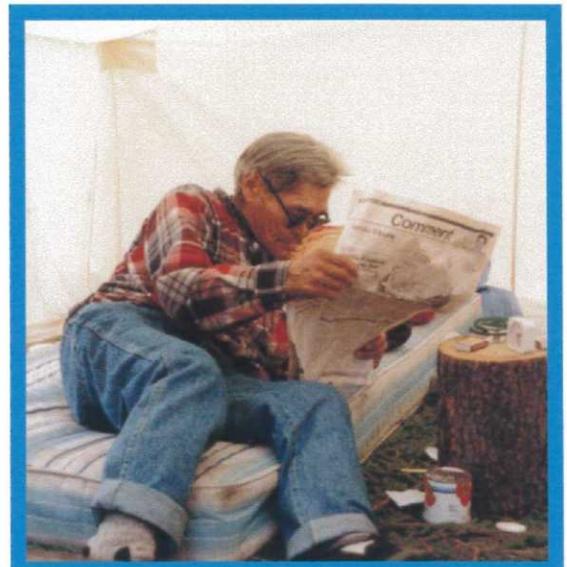
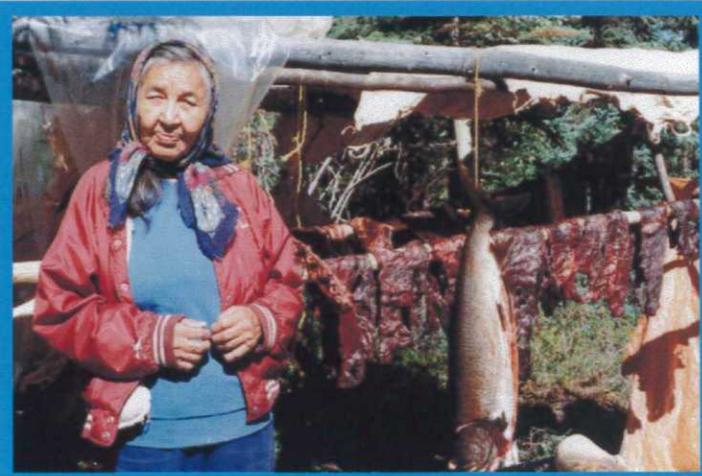
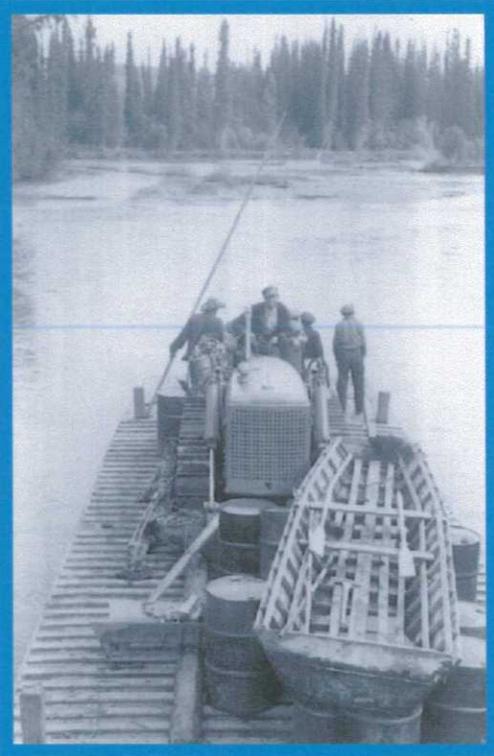




Kaska Cultural Research Project



Kaska History and Cultural Research Training Project

Mission Statement

The Kaska History and Cultural Research Team recognizes the value of identity in building a strong and confident people.

We seek to recapture Kaska Culture and History through the wisdom of our Elders, for the future of our children.

Project Goals:

1. To train people in the community of Lower Post to interview, transcribe and gather research about Kaska History and Culture.
2. To compile these materials into a central data bank, eventually a CD ROM, and make them available to community members for research purposes.

Cover

Top left: Doug Johnson and Pete Allan in the HBC trading post in Lower Post, BC.

Middle: River scow motoring down to Lower Post.

Bottom left: Elder Mida Donnassy at Frances Lake Camp, Aug. 1997

Bottom right: Elder Louis Boya relaxing at Frances Lake Camp, Aug, 1997.

Kaska History and Cultural Research Training Project Newsletter, Vol. Issue 2.

(Actually this one is more than just a newsletter!)

"History is now"

The Kaska History and Cultural Research Training Project began on June 16, 1997 and ran until August 22nd, 1997. We interviewed Elders from Lower Post, Good Hope Lake, Watson Lake, and Fort Ware BC. These interviews were recorded on audio and video tape. We are gathered and catalogued secondary sources; books, articles, photographs and maps. Our team started as a group of six people, George Morgan Assistant Coordinator, Matt King Anthropology student, Michelle Miller researcher trainee, Melanie Miller researcher trainee and Christabelle Carlick researcher trainee/transcriber and Suzanne Hale, project coordinator.

On the way, we met with many others who shared our curiosity. Reg Wolfe, history buff and rare book collector, the Lower Post band office and community members, Liard First Nation, the Kaska Dena Council, Kaska Tribal Council, the North East Native Advancement Society (NENAS) and the dedicated people at Aboriginal Language Services. They all encouraged us in our research, offering insight and many resources.

Members of our group traveled to Fort Ware, the Yukon Archives, Good Hope Lake and Frances Lake and we still have more people and places to contact. As the project progressed so did our learning.

The work presented in this newsletter is a glimpse of what we found. It seems the more we learned, the more we realised we had to learn. Our work is not yet finished, not at all. Much of what we found may already be known to others, but for us it was a first exposure in researching and documenting Kaska history and culture.

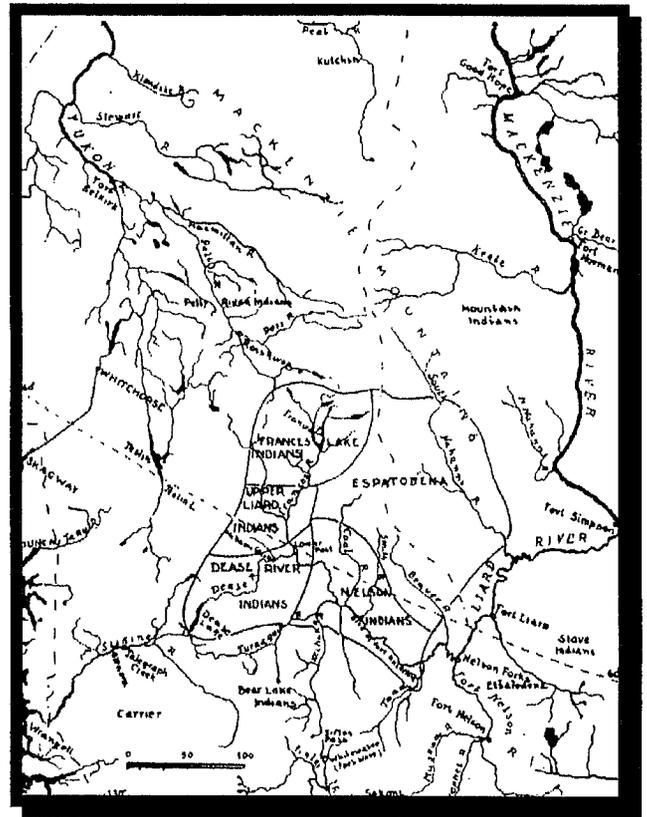
We were told that this kind of work is "like hunting on paper". As we went about discovering resources, of and from the past, we were all struck by how important these people and memories are to life here, in the present. In some way, we were all woken up by the value of what we were learning.

If this project were to happen 100 years from now, we wondered if we would be able to pass on glimpses of what was important about the way we are living today. How would our children and ancestors find out about who we were? Our conclusion was that even though it passes invisibly, history is now, too.

Kaska Dena People and Territory

According to a report done on Aboriginal languages in the Yukon, by Bruce Cottingham, there are five Kaska Dena groups traditionally named and identified by their domain. (*Names that appear in italics were provided with the assistance of Dennis Porter, Kaska interpreter. They are the English phonetic pronunciations of these Kaska words.*)

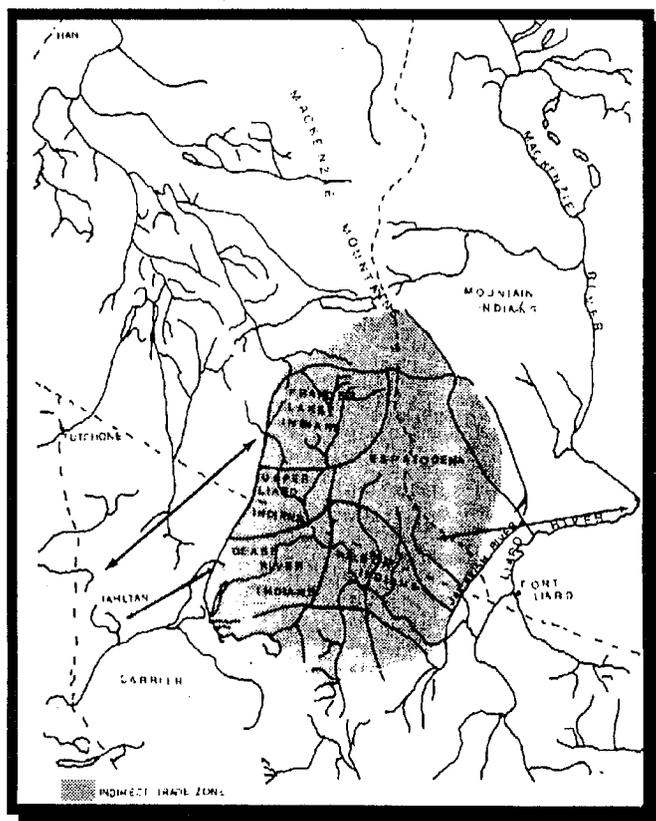
1. Tu tcogotena (*Tu cho gha nugga dhal*)
(Big Water Dwellers)
2. Espatodena (*Espa tah dena*)
(Dwellers Amongst the Wild Goats)
and Gata otena
(People Who Hunt Rabbits)
3. Naatitu a gotena (*Na aw ti tu a gotena*)
(Dwellers at a Sharp Mountain Where
a Little River Starts – *Lower Post*)
4. Ki stagotena (*Kaska word – Tsetotena*
– *Tsay tow tena*)
(Mountain Dwellers) or Dease River
Kaska
5. Tse lona (*Tsay lona*) (Mountain Top)
or Nelson Kaska



Map of the Cassiar and Its People.

Where they lived

- 1) Tu tcogotena (*Tu cho gha nugga dhal*) (Big Water Dwellers) are the Dena people that occupy the Tucho (Frances Lake) and the Tucho Tue (Frances River) area. They hunted also the Too-Ti (Liard) and Tucho Tue (Dease River) areas.
- 2) Espatodena (*Espa tah dena*) (Dwellers Amongst the Wild Goats) and Gata otena (People Who Hunt Rabbits) are concentrated within a range east of the Tu tcogotena Kaska north of Tsa Tue (Beaver River) and the Nahanie River. They also hunted at the junction of the Atsonne Tue (Moose Dung Water River / Coal River) and Tyagacho (Big River/Liard).
- 3) Naatitu a gotena (*Na aw ti tu a gotena*) (Dwellers at a Sharp Mountain Where a Little River Starts) occupied the head water country portion of the Liard River called Net I Tue, down to the Canyon above Daelyu (Lower Post) which means "a place where we gather to trade." They made seasonal migrations to the salmon runs a Tu disdis Tue (Pelly River) which means, "you can see clearly into the deep water." Seasonal fishing also was done at Tuts Algua (Watson Lake) or Lu cho, and game was harvested along Agedze Tue (Hyland River) which means "too much game."
The Tu tcogotena Kaska also used the Hyland River and called it Bath-o-too-a (Dangerous River).



Map of the Cassiar (Honigmann, 1964).

- 4) Ki stagotena (*Kaska word – Tsetotena – Tsay tow tena*) (Mountain Dwellers) or Dease River Kaska dominated the south and south east of the Natitu a gotena Kaska. Their traditional range included the valleys of the Dease River south from Net I tue to the northern part of Dease Lake where a natural divide separated them from the inland neighbours. Ki stagotena living along Duna za (McDames), meaning "pure place where people stay," above its junction with the Dease River was also known as Ozanna, "people of the same blood." The inseparability of the land, language and the people is illustrated by the Kaska name for Liard Tom "Ozanna."
- 5) Tse lona (*Tsay lona*) (Mountain Top) or Nelson Kaska populated the area south and east of the Ki stagotena. They lived and hunted the Rocky Mountain trench headwaters and valleys, the Kechika range over to the Toad River area and north to the Flat River. Some families in this group are known as Tse Ts iynetena or "Wolf People of the Mountains." Before the Hudson Bay post of "Chee House" was open in 1880, Tse lona Kaska would trade at Ft. Nelson.

Cottingham, Bruce. A Profile of Aboriginal Languages in the Yukon. Canada-Yukon Agreement on the preservation, development and enhancement of Aboriginal Languages. (p.69-70)



Left to Right: Liard Tom (wearing glasses in back), Louis Boya (above right shoulder of unknown man with hat), Harry Porter (standing between door and window), Grandma Lucy Porter (right of Harry), Annie Forsberg/McCook (in front of window), Big Annie Stewart (woman in dress in front).

Early History

by *Matt King*

According to archaeological evidence in the Yukon, people have been here since the retreat of the Cordilleran ice sheet about 10,000 years ago. The Kaska Dena have most likely lived in this area for the last 4,000 years.

A large volcanic eruption in present day Yukon and northern BC about 1,600 yrs ago displaced the Native people. These Athapaskan speaking people may have moved from the south to the north through the Rocky Mountain trench to the western coast, originating the coastal Athapaskan speakers, the Tlingit and the Eyak.

Part of this population settled in southeastern Alaska and the adjacent Yukon. This is where the earliest form of the Athapaskan language is found. There are similarities between the Athapaskan languages including Kaska now spoken mainly in the communities of Ross River, Watson Lake, Upper Liard, Lower Post, Two-mile, Good Hope Lake, Dease Lake, Fort Ware, and Muncho Lake.

Trade and Contact with White People

By the 1820's the Hudson Bay Co. knew of the Indian people living west of the Rockies and by the headwaters of the Liard, but they did not know where these headwaters were located. Much of the Hudson Bay's knowledge of these people came from the neighboring tribes who traded with this group called the "*Nahanni*". The *Nahanni* received goods from the Tahltan and Tlingit middle men who traded with the Russians on the coast, since about 1800, and the Slavey and Beaver middle men who traded with the Hudson Bay Co. on the Lower Liard and Mackenzie Rivers. Direct trade was established by 1821.



Hudson Bay Company, Lower Post, BC.

