock?

A. Yes, that is bannock. It's something made new. Sometimes that put it in a frypan and sometimes they put it in an oven and its sold. It was part of a life.

Q. When you say your Grandfather taught you to pound ash, what would that be for?

A. That was to make baskets.

Q. To flatten the wood?

A. You took the ask and you split it four times, and maybe again, and you shaved it until it got square. Then you took it and put it on a rock or a stump and you pounded it – you see ash will come apart. Piece of ash tree will come apart. And that's what you make the splints out of. Yes, that's how they make the baskets. And so he showed me and I helped me. So I can make baskets today. I own a craft shop by the entrance of Kedgie Park. A little place there, and it's something you know, takes away the loneliness because I'm there with it. So that's part of my life too.

Q. Did your family, were they among the Micmac that would take the baskets down to the neck and Islands to sell them?

A. No that was the Bear River Indians. We use to come far as Lequille and sometimes to Granville and then we would go towards Liverpool and Maitland Bridge and Kempt and Harmony and those places. Some of them to Bridgewater. We had to go door to door.

Q. Do you remember what you would charge for say a laundry basket?

A. A laundry basket at that time might have been \$1.75 and today they are about \$80.00.

Q. Yes, and well worth it. Did the old people do any quill work when you were a little boy.

A. Yes they did. But they work very hard. They worked from in the morning to sunset in the winter and summer. They could tell fortunes with tea and they was quite good at herbal plants and medicines.

Q. Did you learn that as well?

A. I'm still learning onto it. Yes, I have taken up herbal plants and medicines and I use to go out with my father out in the river, and I would dive off his old boat and dive down to the bottom of the river and pull up plants. And bring them up and if I got the right one it was great, but on the bottom of the river was a lot of plants, and sometimes I would get lily roots and he would put that away in the winter for different medicines. In the winter he would put a pot of medicine on the stove and whoever came in the house would go to the stove and take a cup and take a drink of the medicine. It was something that was part of his life.

Q. Now tell me about your trap lines.

A. My trap line, I had learned it first on the Wildcat Reserve but in 1947 when I moved to Bridgewater back in the old mines there, I worked everywhere and when things got a little slack, I use to go in the woods and set traps and snares and do some hunting so I made some money. It was to help to survive and with my expertise that my grandfather had showed me, I could kind of out trap the next guy because I knew how to do it. The next guy he kind of done his traps quite sloppy but with me in order to trap you have to move to the animal. So when you move to the knowledge of the animal you're after, you know what is to be done. About every two weeks I would send my fur away that I got, then I would have a cheque coming and it would help.

Q. What kind of animals did you trap?

A. I trapped muskrat, beaver, mink and otter. Them was my main ones. And we done a little bit of squirrel hunting.

Q. What would you use the squirrels for?

A. It was sent away to a fur buyer and what was left over, we fed it to our animals.

Q. Did you do that with the carcasses of all the animals you trapped?

A. The mink and the muskrat – the muskrat was given to the animals but the mink wasn't. The mink was put back to Mother Earth.

Q. Is that because they had a special taste the animals didn't like?

A. Yeh, they was something that was part of my life. The mink, he was a very skillful hunter and mover. So with this, I put the carcass back to earth.

Q. When you say you fed it to the animals, like the muskrat, what animals, dogs?

A. We had a dog, and we had one housecat and sometimes I use some of the meat for baiting the traps and then the bones of what was left over I would bury in the woods.

Q. What about bobcats?

A. The bobcats at that time I didn't bother with and at that time there was very very few coyotes. But there was a lot of foxes, but the foxes didn't have much value. So I didn't bother with very many of them.

Q. This would only be a winter occupation for you?

A. Yeh, just a winter. Then I would work in the pulp wood.

Q. Now who would you sell your pulp wood to?

A. We sold it to Bowater Mersey.

Q. Did you. And is this when you were working with oxen and a team of horses?

A. Yeh. And sometimes I would just work for a local person. And so then I just got so much for working for them by the day. But you know at that time, first when I started, we worked ten (10) hours a day for \$4.00 a day.

Q. Would you be staying in lumber camps?

A. Yes, I worked in lumber camps. We'd go in and stay til Saturday afternoon, then we'd walk out and we'd have to go back in the woods again Sunday night in order to go to work Monday morning.