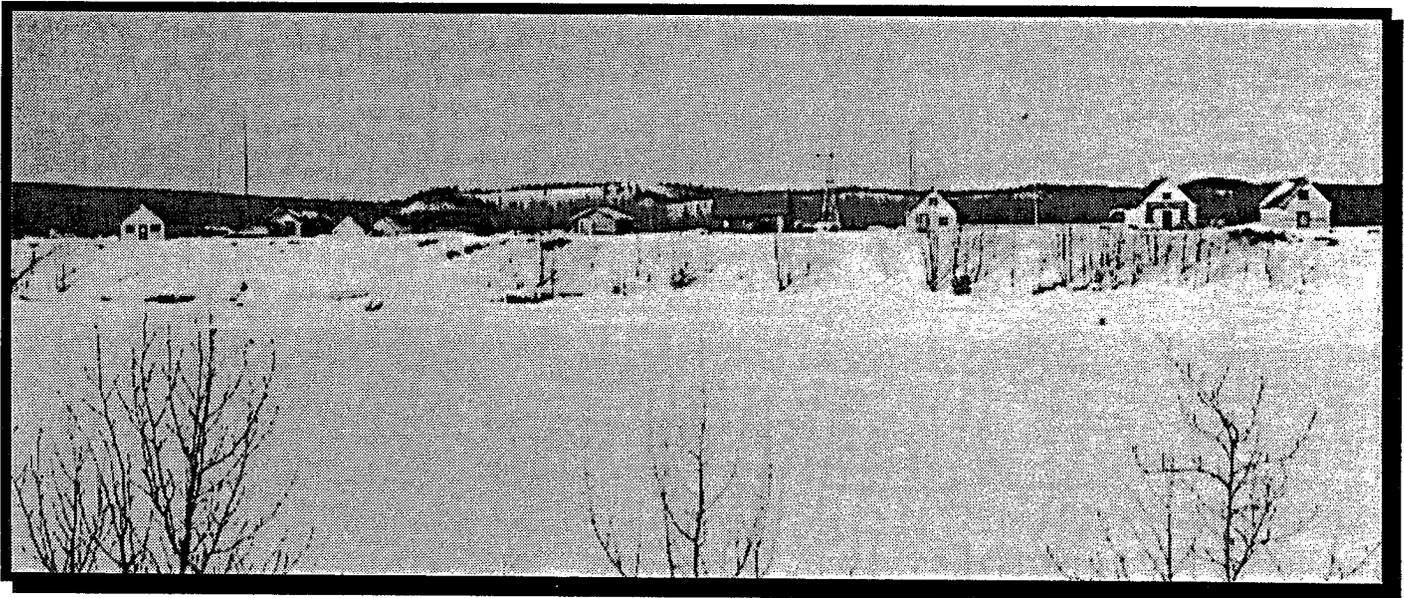
Due to previous indirect contact with Europeans, the Nahanni had suffered both disease and a new economy based on surpluses for trade.

The Nahanni, according to journals kept at Ft. Liard, were not Slavey, Sekanni, Beaver or Chipewyan, all of whom were identified at the time, nor were they Tahltan or Tlingit who at the time were middle men for Russian trade on the coast. They could only be the Kaska Dena peoples of today who at the time were called the Nahanni by the White traders.

By 1865, there were no White people in Kaska territory until the start of the Cassiar Gold Rush.

Around 1876, the trading post at Lower Post was set up. An American named Robert Sylvester built a large trading post at Lower Post and another at McDame's. Practically the whole of Kaska Dena trade took place either at McDame's or Lower Post. The Kaska of these areas are described as living in a country that had an abundance of furs and food.

The Kaska Dena only visited the Post once a year, they lived a nomadic life, moving from camp to camp in isolated small family parties. The Kaska Dena packed everything on their backs or on dogs. Rivers and lakes were crossed in the summer by rafts. By this time there was sufficient contact between Whites and the Kaska Dena to cause some serious illness and diseases. Viral epidemics were attributed to the White's arrival on the land.



Kitchen, Trading Post, Store House, Trappers' Quarters, Old Lower Post.

The previous article is a summary of the contents of Peter Doug Elias' 1985 "Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon" and R. M. Gotthardt's report "Archaeological Resource Inventory: Liard and Frances Rivers, Southeast Yukon: Final Report."

Who were the 'Nahanni' really?

Sometimes history makes a mistake. Eventually as our understanding deepens, these mistakes are revealed. The term **Nahanni** is an example of this. Originally the word **Nahanni** was used by White Traders to refer to different Native Peoples. They thought it was a 'proper name' and so they told others, who told others, etc. In fact until the mid 1970's the word **Nahanni** was used by some people to refer to the Kaska, Tahltan and Tutchone peoples.

Through our research, we've learned that **Nahanni** was a Native word used by Native groups to refer to other lesser known Native groups. Its meaning was loosely, "Native people who live far away, are remote or unknown, possibly considered hostile, or untrustworthy." (Honigman 1956:36)

In the past, the word **Nahanni** was used by the Kaska people to refer to the Tahltan, and Pelly River Kaska, who adopted it for themselves. The Sekanni people used it for the Tahltan and Upper Liard Kaska, the Carrier people used it for the Tahltan people, and the Northern Tutchone people used it for the Pelly River Indians.

Because of geography which made Northern BC and the South Eastern Yukon difficult for the traders to access (Mackenzie Mountains to the east, and the trade block imposed by the Coast Tlingit upon the interior which kept the Europeans out by the west), the area remained remote, and the people little known. All of the Native people

in the area were called Nahanni at various times.

The term began to be used in the 1820's by White traders to refer to the peoples west of the Mackenzie mountains, who traded at Fort Liard and Fort Simpson (HBC 1826-1828), now said to be Kaska. By the 1830's the term referred in general to people who lived west of the Mackenzie Mountains and the Liard River.

The Fort Halkett population was described in the Hudson Bay Journals as "Sekanni and Nahannies of different tribes." (Anderson 1858). By the 1850's it was used to refer to any First Nation of the Cordillera, other than Kutchin, as well as to the Mountain Indians.

George Dawson, who passed into Kaska Territory in 1887, as part of the Geological Survey of Canada, was the first to try to definitively name peoples, not relying on the name given to them by their neighbours. He found the Kaska to form a group of people who were referred to as the Nahanni.

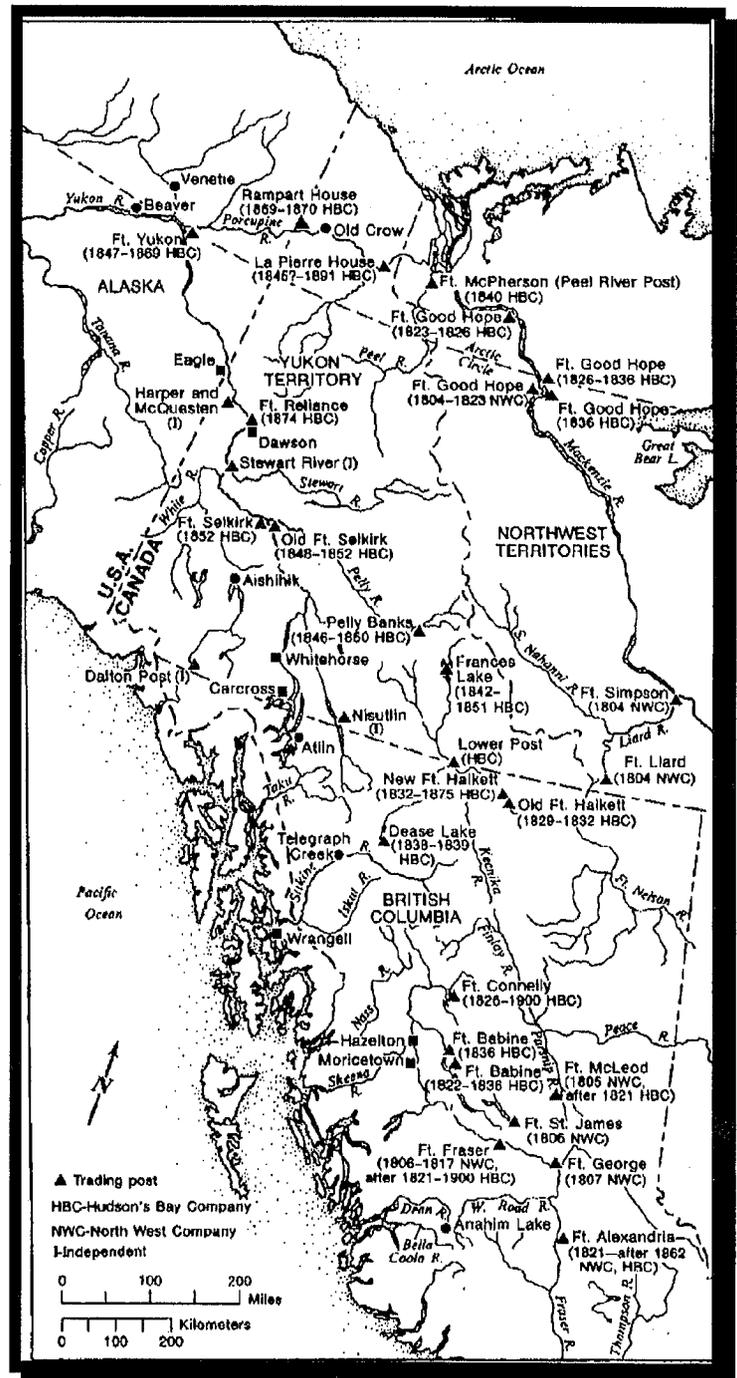
"[Today], however, the term Nahanni is not generally considered by anthropologists to be an acceptable label for any tribal, cultural, or linguistic group." (p.451 – Peoples of the SubArctic)

Notes from Handbook of North American Indians, Sub-Arctic, Vol. 6 – Smithsonian Institute, 1981. Chapter on Kaska by John J. Honigman.

Time line

Contact with Hudson Bay Posts and White Society

- First steady contact with White people came in 1820's, at Hudson's Bay Co. (HBC) Trading Post at Fort Halkett, on the Liard and Fort Nelson Rivers in 1829, then Fort Halkett moved west to the confluence of the Liard and Smith River in 1832-1875.
- 1838 HBC opened a post on Dease Lake, closed after 3 years
- 1843 HBC Fort Frances opened, closed in 1851, reopened in 1881.
- 1873 Cassiar gold rush brought many Non-natives in Kaska country (Cassiar name comes from the word Kaska, said to refer to the territory of the Kaska peoples)
- 1876 Rufus Sylvester opens an 'independent' trading post at Lower Post and an other post at McDame Creek. Eventually, these posts were bought by the HBC.
- 1897-98 Klondike Gold Rush brought many more prospectors into the territory.
- 1926 mission established at McDame Creek on the Dease River, by Father Allard OMI
- 1937 mission established at Lower Post by Father Drean OMI and Father Poulet, OMI, after Father Allard drowned in the Cottonwood rapids, (on the Dease River), while transporting supplies to build the mission at Lower Post in 1935.
- 1942 Alaska Hwy building begins, road to go right through Lower Post. Approx. 500 men arrive for construction, and make camp around Lower Post. Forbidden by Father Poulet to enter reserve, they camp around the outskirts of Lower Post.



Trading posts in the Cordillera and adjoining Mackenzie borderlands, with approximate dates when they were established and abandoned, when known.

Handbook of North American Indians. Ed. William C. Sturtevant. Vol. 6, "Sub Arctic." Volume ed. June Helm. Smithsonian Institute, Washington: 1981.)

Excerpts from Elder's Interviews

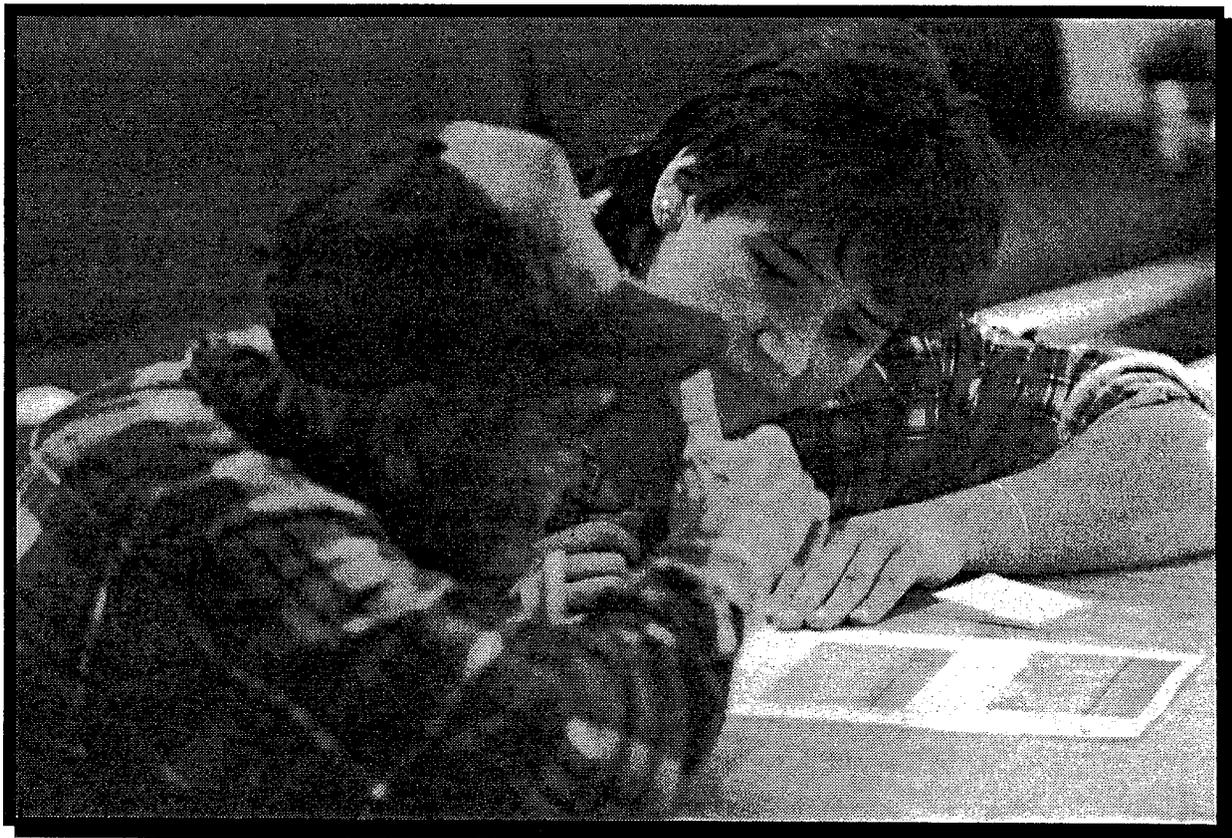
These excerpts are from hours of interviews with Kaska Elders, mainly from Lower Post and Fort Ware. The interviewers are students, mostly from Lower Post, who took part in the Kaska History and Cultural Research Training Project.

Sometimes history can be controversial. We all see things in different ways. The words that follow, are those spoken by the Elders, written down exactly as they were spoken. We have not changed them or censured them. It is our hope that we will not offend anyone in publishing what has been shared with us.

In presenting these excerpts, we would like to share some of the knowledge that we gained during this summer's project. These are only excerpts, there are whole transcripts that are available to those people who are interested in learning more.

It has been a great privilege to learn from these Elders, who very generously opened their memories and hearts to us. We would like to share this privilege.

Our research process is by no means finished. It is just beginning.



Elder, Louis Boya and Melanie Miller looking over old photos.

Elders' Excerpts

In this section are highlights from the interviews that we did over the summer. These are just highlights, the rest of these transcripts give a more detailed picture of history. We encourage people to read the entire transcripts right through.

Elder's Name	Topics covered in these excerpts
Alfred Jakesta	Hudson Bay Co. transport, Walking days, Moose, Working on the river scows
Louis Boya	Working on the river scows, Help with cemetery upkeep
Mary Jean Poole	Scul boats...transporting goods to McDame
Michael Abou	Message to youth, Hudson Bay Post in Fort Ware pulls out, Growing up traditonally in the 40's New trading post in Fort Ware Credit at the post, Trapping, McDame World War II, Acceptance of Death Getting an Indian name
Lillian Boya	Walking the Davie Trail, Skin boats, Language
John R. McCook	Spirituality, Food, Living in the traditional style
John Poole	Hunting and fishing
Tom Poole	Elders in today's society, Leaders Language and Culture, Recreation Walking Trails, Food & Health, Land Claims, Home Brew
Wayne Poole	Women in leadership
Dickson Lutz	Elder's knowledge, After getting an Indian name/surviving in the bush
Lorna Reid	Making dry meat, traditional healing
* Francess Carlick	Social change, storytelling, Cross cultural influences
*Dave Porter	Political beginnings, cultural influences/training
*Dennis Porter	Traditional government, Animal as protectors
*Walter Carlick	Dead falls, hunting, being on the land
*Steve Jakesta	Working together, Importance of understanding history
*too young to be considered Elders	

Alfred Jakesta is speaking about where he was born and his memories of the Hudson Bay Company. He is being interviewed by George Morgan.

Alfred: I tell you, I don't know just exactly this where I was born, I was born in a tent. We don't have houses before. And...they keep me in a shelter, [with a] campfire. We got skin clothes and about three corner ... And it don't costs too much money, two-fifty. And umm, food is cheap, no tax... and we walk about when we want to get traveling. And we used to have a trail that run around Dease Lake. Probably someplace grown over, some place probably [there is] still [a] marking. ... [it was] used a long time.

Before I [was] born they have gold rush days, people come from all over [the] country. McDame's, they had a whole bunch of Chinamen from Telegraph. They send them all back.

You got a horse trail that comes up from Telegraph to Dease Lake that pack[ed] freight for Hudson Bay and Hudson Bay got its own horses, they pack...they got [a] few guys packing for them and...when I was pretty young I see that pack train... 'Hudson Bay train' they call it.

And then they shut that down and they got that little cat tractor, hauling wagon[s] through, you know them little wagon[s]. They got that long, long...that five ton, they haul [it]down with [an]inboard motor to McDame's and to Lower Post and then ... they come up and they make...make four trips and have enough food for the winter. Hudson Bay men do like this.

And then they would hire a few guides to work and they [would] unload trade and pack it up the hill. Sometimes [they would] have a heavy pack, boy...going up that hill... and [it would weigh about] [a]...hundred pound [you would just] throw [it] over your shoulder [and] walk, those Indian they [were] tough for walking, boy. They don't have education but they do a lot of hard work. They chop wood with axe and they can chop half of that log and just – chop! After that [you] put it up for stove wood. And you go again and sometimes you go to have a camp fire and you chop up lot[s] of wood and you cut all them down... for a night. You burn them up and sit down to a fire and then umm, you're on the way again. [There were] lots of ways people did travel before, some of them have a tough time, some of them have an easy time. Because Indian[s] before, they did [a lot of] hard work, they lived on meat.



Elder, Alfred Jakesta

The following is another interview with Alfred Jakesta, he is being interviewed this time by *Matt King*.

In the walking days I used to walk to Telegraph [Creek] and Dease Lake. 'Walking all those mountains, up behind Dease Lake, moose was just like cattle. I come out [around] the lake I see four or five [moose], sometimes two or three [moose], some run away. If you go out hunting you wouldn't [see] anything of what I [have] seen before. [There would be lots of] Moose trail and you go up and sometimes hundreds [of moose].

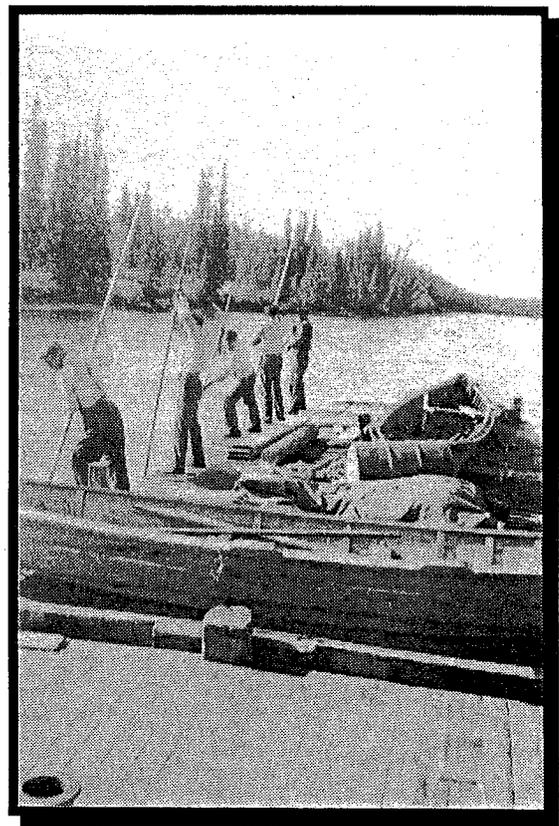
That's the guys who are outfitters out hunting. They take everything away from us and they're making the self-government on our country and we're left out. No good. We're the ones suppose[d] to be [doing] self-government or something. All native land.

Lower Post or - Daelyu - in Kaska - came into existence as a center for trade, located where the Dease and Liard Rivers meet. From the 1920's to the 1960's, river travel was a main way of bringing goods, traders, travelers and missionaries into the north country. Many Kaska people found work piloting and powering the 'river scows' from Dease Lake to Lower Post.

Alfred: And then, when they used to trade down the river to Lower Post with a hand paddle, [it would] take them one month.

Matt: How would you paddle yourself down the river?

Alfred: You go down with a pole, its called a scow...[it was] about fifty feet long. And you pole hard and line it up... lot[s] of work boy, by hand and pulling. Here...that body, it gets solid. And... I mean that [was] not an easy job but we do it. That time they got machinery, first motor I seen that, one cylinder Alto. Next, uhh.. Johnson, they called it a Johnson motor, and uhh... twenty-four horse for power. They put that on [the] boat, sure makes [a] lot of difference than poling, when we did that. And inboard motor... they did that...and...and another thing comes... they [started]building big boats, really.



Poling up-river from Lower Post

Alfred: Just before I get on the big boat, I work... I work[ed] on the road when I was young... I rode trucks and we shovel[ed] with our hand[s]. And we fill[ed] in the holes... it was one way traffic, we work[ed] on that and put food in covers... and then we cover[ed] it up [to] send it on the river. I work[ed] for three months when I unload[ed]... when fall time come, I go trapping and hunting and... time go by, sometimes you don't remember most of it, but you do what you want to do. Nobody [tried] to stop you from trespassing... uhh, you go anyplace in our country, we're travelers, but we're all trapping. It say... its my... it can't go like that...they have no business to ruin our country and tell us what to do. Give us orders... its not, not right. Us Indian Nation, we were here since time of the flood... Indian people.

Louis Boya, is telling about a man who worked on the river scows. This interview took place in the Cemetery across the Liard River from Lower Post. Louis was our guide.

Suzanne: Louie who was the Old Captain?

Louie: That...he...[that is] Chief Allick...beside him... that [was] his cousin.

Suzanne: His cousin.

Louie: Ya.

Suzanne: And did he work on the river on the boats?

Louie: He's an old timer, but some of the guys is old but he, there [was] no money that time, nothing, just "you can have a card box ticket" "OK". Then we got a fifty dollars, two dollars, three dollars, and them... an old timer from here, [would go] just right through to Dease Lake...what you think?



Chief Allick, Dan Lutz and Annie Stewart in front of the newly-built Catholic Church in Lower Post.

Suzanne: You were paid six and a half-dollars to go to Dease Lake? [Or] It cost you?

Doris: He went.

Louie: Two in half each day. Hour and a half a day.

Doris: And they gave it to you in the form of a ticket.

Suzanne: How many days did it take you to go to Dease Lake?

Louie: Oh, [to go] there was a hand powered, you know.

Suzanne: Hand powered?

Louie: A pole, you get a hard time. Maybe, but two or three weeks you get there.

Suzanne: Wow.

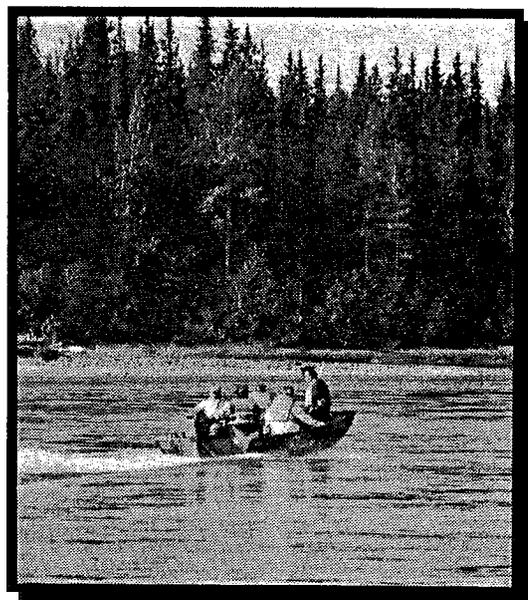
Louie: You know Dease Lake.

Suzanne: Ya.

Louie: Well.

Suzanne: A lot of work eh...a lot of hard work.

Louie: Oh, a lot of work, old timer like me, holy manny, hard working people! That['s] why I say that. Look at that (pointing to the cemetery)...only me... like that...(showing his hand that he cannot totally straighten out)...clear the place not too long ago, but I can't do it again, no, no, no.



Times have changed! Going to visit the old cemetery across the Liard River at Lower Post.

Interviewing Elders in Fort Ware

Mary Jean Poole, speaking about her Grandfather and Grandmother Poole and old time skull boats.

George: So you're going to tell me a story about your grandfather?

Mary Jean: Yeah, my Grandfather and my Grandma Poole raised me.

George: Were you raised on a trap line at all?

Mary Jean: Yes. But what I was going to tell you about is long ago when my Grandfather was still living. How they brought food to settlements... Grandma told me that too! What they used was them skull boats. I know what it is, but you got to have man power. No cake or nothing. They use to bring supplies to settlements.

George: What year was this? Was this like the nineteen hundreds?

Mary Jean: Probably eighteen hundreds. Because my Grandma was born in 1889. Well, that was in the 1800s. My Grandma used to go with my Grandpa. And him, he was the captain. They call him captain hey. They have to use those skull [boats] to haul with man power.

George: Up those rivers?

Mary Jean: From McDame to... it depends on how rough it is. They got to use rope you know, like through [the] ripples.

George: Were they taking goods to the trading posts or what were they doing?

Mary Jean: Uh huh!

George: Was there an Indian village at McDames before there was a trading post?

Mary Jean: Uh huh! Yes. There were Indians everywhere.

While in Fort Ware for the General Assembly (June 30 to July 6th), Matt King and George Morgan interviewed a group of Elders (Charlie and Mary Jean Poole, Tom Poole, Wayne Poole, John Poole Lillian Boya, Michael Abou and John R. McCook – Fort Ware Chief) shared concerns about the changes they see in their community.

George: What part of our culture do you think that's important to make sure that young people never forget? What kind of rule or what kind of, if there's one thing that you can tell me that you want me to never forget, you know what I mean?

Mike: Uh huh.

George: What would that be?

Mike: You see nephew, if you got a son, you got a wife, you got a son, you got a daughter, just like what you .. what the people figure they want .. they want to go out in the bush and teach kids in another part in the bush. That sort of thing is good but for you I want you not to forget is don't ever go drinking .. don't ever go toking, that's evil for you kids.

It could be maybe you figure - you might figure 'oh, it make me feel good, oh it's...' but it's hell, it's hell business. It's no good for your kids sake. One thing don't ever do, and keep your kids away from other kids that's doing things like that. You guys have to leave with them, alone, and find [a] new base.

You see that's all the White people doing this, I know that dope business... that's come through Cree, Cree people they're the one that... you ever hear about this mushroom stuff? You see, that's the Indians [who] found things like that, but they don't make a pig of themselves with things like that.



Clockwise from bottom; Willie Poole, Mary Jean Poole, George Morgan and Mike Abou.

What it was like growing up traditionally in the 1940's: at a time when many families trapped during winter months, living independently, away from settlements.

Michael: But anyway, for the time being like you know when I tell you about we have...I have some hard life. You see sometime we... my parents they don't get enough meat, dry meat and stuff. You see it's pretty hard, it's really pretty hard sometimes. You see sometimes you low, you see they make a lot of dry meat for the winter, they make all kinds of dried ground hog and dried beaver meat and moose meat, caribou meat, sheep, goats, deer and stuff.

And yet sometime, we're a big family and sometime Dad be just steady out on the trap line, steady trapping fur, and he forgets to go get some fresh meat and we have to depend on chicken and rabbits. Like I said about we don't receive no S.A. or no family allowance or nothing. Everything you do in my days and them days, it's got to be out of your hands, hard work, every penny you get it's got to be out of you know, hard work. Work every day, trap, go break trail, set out traps, you have to go set beaver trap under ice, you have to trap hole through ice. You got to find a run way before you set your trap. So all that kind of deal you know it's...nowadays people get things too easy and they figure, we could do this, they get a job. When they get a job, wages is pretty sky high, it's good.

In our time when we used [to] work we work[ed] our ass off for maybe eight dollar a day, maybe three dollars a day. And still... yet we work[ed] all summer, by fall time then we were lucky, we work all summer, then we bring back all what we make. We buy all the grocery we need, then we go back out in the trapline and that's where we stay all winter long. That's how Dad raise us. Yeah Mom and that, they were hard working people, so is my uncle Jack Abou and Auntie Bella Abou. They work[ed] the same way too.

Once Trading Posts were set up in the North, they brought with them a new trading system and technology that changed the lives of Native people forever. When the Trading Posts closed, this also made a huge impact.