Q. Now which did you prefer working with, oxen or horses?

A. Well, if you got a good horse, it was ok. And oxen they was a bit lazy. You had to make them move more often. I was quite young when I worked with the oxen. But if you got a wild horse, he was breaking his harness up and pulling his shoes off and things like that. But if you got a good horse, you was ok.

Q. How do you compare the type of cutting that you would have done in those days to the way the forestry is managed today?



A. Well, years ago we done select cutting but today what is being done, everything is being destroyed with those things they call processors. Or harvesters. And what I see about the harvester or processor, is its weight. It crushes all the young trees that's – there is no tomorrow for the plant life. The other thing about the processors is the oil leaks. Everything on them leaks, and oil is going on the earth and plant life can't survive. And why I say plant life is in the spring of the year when the leaves comes out on the hardwood, water goes up in the tree. Now it stays there until fall, and then it comes down. That's the kidneys of earth. Millions and millions of trees had done this and had cleaned the water. But today, there is no trees hardly left so our water is being stagnated and is poisoned. Out on the west coast the Indians tried to block the roads and stop the pulp companies but they was more powerful with the government. They done some good, but now the fish out there on the west coast is not coming up the rivers like they should. And the cod stock is gone and with this, the plant life also some of the plant life in the ocean which is being overfished by trawlers and by dragging those lakes, this is ruined some of that plant life. And it is also destroying the spawning beds. With this plant life under the ocean, it helped to clean the water too. It was energy that had to be given to water. But man doesn't think of that. All he thinks about is to be more powerful and to be more richer. People had asked me, they said, Charlie wouldn't you like to be rich, would you like to be a millionaire? With this, I had to think about 10 seconds. I told them that I am rich. I am a millionaire. I have myself. So that gives me quite a lot. Because I believe in helping people, helping earth and to try to help others that is lost. I have done part of healing and things like this, and worked with different plants and whatnot.

Q. How much of the respect for the earth did you learn from the old people when you were a little boy?

A. What respect I learned from the old people was a real lot. They had respect for mother earth because all that we had here on earth we got it for nothing. And today within our Bible we have the Ten Commandments with our First Nations people we had one. Love and respect. And with this it meant all of them. But our Ten Commandments within the Bible is good but very people look at them with respect of earth. That's part of my life, this is part of my walk. So the old people have taught me a lot.

Q. Do you remember them actually pointing things out to you and saying you must not take an extra fish because we have enough. Like that type of thing?

A. Most of what the teaching they had gave me was the walk. I travelled with them in the woods and they would only take what they needed. And as they worked in the woods to haul a log out, they made sure that they only cut the select stuff. And they saved what was there and they never polluted anything like they do today. Oceans, rivers, lakes and streams are being used as a septic tank. So our forests can't survive. You know, my people is very old, some of my old people is 141 years old. Today if you can live to be 40 without under the doctor's care, you are old. A lot of things is happening.

Q. Now, basket making is something that somebody taught you, but my impression is that to be a healer, it would be something you were born with. Am I right?

A. Yes, to be a healer it is something you are born with and also it is from the spirits. The spirits knows who you are, and he knows that you don't have to have a million dollars but you must have respect. And you walk the walk and talk the talk. So I have been quite successful with travelling and healing and my friend Marlene Dykeman, had told me about a young lady in the valley, in Windsor, who had MS. She said some day, Charlie, we'll go so one day I went over and sure enough we went and we seen this little lady and I had carried with me a sacred blanket, a red blanket. Now this blanket I put into talking circles, I took and put it into the sweats, I took it to the powwows, I carried it with me in my car. So when we went to see the lady, we talked with her awhile, and she told me how sick she was. So I said I'm going to give you my sacred blanket. So she put it on her shoulders and when she stood up, I got very – a lot of electric shocks through my body. I told her, I said, you are healed. So today she is out in the Baffin Islands teaching school. And she only had 1 ½ years, that's all they gave her. And she bought herself a pick up truck and she is doing real good.

Q. And how long ago was that, Charlie?

A. She's been up there about 1 1/2 years now. And every once in awhile I hear from her and she said I couldn't feel better in my life. So with it all, she went back to the Halifax hospital to have her last checkup. So they come out and they said, Wanda, maybe you didn't have MS. She is saying why? They said everything that was in you is gone. They was trying to take the benefit of healing her which this would be natural for them. They said maybe it was the therapy maybe it was this. But it wasn't. I think if she'd have kept going to their doctors, I am afraid she would have lost her life. Things like that.

Q. When did you first get an inkling that you might have healing powers?

A. I think it was – I had touched and shook hands with people that had broken bones, and I have touched people, and within days, minutes, hours they was healed. And I just thought it was just wonderful. But after awhile I used this touch on my own self when the truck had fell on my hand and crushed it, when I was in very bad shape, and so it was healed in the morning and I went back to work.

Q. Tell me about more about that, you described it a bit earlier.

A. I had worked in the woods quite a bit and about a year and a half ago I got hit by a tree. I got drove through the air and I was unconscious for sometime. I have scars on my back yet – 12 – 14 inches long where I had been cut open. And it crushed my elbow here. This elbow here was broke. It was swelled maybe twice the size it is now. And so a young lady examined it, she is a nurse in the hospital. She also travels in the upper part of Canada, north, so she told me how many bones was broke. So she said you go down to the outpatients in Bridgewater and they'll put a cast on it. I said, o.k. They said go right now. I said tomorrow I will go. So I set there and I felt real strong, felt real strong, and I took my hands and I thought about the spirits. I rubbed them together. And I took my hands and I went over my elbow, my whole arm. And as I went I could feel the healing, I could feel everything healing. And the next morning the swelling had went down and I went to work. And the same way with my leg. I had broke my knee and with this it was bad for about two weeks. It was in the winter and I was going to go to Big Cove, New Brunswick, to take up gifts for people up there that was kind of under privileged. So I took my hands and went on my knee and went down over my knee and when I got down around my ankle I stopped. And all of the hurting went out of my knee and went down to my foot. And my leg was in quite bad shape so I couldn't quite reach it so the next morning, I looked at my leg and it was healed. But the other part, all the hurt matter was at my ankle so I took my hands and went down over it and it left. With this, I have tended to talk in circles and gatherings and with my presence within a place, the people said they could feel my strength. But I told them, it's not me, it's the spirits. Because me, all I am is just a worker. I am just an ordinary being, but it's the spirits that does it. I don't want to take the benefit for healing it. Because I'm just me. However, with me, the Creator who made me made you, he made all the plant life, he made the thunder in the sky, and he also made the rainbow. So we been made by one Creator and in so many ways we are sisters and brothers to everything out there, the plant life, the rivers, lakes and streams. So as I have travelled, I have said all my relations. We are in so many ways related. But I guess it's the idea of having the time, being alone, these things have come to me. You know, my grandfather, he is deceased, but he still comes before me and talks to me. And some of the old people.

Q. When you're sleeping, you mean?

A. Sometimes during the day. I am the fifth generation of Louie Luxie at Kedgie.

Q. And was he a healer as well?

A. Louie was a gentlemen who helped put the petroglyphs on the shores of Kedgie so Louie Luxie's daughter was named Katie and Katie's son was named Joe and Joe's daughter was named Beatrice. That was my mother. And so Louie Luxie's father was named Johnny Luxie and so he was one of the people that watched the wooden ships land. Some of them. My son works at Kedgie and my granddaughter works there. Trina Labrador.

Q. Now, how did you meet Juanita?

A. My wife Juanita? I think it was when I was going to school and we use to go to dances and what not and we got together. I lived around the Bridgewater area at that time and so I met her then.

Q. Is Juanita a Micmac person as well?

A. She would be about 12%.

Q. And how old were you when you got married?

A. I think I was 25.

Q. What do you remember about your wedding? Where were you married?

A. My wedding was very small. It was the people that took me to the Ministers place, the minister, my wife and I. At that time I had no money and I had to borrow \$10.00 to give to the minister. And he took the money and that was it.

Q. And where did you live after you were first married?

A. I lived with my wife's folks and then we got a small house in Hebb's Cross. And about three years after we got married, we started raising a family.

Q. And how many children did you have?

A. I had two boys and a girl. My daughter Bonnie, she works with the Band Council, and my son Todd, he works with Parks Canada and my other son, he was working with Bowater Mersey, now he is on his own.

Q. What is his name?

A. Arlie Charles, and my youngest boy's name is Todd Graham.

Q. Which Band Council does your daughter work with?

A. She works for the Acadia band.

Q. Now, just while I think of it, in some of my research I come across a photograph, and I probably have it here, of six or seven Micmac men. And one of them was John Labrador.