Mike: You know these, I hate to say things like that sometimes, but you know it's White people, they're trying to buy us off, our land or our trees or whatever we live by. You see all the cut blocks around, you know this friendly river, one time ago this river was a road to us. We used to come back from beaver trapping [in] spring time, we sell all our fur to Hudson's Bay.

George: Where was their post, here?

Mike: Yeah. Right here, just up behind the grave yard. Then from here we used to go out to Summit Lake or McLeod lake with boat, so we work out there all summer, work on [the] saw mill and stuff like that. But we never thought anything like that [was] gonna turn up this way and 1953 spring, Hudson's Bay move[ed] out on us. And we were all, you know, it's just like we were thrown away.

No White people comes around, no White people was to do anything for us. But down Fort Graham there was an old fellow by the name of Ben Cork. And Art Van Summers and Dick Corles and Jimmy Van Summers and they were very good, very, very nice people. They are just very... they come and help and they... most of us went down to Fort Graham there. That's the only place we gonna buy supplies from these trader[s]. This guy he just got a little company store, eh. So he we trade with him, everybody trade with him from here and then, he wasn't very much of a guy because he just got a store for the people down there. But he was a very nice fellow and all the people from Inginika, Fort Graham, they were... everybody was nice to us.

A new trading post is established in Fort Ware

Mike About: Like I said after the Hudson's Bay, just like... they throw us away. It was very, very tough because you see how far we have to go on our trapline from Fort Graham way back that way. It's [a] hundred some miles from here to Fort Graham, walking, and we have to pack our grocery and [use] our back pack and dog packs. But then, like I say, after the trader... that Dan Quorck he comes up, he comes up with so much money, you got Art Van Summers to help him and Dick Corles and Jimmy Van. They come up to Fort Ware here, they bring.. they haul freight for him. He put up a store here for us.

He put up a store here for us and we all move[d] back up here. And he got [a] store running down [in] Fort Graham too. I should say Iginika, the old Inginika, Inginika Point they call it. By there, he got [a] store there too for the people down there that... well them.. you know, them Sekanni people, they're our people hey. Except for the youngster, nowadays they don't think of it that way, but you know us older people we used to be all together. Yeah like William Isaac and Grandpa Tomasoni and Uncle Thomas and Uncle Isador Toma he's still alive and Uncle Bob Pierre and all the Pierre Boys. Duncan Pierre and Kiyon Pierre we used to.... oh we used to have lot of fun together down there. You know we use to stick gamble, sometimes we used to play poker, we used to hunt together all the time and you know.. then some boys come up and marry some girls from up here, just like one group of family.



Credit at the trading posts; World War II; Trapping

Mike: I don't want to put pressure on you boys. You boys are just great listening to me and you know I'm happy. But back about back in 1942, I tell you I was maybe about nine years old and I still could remember just about everything.

George: About the old way of doing things?

Mike: Yeah. You see where we, me and us - the whole family, Dad, Mom and the whole family, we left here one time, one spring March time. We left here and we headed north. There was Hudson's Bay store here, but for some reason Dad got sort of angry with the store keeper because Dad was short of money, he didn't have enough money to pay for two boxes of ammunition and the Hudson's Bay wouldn't let him take it.... couldn't put the rest on his bill even though Dad got, he got no credit nothing, you know that's the way they... the old time days they [didn't] call it a bill or credit, they use to call it Ja-boon. [Jaw bone]



George: That's the Indian word for credit?

Mike: No, that was an English [word]. Yeah, Ja-boon. "Give me Ja-boon." "Hey you got no money, I give you ja-boon." That's the White people, Hudson's Bay. I know all them things. So that's why we left here. Dad...we pull out.

George: Pull out of Fort Ware?

Mike: Yeah, we just left here, we head north, we go back in our trapline. Daddy pick up some of his shells back there, ammunition, and away we head. We keep on going, we travel all summer pretty near. We leave and we stop here and there and we got to ...we come out to McDames Creek.

George: McDames Creek.

Mike: McDame you hear about it?

George: Kaska Dena Council needs some help on McDames right now because the White man says that Indians never lived there before the Fort, before the Fort was there.

Mike: You see 1942.. I tell you McDames, I tell you the village, the reserve was just other side the river. It was just nice, beautiful, just grass.

George: Other side of the river, eh?

Mike: Yeah, oh timber was far back and this side of the river was just small Jack Pine. Oh just beautiful part.

George: And that's where the Fort was?



Mike: Yeah. There was a church down there and the Fort was across the river I think, yeah. Yeah, Fort McDame they call it. Yeah, it was just beautiful country. Then I see old kind of Caterpillar [machine] there one time. I remember it was the first Caterpillar there and just a smaller, must be a John Deere or something. And you know we were kids and were curious and we like to see all the time.. you know there was priest there and teaching kids then them days. I forget the priest's name, I was pretty young then 1942 and that was the year that we saw first plane up in Porcupine creek, up in trapline. Yeah, first plane that went... night time too... went by pretty low and my Uncle and them just wash out the fire place. No time, no more fire, just was all sitting in the dark. Then it was... World War II was going on. So that was that was why they were doing this.

I tell you they wanted to pick up lot of boys from here then for.. out to fight and bring them to war. They were ready, two boys were stupid enough to say OK. They were ready, their name was Hank. My brother Charlie Abou was one of them and my Uncle Perry Massetoe was one of them and Andrew Bob, but him, he they cancel him out, but Thomas Bob he was one of them too.

...but they never went, they never pick[ed] them up. John Poole was going to be one them but they never picked him up. It's got something to do with the Bishop. The Bishop's put a stop to this. They don't want them to pick up anybody from here. Or anybody from anywhere else. But Fort St. James... You see when we went to McDames.. from McDames we stay back there two years.

George: Not coming in for grub or anything?

Mike: Well we, Dad and them they always pick up groceries from McDames. But you know it's good right in post there. Dad was pretty good back there and Dad's got the, you ever hear of what you call them? You ever hear of Murrat people.

George: Murrat?

Mike: Yeah.

George: No.

Mike: You never hear of Jimmy Murrat or any of Murrat?

George: I never heard the name before, no.

Mike: They use to live up Little Muddy. That's their trapline, that's where we stay, by them. That was my Dad's brother in law. We use to trap out there and Dad used to go down [to] McDame, trade his fur down there for everything he needs and Dad was making money. Fur was good, sixty bucks for martin and one pelt and link ninety dollars, fox, silver cross fox was thousand bucks. Dad come out of there with over nine thousand dollars one year, and when we come back down here that guy that Hudson's Bay guy, Dad talk to the Hudson's Bay fellow over in McDames and he phones around, you know they don't have telephone or anything like that them days, not even radio phone. But what they call, [they used].. this telegraph [machine].

On the knowledge and acceptance of death:

George: How about death. How did our people see death? Did they see it as something scary or something bad or they think it's okay?

Mike: I don't know in, ... one of my uncle died you know. Before he died he tell us, he say "You know Nephew, I say what I'm gonna leave, I'm gonna leave the...I'm gonna leave you guys tomorrow, two o'clock in the afternoon." I say "Uncle, what you talking about, where you gonna go uncle?" He say, "I'm gonna die two o'clock tomorrow afternoon." "Uncle are you crazy, are you sick in the head, are you in your right mind?" He look at me, he say "Nephew now, [say good]bye [to] me. Elder's pick me up, two o'clock. Tomorrow two o'clock I'm going with them." And you know what, he was sitting by the table next day, at two o'clock he was having tea, he fall over [the] table, he's gone.



Headstone of Andrew Sambob located across the Liard River at Lower Post

George: How'd did he know that?

Mike: **He say the spirit tell him** that what time he's gonna leave. You see that's how come our people tell us don't commit sin, don't live in sin. Do not run around with different woman beside [your] wife, no matter what. Don't get tempted. Be tough, be strong, be hard, hard man. Have your love in your heart for the one you live with, love your kids, see that's the way our Elders are. And Cestnor tell us like our, like our .. like this earth we're living on. The earth we're walking on. It's just like an old Grandma to us. This mother is our great, great mother. See it's just like our Grandma, our mother. She's getting old, one day everything, you figure everything is fine, but one day things turn around. Somebody up there doesn't want it to wash its face, we'll be all gone. The earth will be washed, see. That's how my Grandma used to tell me. My Grandpa, I never even see him before he died.

Spiritual beliefs, Christianity, fasting and the Eagle as messenger.

George: What was your Dad's Mom's name?

Mike: Gee, I think her name was Elizabeth.

George: You remember her last name?

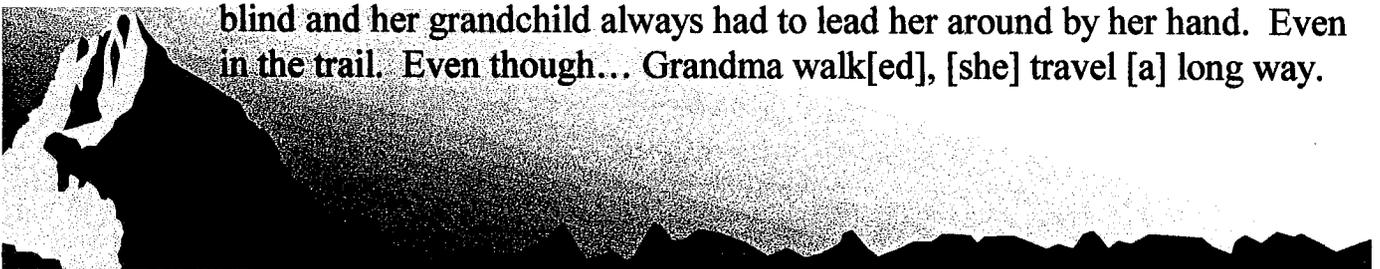
Mike: McKigga.

George: Did she grow up with you on the trapline at all, was she out in the bush with you at all?

Mike: Who?

George: Your grandma.

Mike: No, she was too old. My grandma was too old. Yeah, she spent two years with us, back in Porcupine Lake, where I tell you about. But Grandma was blind and her grandchild always had to lead her around by her hand. Even in the trail. Even though... Grandma walk[ed], [she] travel [a] long way.



George: How did your Grandma...can you tell me how she was? How was she in the bush? Like what kind of stuff did she believe in and stuff?

Mike: She don't believe in anything hardly. Grandma... ever since I could barely remember, Grandma teach us how to pray.

George: To which god? To the Whiteman's God or to the Indian god?

Mike: Well, I don't know what God but she always tell us there is only one God. That's what she always tell us. And she say, and she always, I remember she used to tell us that person...our God she say, he's got red hair and [s]he say he's got a bushy face and he's handsome. She always tell us in our language you know. So I think what Grandma talk about is Jesus,eh. So anyway that's the way she teach us. That's only person Grandma always tell us about.



Other than that sometimes she tell us stories about her Grandma and her Grandparents. I don't know how many years ago was that. She always tell us, "you ever hear eagles sing in the mountains?" I said "Yes grandma", she said "the eagle is our leader" and sometimes she said to us, "you don't have to go out. You don't eat breakfast, you don't eat water, you don't eat nothing." "You want water," she say, "go chew on a piece of willow for the juice to keep you mouth fresh and that way you OK." "Grandma", I say "how can we do that?" she say, "it's our ancestor's way." [S]he say, "that' s our old, old people[']s way. I'm trying to tell you kids, you don't obey, you're no good." That's what she tell us. And she say "sometime when you're out in the mountains, listen for the eagle. Say you hear him singing. Sometimes he feel sorry for you," [s]he say, "he'll lead you to what you're looking for."



Elder, Edna Watson (McDonald), Preparing a Moose Hide.

And Grandma is right you know, one time me and my brothers we were out in the mountain in September time. And well, we never go hungry once, eh. We always have meat. You know that's what my dad and them raise us on. Spring time they buy [a] bunch of grocery that last[ed] us all summer. And then October time they make another trip, that last[ed] us till Christmas. Before Christmas they make another trip that last[ed] us till March then with dog team they can hold about three sleigh load of grocery. That's lots, that lasted more than all spring.

Lillian Boya is speaking about walking the Davie Trail, a trail that links Fort Ware to Lower Post and McDame. Lillian also remembers traveling in skin boats. She is being interviewed by a young man in Fort Ware. (His name is Matt, his last name remains a mystery to us.)

Matt: How long did it take to come from Lower Post down to here, [Fort Ware] as in the trail?

Lillian: Four days. Not long. We come over and we left Lower Post and we make three camp[s], then we make it right there. Not far from right there.

Matt: No. How did you travel mostly? Just on foot? Or use horses ?

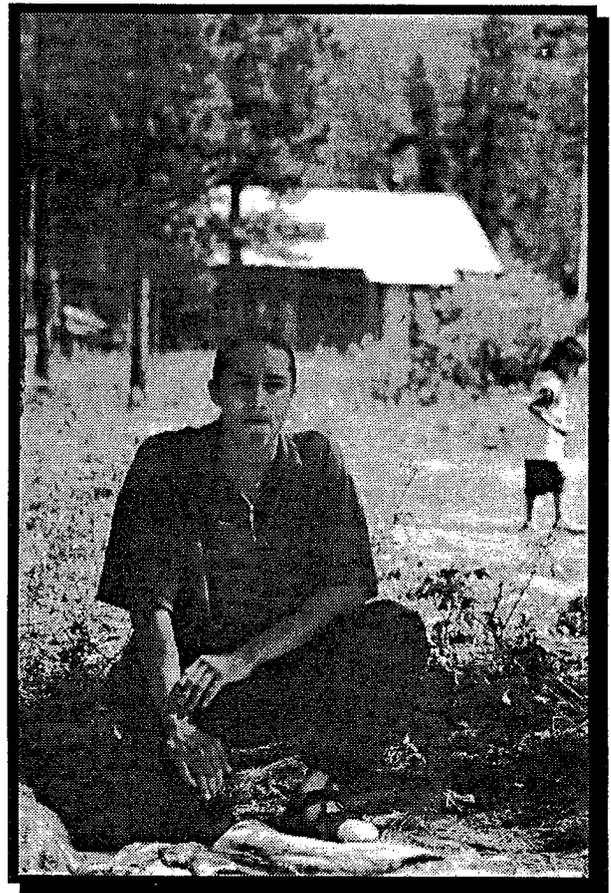
Lillian: No, just walk.

Matt: Just walk hey. Just pack everything on your backs?

Lillian: No, I got dog. Bunch of dogs. Pack my stuff.

Matt: How did you used to travel on the rivers? Did you ever travel down the water?

Lillian: With boat.



Matt ..., Fort Ware, BC.

Matt: With canoe boats?

Lillian: Big boats. [When] it, it's getting rotten we just throw them away.

Matt: What were they made from?

Lillian: Over here. You know how they make boat but it's getting harder with this tool. You can't walk around you just sit down where you sit down.

Man: Can't hang on. That's why I wouldn't go in the meeting. I wouldn't go on the boat.

Matt: Do you speak Kaska now? Is that your language.