A. John? That was my uncle.

Q. He was a very strong man?

A. Yeh, he was a – his strength was about 3-5 times today as modern man. The old people, some of them and some of the Meuses was very strong. John Meuse out of Bear River had the strength of today's men, about three of them. He was extremely strong.

Q. Tell me a little more about what you remember about Dr. Leighton making that movie about the porpoise.

A. That part there, I was about 3 or 4 years old, something like that. But when Joe Louis and Maltie went out to get the porpoise, they brought it in and they made a big fire, I remember the fire, and part of the porpoise is edible, so I had part of that meat and the old people made shelters, they had canvas or tent or something, and they broke branches off in the woods and made a bed for us and I stayed with them and I ate by the open fire and the shell fish. They depended a lot on the shell fish on the shores of the ocean and so there was a lot of Indians there that had come. Bear River Indians and some of them from the upper part of the valley. And mostly from Lequille, and it was pretty good. There was survival, this way you couldn't buy, so then when the weather started to get cold we would go home.

Q. How would you travel?

A. Well, sometimes they would get a taxi to go from Smith's Cove to Lequille, and then the old people would come out and get me and pick me up. My grandfather. My grandfather was a birch bark canoe builder. He worked in Sussex New Brunswick with the John Meuse and Fannie Meuse. My mother was only a little girl then and he worked up there just below the pop bottling plant. So when the weather started to get cold, my grandfather said, we gotta go home. So he made this birch bark canoe up there and when it was ready, the weather was pretty good, they went down the river to the Reversing Falls, took it out and when the tide was right they put it in in Saint John and they landed here in Digby. The town of Digby was very small at that time and Grandfather said I'll stay by the canoe while you fellows go get a few groceries and then they was going to paddle from there to Bear River. And a gentlemen came along and he asked my Grandfather, he said would you sell your canoe? And Grandfather said, yes, I'll sell the canoe. He said, how much would you want for your canoe? It was a new canoe. Grandfather said \$16.00 and I'll give you the two paddles too. And so the canoe was about 16 feet long, and with the money he got from the canoe, today that canoe would be worth 16.00 a foot because you know, they would be something hard to find. I have one, I have an old canoe. And with the money, Grandfather had enough all winter until way way late in the spring. Sent my mother to school and had a lot of money. Yeh, I have the old canoe that was used in the porpoise hunt, the last porpoise hunt at Smith's Cove.

Q. Have you ever seen that movie?

A. Yes, I have.

Q. Can you pick yourself out in it?

A. Yes, I can pick myself out in it but with this new machinery that they have, which is a VCR, it travels quite slow. But with the new stuff, it is kind of hard because they travel too fast. Yes, I'm the smallest guy there.

Q. I saw that movie years ago. I use to work in the Public Archives in Halifax, and we had it there. Wonderful.

A. Yes, I use to go to the Archives in Halifax. My friend Donnie and I. But today it is made up different, and I don't think I could do anything there.

Q. They are not open enough hours. Now when your Grandfather paddled from New Brunswick across to Digby, was he the only one paddling?

A. No, John Meuse. John Meuse and my mother and Fannie Meuse was just passengers. My mother was just a little girl. See Fannie Muise was a sister to my Grandfather's wife. She was one of the ladies from Lequille.

Q. Do you have any idea how long that would have taken them to paddle?

A. Well, I imagine it took the best part of a day.

Q. And was that considered an unusual feat in those days?

A. The trip across there had been made by quite a few people from Lequille and Bear River area. They use to sell their oil across there in Saint John, the porpoise oil. And they would go across and so some of the old people like Malti and they would go across with a canoe.

Q. Do you remember Malti?

A. Yes, I do. I remember Malti. He was the son of Ben Pictou.

Q. He was an old man when he died. As a young boy, what religion were you, and did you have Christian religion as well as your Micmac religion?

A. Our religion at that time was Catholic. But over the years I still feel strong about the Catholic Religion, but however, there has been a lot of mistakes made within the Catholic religion and most of my belief today is to travel to powows, and also to do my own praying and I 'smudge' every morning with sweet grass and I have a smudge bowl and I smudge myself and so I pray for my people.

Q. Where do you get the sweet grass?

A. You pick it off the shore of – you can pick it here in Digby and you can also pick it in the Annapolis area. And its where the fresh water and salt water meet, that's where the sweet grass grows.