Lillian: No, I don't know how to talk my language.

Matt: No?

Lillian: I can't. Anybody tell me, but I don't know. I can't talk to my language.

Matt: Sekanni?

Lillian: No.

Matt: No Sekanni.

Lillian: Everyone, people they try to talk my word and Indian word but I don't know me. I can't talk in my language. No good.



John R. McCook, speaking about spirituality.

George: What was there before the Catholic religion?

John: There was unity.

George: If Christianity hurt us as native people, why do we stay with it now?

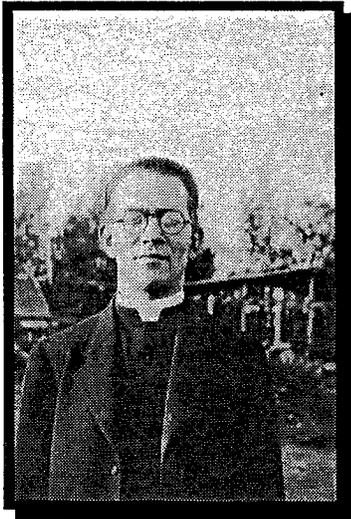
John: Probably because we as native people we believe in.. there is a creator, there is someone more powerful than us. We have dreams, we have visions that we don't yet know of. But when we see them we don't know the meaning of it, but it's still there. Being close to the land really helps us. It brings us more like where we're created.

George: Do people still follow their dreams that they have and try to interpret it?

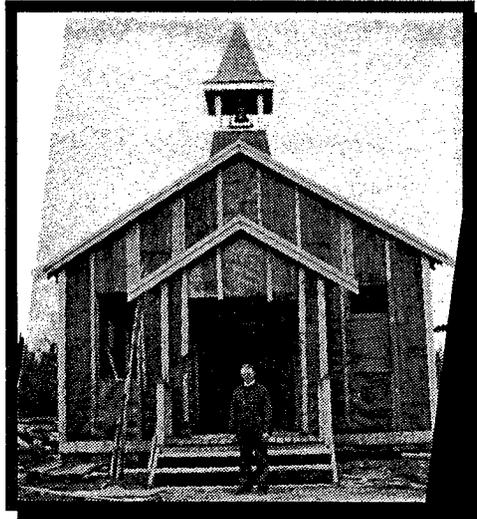
John: I suppose some do. I can't speak for everybody, I am only one person but I think that people have dreams and if they want to see it happen then so be it. They will go for it.

George: Would you like to see someday when the Native people are back and they're back with their dreams and they're back on the land, they're back giving thanks for the game they kill? Rather than in church and reading the bible?

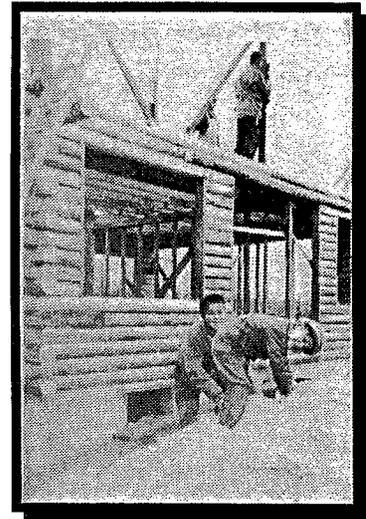
John: I think as Native people we give thanks everyday for another day, when we go out and kill moose we give back to the land. We don't take it all. We give back some or a little bit and we're thankful for it. We don't abuse our wildlife or our culture or anything. I don't think we do as far as I know.



Father Poulet



Father Arsenault, in front of
the newly-built Catholic Church.



Lower Post Mission House
under construction, early 40's.

Food and living in the traditional style:

John: **I'm going to tell you something** George. You see there is, think about back in the thirties and back even back in the fifties there is like I said... there is no such thing as S.A. or family allowance. No source of no help from the government or the white people. But we have to work our guts out to live and raise the young one[s]. But now you know kids, these new kids I was wondering if anything happens. If it turns back to the old days how many young people you think will survive? If no more S.A., no more nothing and they have to live on or out of their own pocket like the way we used to be... how many young people do you think gonna make it?

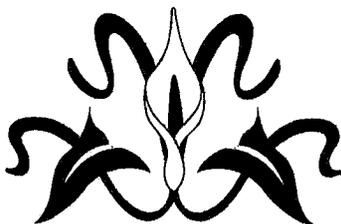
You know that sort of thing I was thinking about. Like us when we were...when I was a kid we can go out on empty stomach for maybe a day, maybe two, we have to find chicken or rabbit or ground hog or something like that, porcupine and stuff. Whatever's edible... that's you know... like I was saying, did you ever see people eating birds?

George: No.

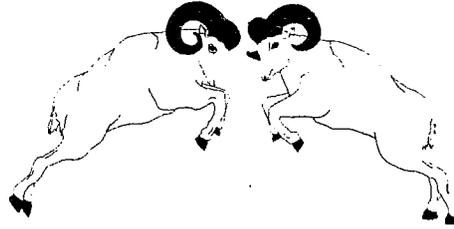
John: Like swan and geese and ducks. So see, we used to eat anything you know. But lately everything just coming up on too much White people[s] way. People just forget about eating swan or geese or whatever, you know, ducks and stuff. We got this to eat we don't need them kind of thing to eat. But you know, it's good stuff they're losing out on. These young kids there, they're like that. They just like to eat whatever white people eat. Which they figure it's so good.

George: What's the biggest change about today's life from the old days?

John: Today's life is just like I said about the kids will, new people will never make [it] if everything change[s] back to like the old times. Everybody was just doing fine, then all of a sudden everything just come in. And you know, here you got this kind of money coming in, you got that kind of money coming. You got this kind [of] help. That's what spoiling all the young people. It's good for the old people and the handicapped people.



Matt King interviewing John Poole, a Fort Ware Elder born in 1922. They are speaking about hunting and fishing.



John: But I don't bother sheep. Sometimes I kill one, good enough. Just when I got really nothing, sometimes I kill one. When I got something to eat, I just save it.

Matt: You go fishing a lot?

John: Yeah. Fish too, I don't bother them much. Mom make all kinds of size those net and she make it about eighty feet long. Catch all kinds of fish. I try [to] make one like mom, but I forget about it. I can't make it.

Matt: Do you remember what she use to make the net out of?

John: Mom she make it all kinds of size every five feet, those net... then we catch all kinds of fish. Big one, small one.

Elders, how they are treated in today's society, Tom Poole

George: Do you think the Elders still get the same respect that they got long time ago?

Tom: ...some here. Not all of them, some of them respect you as an Elder, and some young people got too much other things to do. But I think it's still going if the young people learn more. Teach them, they'll respect.



Elder, Liza Magun sharing a joke with researcher Christabelle Carlick.

Leaders - Tom Poole

George: Way back, did the leaders have to be wealthy men, rich men? Were they usually wealthy with the Chief?

Tom: No.... I don't think. As long as they got the knowledge of the leading their people I guess, that's all that count. You ever see a rich Indian way back then?

Food, Health

George: Did they get rotten teeth back then?

Tom: Not really I don't think. People are using sugar, sweet stuff, from chewing tobacco. Like grandma told me when the White people came they had sugar and things. I guess the older people before her carried some of this tea, they didn't like it, they spit it out, she say. They just drink water in those days.

Walking trails, land claims

Tom: You see trails all over the back area of here. The trail that... the Davie Trail go right to Lower Post, McDame. They walk it all.

George: Those trails are like, how old are those trails?

Tom: **Must be thousands of years.** That's how come I say this land should have been, should be our's by right. But the White people just come in, I know money talks. That's what they say. That's the whole trouble, right there. As long as they got the money, [they say] "that's our land over there, buzz off." It shouldn't be so cause we been living on this here for a long, long time.

George: Did certain families have their own traplines around here? Or did everybody?

Tom: Everybody. Some of them are gone, walked over down south.

George: Was there traplines before the White man?

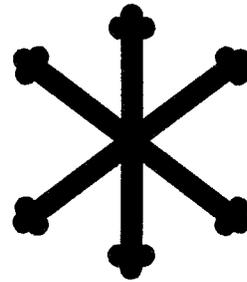
Tom: Otherwise White man wouldn't learn how, where the furs are. The Indians walked them through the trails. The Mountie what they call them ---- way back then, the Indians walk him through these [trails]. See when I help you, they get the Indians to do this and after that [they say] "that's our land".

Language and Culture

George: How do we go about keeping the culture and the language?

Tom: Just work at it and never give up. Never say "oh it's too hard I can't do it." Try again. You know what they used to say, if you don't succeed try again, try again. If you just let everything drop and too hard, you're lost then.

That's what I tell these young people. You want to learn something push hard to learn. You have to give up lots of things like that in my life. If I do something [that] look[s] too hard but I never say give up, I keep at it, that's the way it should be.

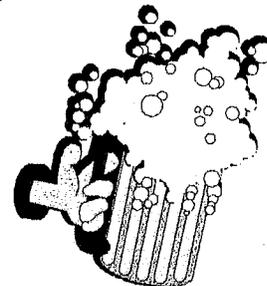


Home Brew

George: When did people start drinking around here?

Tom: Long time ago, way before I was born. Home brew. But in those days like forties and fifties, the people [are] not like that now, they drink pretty near everyday. But those days if they have all their homebrew, maybe a week of a

month they come back from trapping they go and drink it. Like nowadays pretty near everyday you see somebody with poor eyes. They don't enjoy it. Must be like a cloud in their head, all the time. Not only here, all over [it's] like that I think.

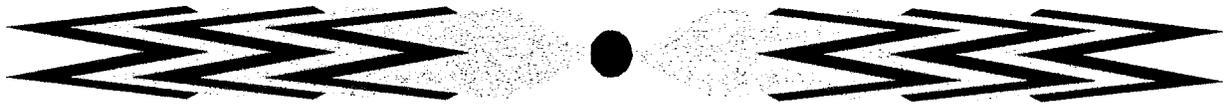


George: Man that's really smart the way you put it. I never thought of it like that, they have "cloud in their head". That's true.

Tom: It's true, that's how I used to be when I was drinking. Never a good day that I know of until I quit. Then I realized that I been on a long trip. I tell you I go and tell most of these young people every time I meet with them, "you leave that thing alone. Enjoy the day!" There must be countless things to do around their homes. They can go to learn how to hunt, trap, fishing...

George: We don't know how to entertain ourselves anymore?

Tom: Yeah.



Recreation

George: How about Indian games? Were there certain Indian games?

Tom: Just stick gambling and axe throwing. And there's this stick that they sharpen, maybe two feet long. They clear the bark off it, winter time, that one... they throw it into the snow and see who [throws it] the furthest [and where] that stick come[s] out. I forgot what they call it.

George: Stick throwing?

Tom: Yeah – then it slides in the snow...so far. Sometimes it pops out or they dig for it.

George: Holy! That sounds like a neat game.

On getting an Indian name: Mike Abou

Mike: Well, it's depends on what kind of name you want. If you come around eight years old, nine years old, what you want, what kind of...what you want to choose it's up to you. Just like you fast for, just like you fast for things like that. You go out in the bush like I said, first thing in the morning, just out drinking the water. And you go, you are one or two bushes, just like... you're just like a shadow and sometime these birds or any animals that likes you, will just appear to you, just like a human and it'll give you the name. That's what my Grandma always told me.



Elder, Edna Watson (McDonald) preparing Moose hide.

Michael Abou and Wayne Poole, speaking about women in leadership roles

Michael: Let's talk because we're telling the truth all the time. We're trying to help out culture and our heritage and all the nations. That's good. That's good to hear. It's good to have a woman chief because they talk from the heart. They don't talk from...

George: So it's OK to have [a] woman as chief?

Wayne: Yeah it's good, it's good to have [a] woman as chief. They talk from the heart mostly. They always understand everything. They know what to do and how to set up... they just know lots about us.

Dickson Lutz, speaking about Elder's knowledge

Dickson: When I see an Elder I know that it's historic, memories of them and like, in the White society they have the library and histories. When I see Elders now, that's our history and that's a walking library right there. Everything you want to know, it's all there. And I think we have to go and collect whatever they got because the things they say, my Grandfather tells me all those things.

When he says "some day" – you know in 1955 he told me in May, he told me.. he said "the white people always looking.. they're always looking for new things. They always want to look for new ground." And he told me, he said "even those stars," he said "there's some new world out there." And he said "one day you gonna hear," he said "that planet's gonna be found."

And early this year in 1997 in January, and towards the end of January when it was around eleven in the evening and what I heard, I was in the living room watching TV and when I heard that this science.. the sky watchers anyway, spotted the star that got a wobble in it. And the wobble was... that there it has either a moon or a star floating around it which make it wobble. And when I heard that the scientists figure that there is a life on there. And I yelled out to my wife and told her look at.. "it's true, that my grandfather said it's one day that ---- gonna find that star and they did!" But how does our elders know that it's going to happen? That answer... I can not understand [how] that ever happen and how did you ever know the forecast before them.....how they tell things. It's just strange.

After getting an Indian name, surviving in the bush...