Q. And it's a special kind of grass.

A. It is yeh. And there is a special time when you pick it.

Q. What time is a good time to pick it?

A. It should be picked before the grass comes in blossom. A smudge bowl is a shell that is taken from the ocean, but the old people had to use different things for smudge bowls. They used a little pot or a saucer whatnot, and they used that, they put tobacco into it and sage. Now, the sage I use home is buffalo sage, it is sent from out west, but the sweet grass is locally picked. But before we started our talking circles or anything or started our day we cleanse ourself with sweet grass. And with the smoke. So that was our belief, you know. And our tobacco. We respect our tobacco.

Q. When you say you smudge yourself, do you actually smudge yourself the way they use to do on Ash Wednesday?

A. No. What you do, you take the smoke from the sweet grass and you put it over you. Once you the smoke is on you, you can go all over yourself, you know. Your hands and arms and if you want to, which we most generally do, you smudge mother earth and the great spirits too. And you thank those spirits too.

Q. This is something you do by yourself every morning?

A. I do that every morning.

Q. I have a Bed and Breakfast in the summertime in Freeport, and we had a guest from Ontario, and she was Ojibwa, and she would do that in the mornings. Go outdoors and light her sweet grass.

A. Yes, it is traditionally. That is practiced today all over the world.

Q. Now you have mentioned talking circles a few times.

A. Yeh, the talking circle is a circle of people who set in a round circle and you have a talking stick. Before you start, you smudge everyone with sweet grass, it's a cleaning, and what is said in the talking circle is left there. You don't take it home with you. And some people talks about things that they have been carrying around with them for a long time. And after they tell the circle, they feel better. So you pass the talking stick around, and it goes to the left because the heart is on the left hand side. And it goes around and if you want you can pass it around the second time. And with the talking circle that I'm part of now, we have drummings, we drum – each person has a drum. So we drum for 20 minutes and then we talk about what we thought about, what come to us, while we was drumming. And its quite a thing. We may call it strange, but its real powerful. You get great strength while you are in the talking circle and I tend the talking circle over towards Peggy's Cove every two weeks. Two of my friends are called – they are Lee and Marny, I just forget the last names, and so people they come from Dartmouth, and Bedford and different parts. Lunenburg and Bridgewater and places, you know. It's nice.

Q. Not just Micmac people involved in this?

A. No, same as what I said. We are all related, so its people that comes there. One time it was mostly just the First Nations people, but now, you know, in order to walk the walk and talk the talk, it has to be us. Because the Creator made those people made the First Nations people, the Creator made everything and so we must learn to work together and to hear what the other people has to say too. Because they have to survive here on earth too, you know.

Q. How much opportunity do you have to teach young native people?

A. I'm with that now. I am teaching – I go to the Friendship Center in Halifax once a year when we have Micmac cultural day and also to Micmac Hotel there in Dartmouth. I go over there sometimes and sometimes with our talking circles, young people sit in, and then we'll give talks, you know. Young people are coming, but not very fast. The older people are moving quite fast.

Q. When you were a little fellow, in the summertime was there a festival of any kind? In Cape Breton they have the St. Anne's Festival, eh?

A. There was the St. Anne's Festival and there always a festival at Bear River what we call the Cherry Carnival. And we'd go over there. And then around the area at that time there was what we call 'garden parties' and a lot of people would come to garden parties. Also some of the places had what they call pie sales. And people would travel from a long ways to go to a pie sale and my Uncle Joe Pennal would go with his fiddle, he was a fiddle player. And I asked Joe one time I said what's the difference between the fiddle and the violin? He said when I learned to play it was the fiddle. So I guess that was what it was.

Q. How much of a factor did racial discrimination play in your life?

A. Well, at that time it was out there but I lived pretty well in the woods so it didn't hurt me a great lot, but as I got out and working with the Nova Scotia Unions, you go to a motel, they would put you in a kind of secondary room and when you went into their dining room, you would be sitting all by yourself – everyone would sit off to the side. But today it's a bit better because the Micmac – he's got a voice out there today. And he's starting to move. But with all this discrimination that has been, I pray for those people that someday they will be able to find themselves, and they will be able to look back and say 'what was it for?'

Q. Have you always felt the same pride you do now in growing up?

A. Yes I did. I always wanted to be a Micmac, First Nations, you know. About four years ago, I was up to Big Cove, New Brunswick, and I was driving through the reserve there in Big Cove and I heard a voice. And I asked a lady what it was. And she said Charlie, that must be your spiritual name. So it was given to me, my spiritual name had been given to me on Big Cove New Brunswick. My spiritual name is Snowman, because the people say Charlie you are more of a spirit than you are a real man. Because you have saved one lady 1500 miles away from where you was.