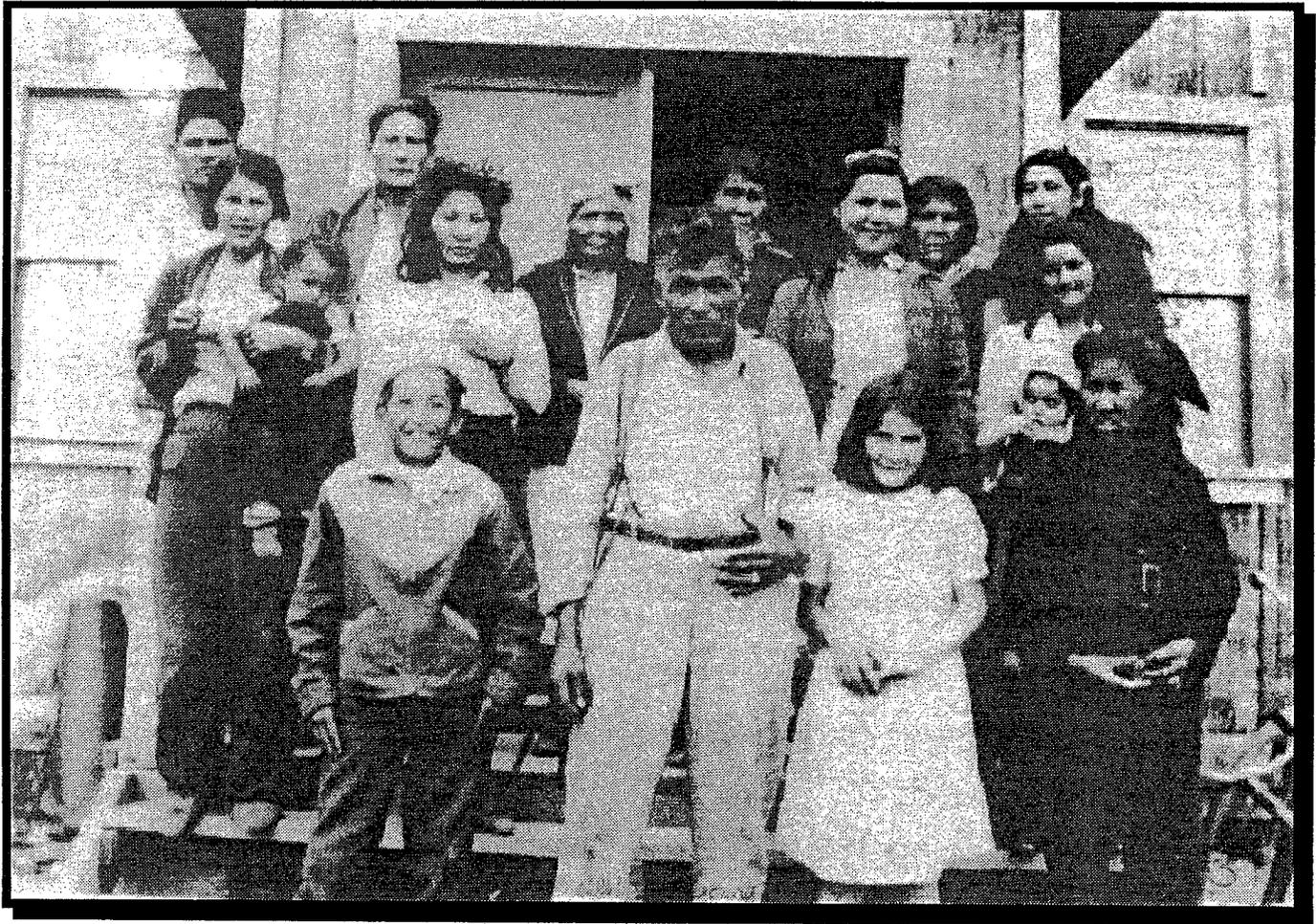
Dickson Lutz

Dickson: He [my grandpa] took me out to on a hunting trip and I was with him for about two or three weeks. And once they give you that name they give you something either from the earth or they get it from where ever... they give you a little stone and they tell you to keep it or else they'll give you part of an animal and then you have to... when they tell you that you're finished your [initiation]. It's like going to school you're graduating from it and you fast for three days.

And when you're fasting you are... like you eat before that time and there's a little water, and it means a lot to a person because they give you willows to drink water with. You don't just grab water and just pour it down like we have today, and fill the cup up sometimes one-half a quart. but then, what he did - my Grandfather - was he took a willow and he said "Water is," he said, "a lot of places, water is hard to come by, so remember you have to remember what we give you." He said "you

eat water, you eat like a moose”, he said “chew on those willows, you’ll get enough water out of it to survive to get to wherever you want to go.” And he tells me, “if that animal can live on it so can you, and remember to brace yourself with that one.”

And it’s the three days I’ll never forget because you take those willow and punch a little hole in it [from]about the base of it, to about three inches. And then you just dip that, you stand around you look around make sure, same as an animal, exactly as an animal. You drink little bit of water. You drink, you look around and then don’t go in a straight line for too long, always go from side to side. And they’ll get you to do certain things, the way the wilderness is kept together so that you can survive too.



Clockwise: (top left) John McCook, Betsy Tisiga Porter (Holding daughter, Maggie), Harry Porter, Clara Smiley (Mida Donnessey’s Sister), Grandma Jenny Chief (Jakesta)(Alfred Jakesta’s Mother), Sambo’s Wife (Bob), Angel Carlick, Minnie (Bob?), Isabelle Tisiga, Clara Donnessey holding her daughter Alice, Lucy Lutz, Elsie Sinclair, Old Stewart, Thomas Stewart.

Lorna Reid, an Elder from Lower Post speaking about traditional foods and making dry meat. She is being interviewed by Chrissy Carlick and Michelle Miller.

Lorna: It's part of our life you know, to be free out there. When my husband was alive we used to do a lot of camping. And he used to always go out and kill moose out of town, way up [at] Sucker Lake and then we used to all go up there and just have a picnic and get all our meat ready and then hang them up or smoke them, before we bring them home. We had no fridge them days or freezers.

Chrissy: I remember going out there, we all went out to Sucker Lake once.

Lorna: Yeah. We just loved it. You know the kids used to just enjoy it.

Chrissy: And I was just small.

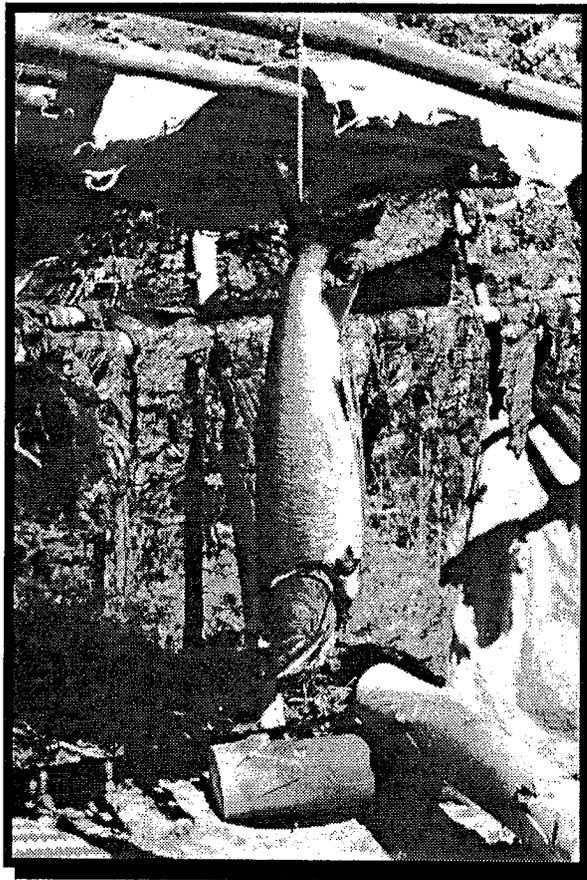
Michelle: How would you store your meat without fridges and freezers?

Lorna: Very hard. We just... that's why we dried a lot of meat because we had no fridge. I didn't know how to cut meat. I wasted lots, them days. But once I started, learned by doing little at a time. Now I can cut them easy now.

Chrissy: Now you're a professional dry meat maker.

Lorna: Yeah, that's right.

Chrissy: When you cut dry meat, then is it different from now? Now we just have dry meat as a... it's just like a special food for us. Did you dry it in thin slices then?



Mmm..dried meat & fish, now considered a treat.

Lorna: Yes, my grandmother use to make big bundles during the fall and she would keep it all through the winter. We use to always visit her just to eat dry meat. She had dry meat, just bundles like that. It was a treat.

Chrissy: Did you even, would you even make soup out of dry meat when you dried it?

Lorna: Some people do, yes. If you cut it thick and just dry it. And you can boil it up and make soup with it.

Chrissy: When you make that grease, you've made some for us, what is it called?

Lorna: We just call it fat.

Chrissy: Moose fat? Yeah in my mom's language they call it Gashou.

Lorna: I think they have a name for it but I never ever heard it for a long time and I forgot.

Chrissy: Did you guys eat a lot of that moose fat when you were little?

Lorna: We did. We used to eat marrow, everything, now I couldn't do it. It's too rich.

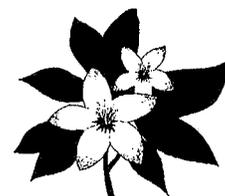
Speaking about Native healers, Lorna Reid

Chrissy: Did they have bad medicine and good medicine?

Lorna: I don't know. How do they know things and how do they predict things, is what I don't know.

Michelle: Cause there's stories about elders...

Lorna: I remember this one old man, I had...my nose was bleeding for two days, you know, and Dad and them tried everything. So my Grandmother took me to this old man, and he was a blind man. As soon as he came in he made me sit down and he sang [an] Indian song. He said I would never get anymore, I wouldn't get any nose bleed[s] anymore. I never took it for granted or anything. It was just something that happened to me. I went home, I forgot about it and I never had [a] bleeding nose after that. Right to this day unless I hurt my nose or something. So that's the only thing I know about this man.



As well as interviewing Elders, we had the opportunity to interview some 'youngers' – adults with rich life experiences, who are also contributing to their communities.

Here, Frances Carlick, a teacher and cultural advocate, is speaking about some of her experiences in the 1970's, a time when Native people across the country began initiating governmental changes, based on an awareness of their rights.



Frances: You know I was very fortunate, because growing up here, I always knew that my Great Grandmother was a very strong woman. And I always never ever felt that I had to shut my mouth in any way, but I had just as much right to speak out as the next person. I'm talking about the men folk. Because I got that from my Great Grandmother and from my Mom, and it's really amazing because in the early 1970's I had met my husband, who was from the Coast Salish people from Victoria and [we] went to a band council meeting, and all the women were sitting outside, and only the men were inside.

(And this is after I tried to...I had brought different things to people's attention here, [in Lower Post] and tried to rally them, right. And then I left [here] because my life was in Victoria, and I hadn't really finished school yet, eh.)

And I just couldn't believe it when I first married. [I thought], what is the matter with you women, how could you be sitting out here, when these men are making decisions for you. So it's been a real pleasure for me to see Wendy Grant-John [who is from the Coast Salish people] being raised up because of what the Coast Salish traditions have been. It [was] very patriarchal.

"You sit down and you shut your mouth", is basically what I had been told. And I just said, "I refuse to do that." I was ready to be thrown out of that band office, but I was not going to be quiet. (laughing)
You should have seen it, the looks on their faces when I first walked

in and I told my husband, "I am not sitting out in no car!". And I went in there, into the meeting with him, and they were just sputtering. He was from there.

Suzanne: And what happened? Did they allow you to sit in on the meeting?

Francess: Well, very begrudgingly, they allowed "that Northern woman", that was the kind of comments they made to me - "that Northern woman". It's changed a lot since then. I spoke in 1989, in the Big House, they don't call it the Long House, they're called Big Houses. And what a difference, from 1989 back to the early 1970's. I wouldn't even have been allowed to open my mouth at all, but I was allowed to speak in the Big House. That was a real change.

Suzanne: I imagine even just your presence to the women who were sitting outside, to witness another woman go in, must also have stirred them up a bit.

Francess: Actually, after that it changed. They [the women] started coming out of their vehicles and sitting in the meetings. (Laughing)



Matt King and Emil Inyallie

Storytelling, cross-cultural influences

Suzanne: You mention the older women who worked as midwives, would they have perhaps been the people in the community...if someone needed to know something... that the people would go to those women?

Francess: There was the men too, who played a really important role. I mean, you know, it was half and half... Yeah, you know like they were there and I remember them sharing knowledge about what was good and what wasn't. Guy Reid was one of the storytellers in this village and he was like... had a good way of teaching. Respect of nature and not to fool around, you know, with animals or mistreat them, or anything like that. So even in his storytelling he always left lessons.

Suzanne: Did he live in Lower Post, Guy Reid?

Francess: Yep, he lived here.

Suzanne: And was he from here?

Francess: Well, you see when the Tahltan people started moving in to Lower Post, I guess it was in the early 1950's, like when a lot of them started to move out of Telegraph and Dease Lake area, and Lower Post was like a trading post where they came to, and because the Alaska Highway had opened up in 1945, Lower Post became a little community that was quite thriving at one time. Like they had a store, a Hudson's Bay Store here, they had... planes would land here, the big river boats would travel up and down the river and Lower Post was where they dropped supplies off. And a lot of our people moved around then, you know, prior to that, our people were not just static, they didn't stay in one place. I heard stories of my Grandfather walking 100 miles and not... you know, if he had to go to work, he had no qualms about walking down to get a job and so you know, a lot of them left Telegraph Creek and Dease Lake, you know, for jobs and what not...

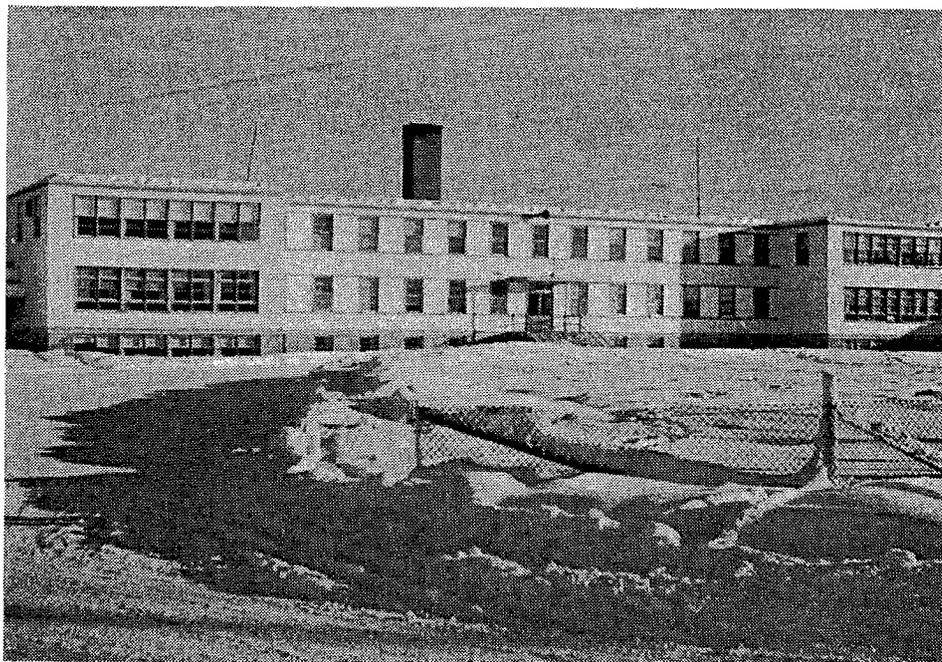
Suzanne: So in that sense, Lower Post was almost a kind of a metropolis, there was water connections, air connections and road connections... so Guy Reid would have been someone who came up during that time?

Francess: Yep, because his kids also went to residential school, they were shipped out from Telegraph Creek and they went to Le Jack Residential School, the same school my Mom went to.

Suzanne: Where was that residential school?

Francess: Near Fraser Lake, close to Vanderhoof.

Suzanne: OK, I guess we can...we will talk a little bit more about residential school coming up, but just to finish off here with the storytelling and Guy Reid. Was it formalized, or informalised, the way that they would tell stories? Would people gather at a certain time, or would it just be in conversation with who was there?



Lower Post Residential School

Francess: Actually I remember running home to do my little chores...dishes or sweeping up, just so we could run back to Guy Reid's house. It wasn't only me, there were other children involved too. Like Theresa Brown and a few others, because he really had storytelling gifts. He really knew how to tell the stories and would you believe I grew up, from hearing his stories, dreaming of a potlatch and owning a Chilkat blanket, because of the stories he shared.

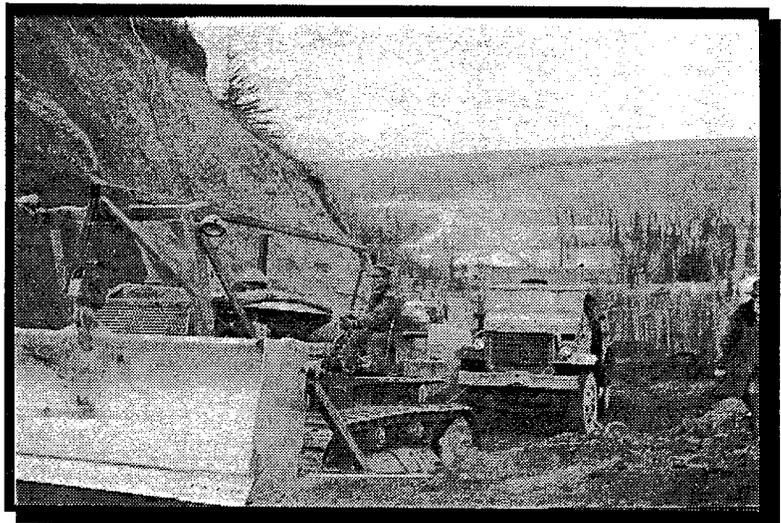
Frances: He probably had a Tlingit connections, like a lot of our Tahltan people intermarried with the Tlingits eh. I think they [the stories] probably did.

Suzanne: So that the stories, could they have been a kind of mixture of the different cultures, Tlingit, Tahltan, Kaska?

Frances: Oh yeah, you know because he would have been influenced just by where he lived eh.

Suzanne: What were the things that made him a good storyteller?

Frances: He made things really interesting. I mean he put the fear of respect of nature into us, you know (laughing). Like you don't mess around with it. I mean every time I went into the bush, that teaching never left me, and I believe that my Grandfather in his way also did a lot of teaching. My Grandfather Fred Carlick was a very wise man and I remember when I was about three, we were sitting outside, drinking Indian tea and Grandpa used to share it with me. And I didn't know that Indian tea has many healing qualities too. [Labrador or Hudson's Bay tea] I remember my Grandfather explaining about the seasons and everything like that, and why it was all set into place you know, and he was the first person that ever explained God to me. And it gave me a sense of awe that never left me.



The building of the Alaska Highway, 1942.

**Dave Porter - Chief Negotiator for Land claims
is talking about his childhood and what brought him into politics.
He is being interviewed by Melanie Miller**

Melanie: What is the major cultural influence on your life?

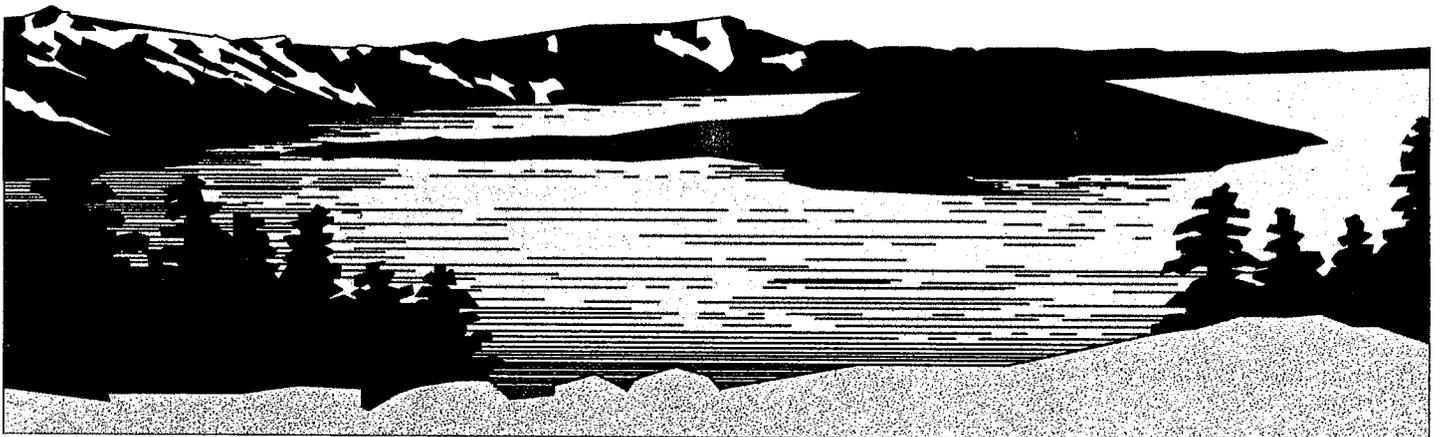
Dave: Well, the fact of my aboriginal heritage has been, has more influence on my life than anything else. Of who I am and the people that I come from.

Melanie: When did you get into politics?

Dave: Really young. What happened is that in the early seventies I was working for the CBC and we were doing coverage of the Burger inquiry. Which is an inquiry that was conducted in the North West Territories about the construction of a proposed pipeline through the Mackenzie Valley. And during that process I sat through and heard a lot of the people talk about their land, talk about their rights, talk about their culture. And for me it was a personal awakening as to understanding where I came from and became interested in the rights of my people. And so from there I developed an interest in the political field. Then I came back to the Yukon and worked there and then eventually got involved politically with the Council for Yukon Indians (CYI) and the Yukon Government. So, so very young, I was probably about twenty-two years old and was elected to CYI when I was twenty-four. And then the legislature when I was twenty-eight.

Melanie: What field of politics interests you the most?

Dave: Aboriginal politics. In all of those political processes there were just vehicles to try to advance the rights of aboriginal people, particularly in the north.



Melanie: Okay, were you taught any traditional knowledge?

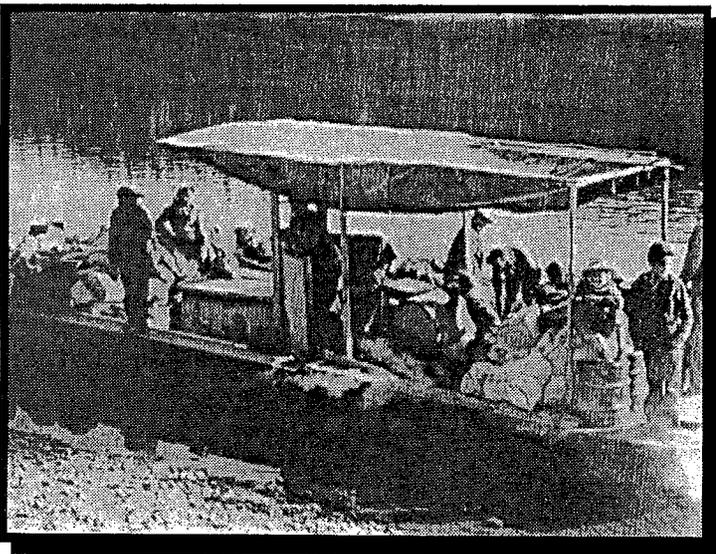
Dave: Yeah, when I was young we just lived in the bush. We just trapped like everybody else and hunted and there was some seasonal employment with big game guides. So for the most part the formative part of my education, from the time I was born till I was seven years old and I was taken away for residential school, was focussed around subsistence life style. Living in the bush and understanding what that meant and learning the language. Unfortunately, as time went on I have forgotten the language. But initially all those kind of skills were skills - the only skills that I knew. And so I would say that deep within my psychology there is a bank of information that I'm sure if I need to use it, it will be there.

Melanie: And who were you taught by?

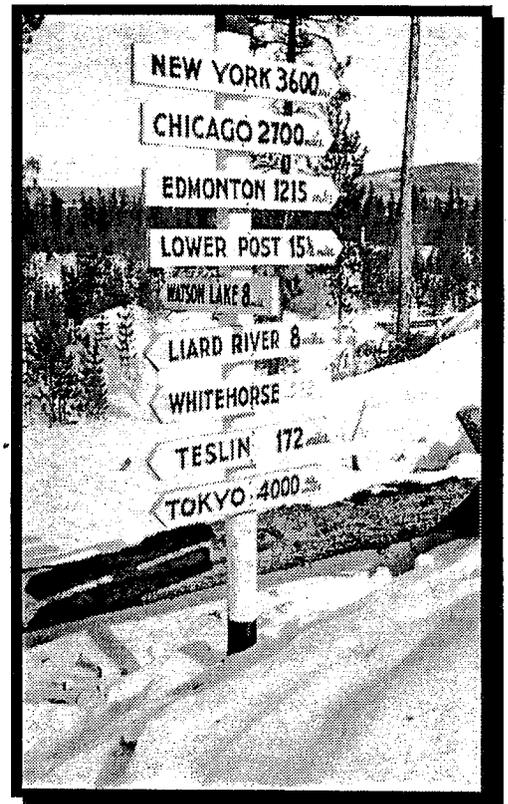
Dave: By my stepfather. But for the most part most of my education came from my Mother's brother. And that's the way the culture works. I mean it's not your father that has the responsibility of imparting those skills, it's the brother of your Mother. And so my Uncle Andrew had that responsibility and he taught me a lot.

Melanie: Okay, Thanks Dave!

Dave: Your welcome.



This was, at one time, a popular means of travel for the people of Lower Post



A Milepost indicating directions and distances from Watson Lake.

Dennis Porter, a Kaska language teacher and a member of the land claims team, speaking about traditional government and Kaska Creation stories

George: Okay, I wonder if you could tell something about what our traditional style of government was [back then] as to what it is now?

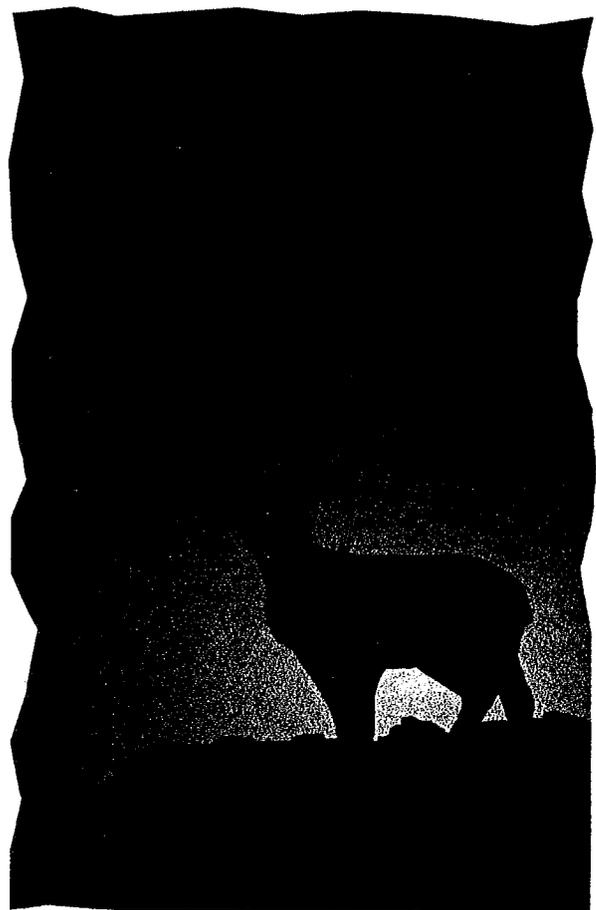
Dennis: Well that in itself is pretty hard to define because the Kaska people, as history will relate to it, we are a nomadic people. We lived in family groups. Small numbers... pertaining to the availability of the wildlife. Other than that, our governing structure was built on respect. And caring for one another. And most everything was done on consensus and done by Elders within the family structure.

George: I wonder if you could relate just a short little story of creation. Like a tale. Like a Kaska story. A short one.

Dennis: Well, if you are talking about creation in regards to religious beliefs etc. I don't know how you define it in the White man's terminology. But the Dene people had verbal history, verbal explanations on various aspects of nature. Our beliefs were that animals spoke as human beings and fundamentally they were very conscious of one another and the relationship to each other.

And our belief was based on that. We held animals to the highest of...highest esteem of any life form because we relate to them not only for survival and beliefs, but also for protection. Animals if related to in a proper manner can protect you.

It's a psychological belief that the Indian people have and I have had personal experience identifying with it, so I am not one to question it. Whereas a lot of the younger generation would think it is Hocus Pocus or in their terminology a bunch of 'bull'. But you know they come from a different era than we did. We grew up different and we have different beliefs and that's pretty standard within the Kaska nation.



**Walter Carlick, a Director with Kaska Dena Council,
took us down the Liard River to see some traditional and modern style
camps. At his camp, Walter spoke about traditional and modern hunting
techniques.**

(Note – deadfall traps were also used for animals much larger than mice.)

Walter: This is a dead fall mouse trap. I'll show you how it works. What you do is...it's like a dead fall eh! There's a little notch here and you put weight on top of this and you put bait on this tongue and it's really hair trigger. It's kind of hard to set, but I don't have weight on it. If I had weight on it, it would set.

Suzanne: Do you want a log for on top of it?

Walter: That sounds like a fairly good idea but I don't know if it is heavy enough. You put it heavy enough so when it falls on him it's going to flatten him out. But that's the way it works.

Melanie: And is this how they use to make mouse traps a long time ago?

Walter: That's how my Step-dad used to make them. And you just put butter or something, whatever, on there. And the mice go in there, sometimes you catch flatten two of them at once.

Melanie: Holy!

Walter: Cause it doesn't take much to spring it. They just they eat the bait and just the weight will slip it hey. And just flattens him out.

Melanie: What do you use on there?

Walter: Butter.

Melanie: No, on top.

Walter: Oh! ...frying pan!

Suzanne: ...then you cook him?



Walter Carlick, our guide, standing by a meat drying rack at nine mile, on the Liard River.

Sustainable forestry, land management, hunting

Suzanne: Did you fall a lot of these trees?

Walter: Never. No that was just.. that is already deadfall. Trees that are there. I don't fall any green trees. Don't cut any green trees, unless I am going to build a cabin. Other than that I just..if I do fall a tree it'll be just a dry, old, dead one for wood. Other than that no. But I do cut a lot of brush.

Like we lay brush down and sleep on the brush. That's our bed. The brush is our bed. And it smells beautiful. Yeah! To me one of my favorite things about camping is I like to have a... cause the whole inside of your tent... if you can see all the dry brush here. What you do is the whole inside is when we first come in, before we move into the tent we'll go and cut brush, small brush and lay it all down. And you interlock all the branches so it fixes a nice bed. And then you just put your bed on there and yeah. That's why... I could build a cabin, but I like the tent. I like to sleep on the brush.

On hunting moose

Walter: What I did is, I went down in the morning and you usually you go between anytime between the time it gets daylight till nine or ten o'clock in the morning. After that it's pointless cause you're not going to see, game don't move during the middle of the day. Or from six o'clock at night till the time it gets dark in the fall time. That's when you're going to see game. So what I do is, I'll go out early in the morning I find [it] is the best time. About nine o'clock in the morning I was coming back up river and there's this bull moose standing beside the river.