Q. Tell me about that.

A. I had got a vision of a place where this young lady was. She was to a place where they were going to build a shopping center and she went there because they had dug out a lot of remains of First Nations people and she was picking the bones up. She was there for four days. So spiritually I moved there and as I came from where they was doing their work, this man come out and he had this piece of pipe or club and he struck me. And I woke up I was hurt then home. I stayed in bed then for two days. Because I was really injured. So I picked the phone up and I called her and just so happened that I got hold of her and I told her, I said there is a gentleman coming and he's quite angry at the work you are doing. I described his clothing and his hat, and also what he looked like and also his beard. That night as she was driving her van, he hauled right out in front of her and the car lights, her van lights shown the gentleman getting out of his vehicle, and she said that's the man that Charlie told me about. So she was ready. And if he would have hit her like he struck me she would have lost her life. And so I had been her protector for some time and this can happen.

Q. Why was he so angry?

A. Because she was holding up the construction of this large shopping mall.

Q. And is this young woman, is she a relative or a friend of yours?

A. She is a friend of mine, her name is Donna Augustine from Big Cove, New Brunswick. And so she has been a friend of mine for sometime and her and I have travelled some together and she has some tapes out now.

Q. Oh, she is the one with the song about the residential school?

A. Yeh. And so she has several tapes out, her and her brother, Jimmy Augustine and so a.....I have been a friend of those people for some time.

Q. Where else have you travelled in your life?

A. When I was with the Board of Directors, I travelled as far as Ottawa but since then I have got invitations to go to different places, but I never went. But I was to Quebec and I've been to New Brunswick and I have been all over Nova Scotia and travelled in these places. I have been invited to go to Queen Charlotte but I never got there, and I got invited to go to the upper part of Ontario for 8 days, but I never got there. And just recently I got an invitation to go to Germany. I had worked with the German people for some time because their belief and some of their cultures were quite similar to the First Nation people, and so someday maybe I'll get over to Germany. I think it was Hunsberg, something like that. And so I have talked with some German people and in order for me to talk to them, they have had translator. And they wanted to know about the drum. I told them about the crying drum, and I also told them about the rawhide drum.

Q. What is the crying drum?

A. The crying drum was made with the strings on back that when you hit the drum you would squeeze the strings and the drum would cry. I have three drums home. And also when I go to drummings I take one with me.

Q. Where did you get these drums?

A. One was given to me the one that I have and so I guess one I bought but two was given to me. And I have blessed the drums. And so you know it is quite a thing. Sometimes I think about drumming in the morning about two or three o'clock. Sometimes I get up and take my drum and it's part of me. It seems as though it kind of relaxes me when I drum.

Q. Was drumming part of your childhood?

A. I guess it has been but drumming wasn't part of my old people that much but before them it was. They had went to....but you see in around in the '50's, Indian Affairs and the government forbid us to drum or powow. They took our waltes and they drilled a hole in the center because the old people put water in the waltes and they could tell how the weather was, they could tell how people were sick, they could tell about what kind of medicine they had to go get, but the federal government looked at this and said we have to get rid of that waltes and so it was brought into the Department of Indian Affairs and there was a hole drilled. That way the water wouldn't stay in.

Q. What is a waltes, Charlie?

A. Waltes is a wooden plate made out of a lump in a tree, quite thin. It was a game that we played, and so different things could be done with the waltes and the Department of Indian Affairs couldn't figure out how it was done. Today it is being brought back. Our waltes is being played again. I have one and so .....

Q. As recently as the '50's they destroyed those. Isn't that awful.

A. Some places we had healing trees. And the healing trees, some of the old people would go to the healing trees if they had a sore back and they would set up against the tree. Maybe for two days. It would heal them. It actually works. So the last healing tree that got cut down was cut down by three or four native men down, the Department of Indian Affairs demanded that they cut that tree down because again, over the counter drugs was being eliminated because they wanted to be over all of us. They wanted to be better than us. And so with our medicines gone, our powers gone, our spirit gone with the residential school, they wanted to make us non native. And it never worked. And you know, with their winning, which they lost, I think today they are feeling quite sad. But with their winning all we can do is pray for those federal people. Because as far as feeling mean, I haven't got that in me. I haven't got meanness in me. There is people that I work for.

Q. How hopeful do you feel about the future now?

A. I still think that there is a future for us. I still think there has got to be a cure for cancer, and diabetes, I am a diabetic. That's where I was this morning to have blood tests. But with myself, I'm not letting it bother me. I have my own medicines too at home. I feel some day that we will find a cure for medicines to heal everyone.

Q. What haven't I asked you about that I should know about?

A. I guess you never asked me about some of the tools that we used. I have some there.

Q. I'd love to see them. I'll bring that bag over, would that be o.k.

A. Yes, you can bring two of them over. The blanket and I'll tell you about the bow and things like that. In here I'll show you , I have two bows here what today we call bow and arrows. And this shortest one was one that my grandfather showed me how to make. It's small and it has only a heavy part of the arrow. It has no feathers. It would be used for breaking through a brush pile, and things like that. You could kill a rabbit or a partridge or a bird with it, and the....

Q. With the blunt end?

A. With the blunt end. And that always went ahead when you shot it in the air it came down that way. And the bow was small so you go through the brush and so that was what we used for hunting. And it has two little hooks there and so you put it this way and shot that way and it would hit a rabbit and kill the rabbit. Now this other bow that I have here is normally what we would use for hunting. I have no arrows with it, but that was big enough to shoot a deer or whatever you wanted. Today they have larger bows, but today there is no game left. So this was a bow that they used to hunt big game.

Q. What kind of wood is that made out of?

A. This is made out of ash and this is made out of sinew, that is part of the animal. On the back, you roll it together, the part of his back and make this.

Q. How long would that sinew last?

A. It would last five years.

Q. What kind of feathers would you use on the arrows?

A. We use to use just ordinary feathers off a partridge or eagle feathers...you had to respect them, you couldn't use them on an arrow. And you only used two feathers, one on top and one on bottom. Today they use three and four and I found them to hit their string and knocks their arrow out. In my drum bag here, I have a few tools and I will explain the tools. Some of them are useable and some of them are quite old. But now, this here is an old draw knife that the old people used to shave wood and they made all kinds of crafts. This is an old one.

Q. Would one person use that?

A. Yes, one person used it. And he used this and this is quite old, this draw knife is quite old. This was made by a local blacksmith and was pounded out of a piece of iron. The blacksmith would made that at that time for about \$1.50. And so with that, I have another one here that was part of our family – it was used by a lady. I don't know where this come from but it has been part of our family. I put tape around it. The women folks use to use this and it was a little fine draw knife and it is the only one I ever seen like this. So that is part of my collection. In here I have some nice old tools here. This here is a splint cutter, you take your splints and put on here and pull it apart to make smaller ones. And the back of it here is like a fiddlehead. The old Micmac was quite musical so that was the fiddlehead.. I think it was made around the turn of the century in the 1900's.

Q. And how was that used again, please Charlie?

A. You put the splint in here, and you pulled the long splints and you could separate – you could make three out of this one. Here's another old one, course this is broken off, and here's one here that I use today and it has the teeth in it here.

Q. So that fiddle end is just a decorative thing?

A. Yeh. That was just a decorative part of it, because most of those old people was quite musical. The old Micmacs. And this was an old cooking knife. You put them in your right hand or left hand. This was made with an old straight razor, and the tape that's been around here some of the old people had arthritis in their hands and they couldn't get them closed. So they had to make the handle bigger. So they could shave.

Q. And that was used for what?

A. That was used for making baskets and making hoops and handles and whatnot. And they would fix up a deer. They would skin the deer with that. And I have another old one here – this old blade here was made back in the 1800's. Part of my grandfathers. And on here was an Eagle's head. And this is ordinary rabbit wire which you use to do the work and I have a couple more little ones here. Those was made not too long ago. So I picked them up part of my collection too.

Q. What would those be used for?

A. They was made for the same thing, making baskets and things like that. And this old blade here. I found it where my grand people use to live. And so I got an old handle put onto it and so it is an old one.

Q. They probably used that, eh?

A. Yeh, they used that. They used it. And this here little bottle, that's bear grease. It's grease that I take in the mornings sometimes – not always. I put it on my hands and I'll rub it and put it over me and put it on myself for healing. It's used for healing purposes.

Q. Where did you get that?

A. That's taken from when someone kills a bear, when the skin is taken off that drips off onto a board and runs into a container.

Q. It doesn't have to be boiled?

A. No and the thing of it is with the bear grease you can keep it forever. You don't have to keep it in the fridge or anything and it has very very little bit of odour. But fish oil and other oils, they get bad and spoil.

Q. That's why you have hardly any wrinkles!!!

A. Yeh. Bear grease was used for different things. They used it sometimes when they made canoes. They put part of bear grease in with their balsam and spruce and they put so much in order to have it so that the balsam wouldn't get hard. It had to be soft because when they hit anything it would scrape off and if it was made right it would just get rubberized.

Q. It is amazing how much they knew, eh?

A. It is. And this thing I carry my tobacco and also with me I carry sweet grass, and so there is different things that people give me. And this is a picture of my Grandfather. I have a large picture in my home.

Q. And which grandfather is this?

A. That was my mother's dad. His name was Joe Jeremy. He was the gentleman that made the mast hoops for the schooner Bluenose. I have quite a collection of pictures at home.

Q. Maybe sometime I could visit and make some copy photographs.

A. I have some old baskets home, I have some different things at home and quite a lot of collection. I have carried some of this with me when I went from school to school and have give talks with different people and different organizations.

Q. You'd be interested, sometime you should come to Freeport where I live because a friend of mine who lives right over on the point overlooking Grand Passage called me one day she was digging in her front yard. She said Chris you have to come see what I found. And there were clay pottery shards with designs on them and tons of clam shells and a tooth with a hole drilled through it and also a beautiful bone, it had to be a tool because it just fit in your hand like that. So I called Frank Meuse and he called Stephen Davis, the Provincial Archeologist and he sent an Archeologist named David Christensen down and they figured that was an encampment about 500 years old, that the Micmac would have come there every summer because they could sit up and see any porpoise or seals or anything coming through and they could dig clams in the cove right down below, and it was in the lee of the wind so they would be protected by the north wind. So they took from my friend, they took all those artifacts, and they told her not to dig any more there. If she was going to have a garden, have a raised garden. They figured that was 5 or 6 hundred years old. And those pieces of pottery you could see the design cut right in them. Wonderful. You should come down sometime.

A. Yes, I would like to come over there. There's another lady that's down towards Church Point, she wrote a book and she picked up an article that was put in the paper that someone had quoted me onto and she wanted to meet me sometime. She is a writer and she wrote several books and so she is fighting trying to save our earth too. The old fishing and things like that.

Q. Would her name be Jan Slacko?

A. No I don't think so. I just forget. I've got it written down home there. I have a copy of her book that she wrote about the plant life under the ocean, under the sea. There is a lot of people that's coming forward that has interest in saving our earth. Each year I have a gathering at Kedgie and this year gone by was the fourth year. Twenty-eighth of September to the first of October and then we had the unveiling of the plaque at Kedgie and we had the Grand Council there this year and also the Jingle Bell Dancers and the Drummers and so it was quite nice because we unveiled a plaque and not this has got to be put up at Kedgie to commemorate the First Nations people. And so it has been a very good year. And this was the first year that I got to the powow at Bear River. I was quite busy all the time so I just took time and went to Frank Meuse's powow. It was small but quite nice. But I was to one at Big Cove and also one at Truro and one at Gold River and this one. I never got to the sundance. That was in Big Cove. That's quite nice. I never see one before.

Q. Will they have one next year?

A. Yeh. And everybody is invited to them. It's very nice, you know, the people that is coming out and to take notice of what is happening.

Q. In the summer because I have the Bed and Breakfast I find it very hard to go anywhere.

A. Where is your Bed and Breakfast?

Q. In Freeport, on Long Island.

A. I was over there here to the place where you walk out to where the rocks are. And that's off to the left. And the sign says that there are Lady Slippers. They are not. Those are skunk cabbage.

Q. There is quite a difference.

A. It is. The skunk cabbage grows very deep in the earth and so the sign says there Lady Slippers and the skunk cabbage was used for curing diabetes. There were some people that actually got cured.

Q. What would they do with it, do you know?

A. They would steep it. And it's quite hard to drink. And you would take some each day. Other than that over on the shores of Maine, there was a lot of skunk cabbage growing. But it was just unreal to see so much skunk cabbage growing over there in this place.

Q. And also picture plants.

A. Yes, picture plants. Yes, I went from there to Brier Island. It is great to see that place. It is a bit more than I thought it would be. I didn't think that we had such a strong place so handy.

Q. Well, I thank you so much.