So what I do is I shot right from the boat. I hit it, I knew I'd had hit it. So what I did is I took my time. I went and landed the boat and made sure it is tied securely and then get all my stuff together, get my packsack. Make sure I got matches, then I'll start following the moose, cause I knew I hit it. You can see by the reaction when you're shooting whether or not you hit it or you could hear by the sound of it. And I had to follow it through brush. You know, brush like this for about, I'd say a good half an hour. I'd just take my time and watch for blood. Cause you're always going to see blood if it's hit. And I finally came up onto it, a fairly good size bull moose.

What happen was he was laying down. He couldn't get up no more, 'cause he was hit. So what I did was I shot it. When you're that close, you shoot it in the neck. It just kills it instantly. Then after that it's really hard work when you kill a big moose and you're by yourself, it's hard to turn. So all I did was I cut it open and you gut it. Cause if you don't gut it within about twelve hours it's going to start to turn sour inside because of all the guts.

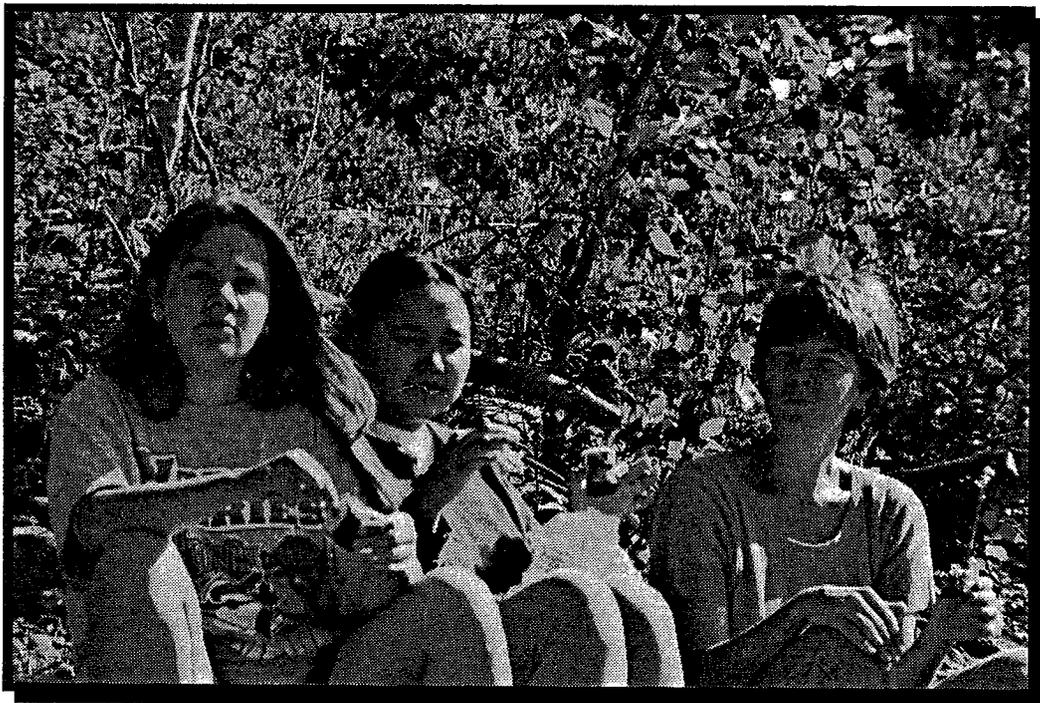
So you take all the guts out and that's about all you can do when you shoot a great big moose. You gotta be able to turn him from side to side to be able to skin him. And the other thing I like to do is if I shoot a moose, I like to leave it in the skin overnight. For some reason it seems to tenderize the meat. I find too, if you shoot a moose and you chase it for a long time, like say if it runs for miles and miles, like say two miles and you finally catch it up and shoot it, the meat is different. We call it "worried meat". The taste is different.

Melanie: You call it what?

Walter: Worried meat.

Melanie: Worried?

Walter: It's like scaring, you know you scare something it has an affect on it. It does. You know it affects the moose. And so...I didn't go after it.



Researchers, Michelle Miller, Chrissy Carlick and Suzanne Hale preparing to visit the old cemetery across the Liard River in Lower Post

Steve Jakesta, a member of the land claims team, Kaska Dena Council, speaking about shared vision and people working together.

Suzanne: If you could impart knowledge about Kaska Culture and History....like, like almost as a magic - wave a magic wand and have people - everybody who is Kaska - know something about their culture or their history, what would you want them to know about?

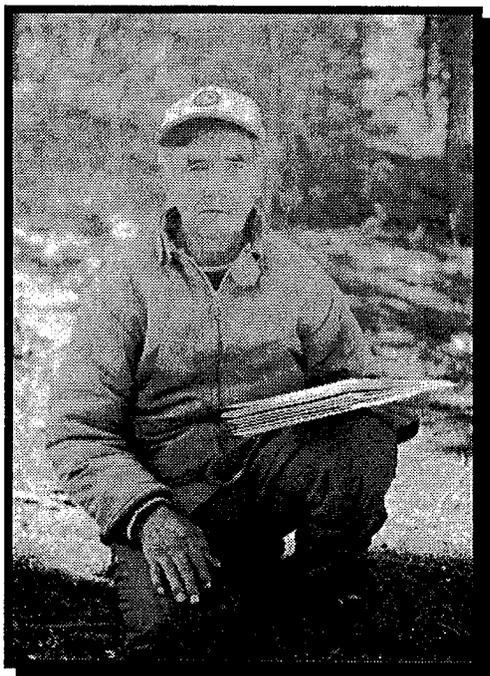
Steve: What would I like them to know about? I think that something that I would like to see...a lot of our culture also reflected our values and principals and some of the strong values that we had was the necessity of working together and sharing. And I think that if we can really enforce those two major concepts again we would have strong thriving organizations and communities and families.

Suzanne: And how do you think people could learn that? Or.....?

Steve: ..could learn that. I think just [by] understanding our make-up. A lot of us have gone through the residential school or have been separated from our families. Just understanding the need of really having a look at our history and what we have been through. And what that has done to us individually and collectively. And how can we, you know, straighten those areas and work through those areas that are hard to face.

Suzanne: Thank you, Steve.

Steve: You're welcome, Suzanne.



Elder. Alfred Ceasar

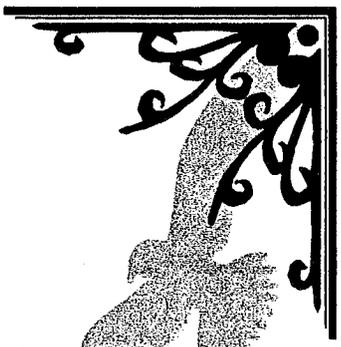


Elder. Filenna Jack



Year End Report

By Christabelle Carlick



My job was the project researcher and transcriber. For most of the time I worked on some research, but mainly I worked on transcribing. Transcribing is a long, slow process of either typing or writing what's on a tape and recording it onto computer or paper. All together there are sixteen tapes with interviews. The interviews were conducted by many of our team members and ranged from people from Fort Ware, Lower Post, and Good Hope Lake.

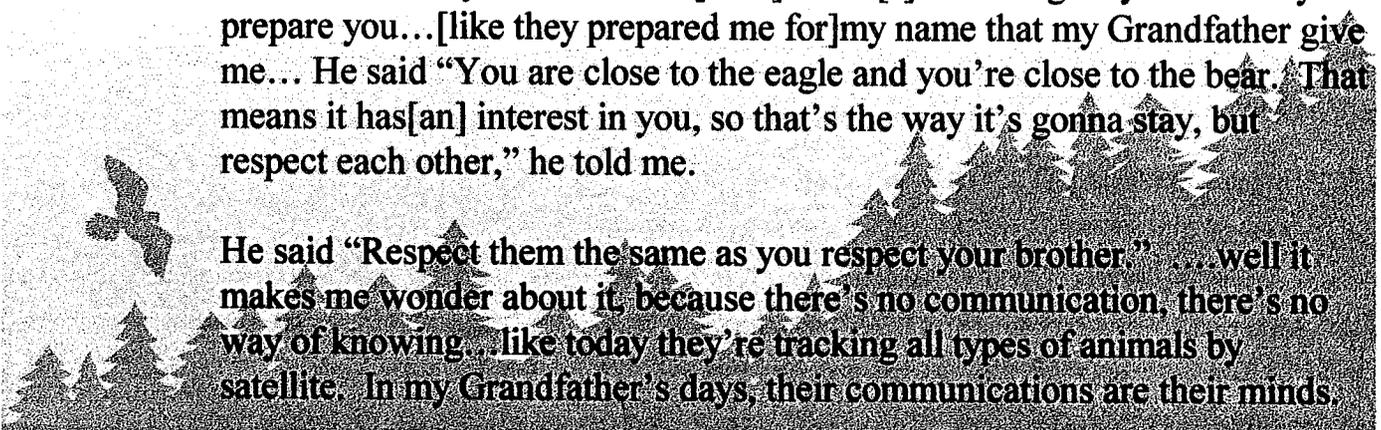
Transcribing was hard at first, but after a while you get the hang of it. The good thing about transcribing is I learned a lot from the interviews, just by listening to them. When I was typing I wasn't just listening to the words, I was learning about our culture and our history. A lot of work was covered and recorded, so there will be a lot of work preserved for our future, but there is still a lot to be learned and recorded.

In the interviews some of the many topics covered were personal history, traditional medicines, religion, changes, and recreation. Here are some of the excerpts from what I learned and thought was interesting in the interviews.

Getting an Indian Name by Dickson Lutz, interviewed by *George Morgan*.

George: How do people get the Indian name? Does it have to be given to you by somebody in your clan, does it have to be like, can it be any Elder or does it have to be your own Grandma or your own Grandpa? How does that work?

Dickson: It works, the way..it is an elder [who] know[s] what to give you and they prepare you...[like they prepared me for]my name that my Grandfather give me... He said "You are close to the eagle and you're close to the bear. That means it has[an] interest in you, so that's the way it's gonna stay, but respect each other," he told me.



He said "Respect them the same as you respect your brother." ...well it makes me wonder about it, because there's no communication, there's no way of knowing...like today they're tracking all types of animals by satellite. In my Grandfather's days, their communications are their minds.

Language and Residential School by Lorna Reid,
Interviewed by *Chrissy Carlick* and *Michelle Miller*.

Chrissy: How do you feel about the language being lost in the younger generations?

Lorna: Well I feel bad about it but what can we do. Because I know in school they were forbidden to speak their language (by the teachers at residential school) but the Carrier Indians spoke their language all the time...the kids that went to their school. So I used [to] listen to them and I understood a lot of words. That's what kept me going.

Chrissy: Our dialects are similar or different?

Lorna: Even animal names and all that [are similar]. So it sort of kept my, what you call, alive. When I went home and people talk Indian to me I understood everything. I never... but the thing is I couldn't speak it because I didn't practice it. I use to listen to them talk, you know. They were good at it, but I never ever spoke it.

On Religion...

Chrissy: Okay we're going to ask you questions now on religion and spirituality. Was there spiritual leaders in the community like in Dease Lake and Telegraph?

Lorna: Not that I know of. When I came to the... you know when I woke up and I start knowing things, the priest came in and they taught us how to pray and all that. Before that I don't know. Well, they believed there was a God in Heaven. They always say "Denetia, Diga-denetia", they say "Up there, that good man up in heaven." So they believed in God but they never had a name for him. They just call him "good person". But after the priest came, well they taught us how to pray like [the] "Our Father" and pray to the Virgin Mary.

Chrissy: I wonder how they know about God before, like [before the] priest and stuff came?

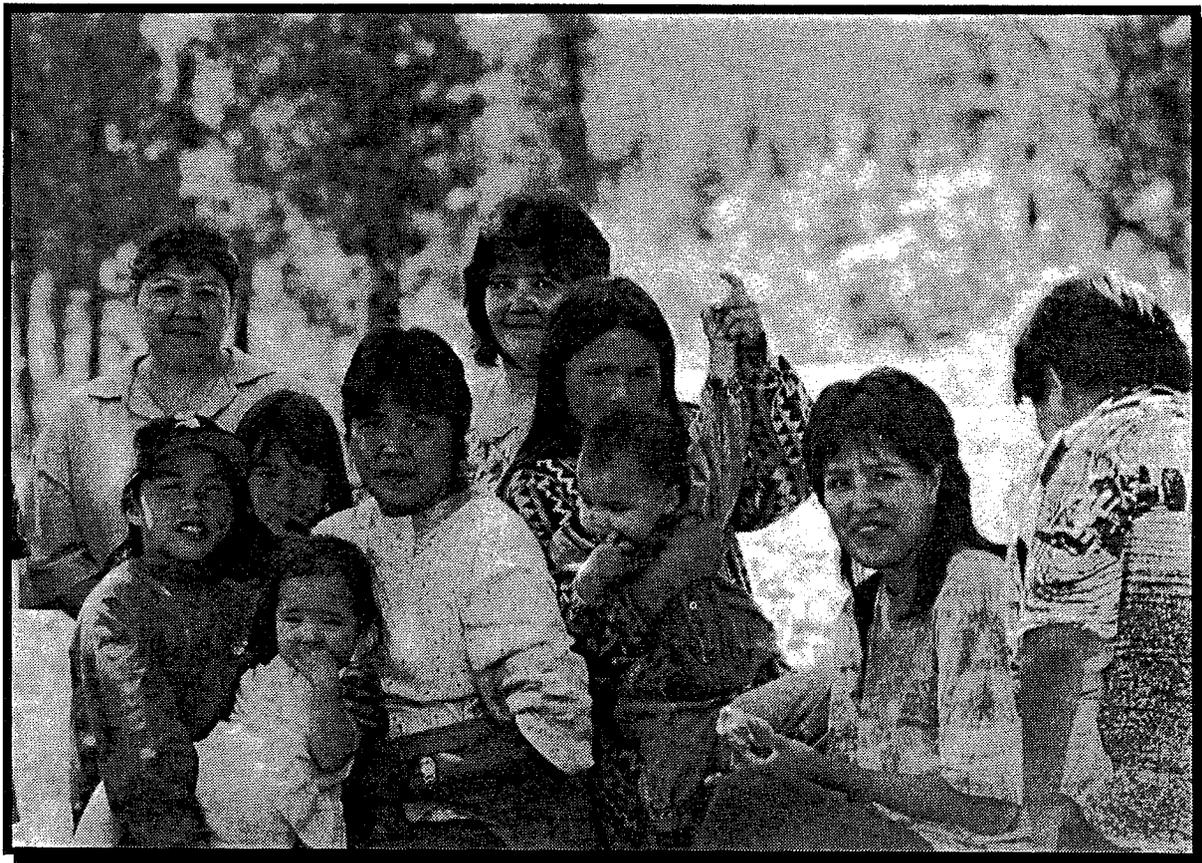
Chrissy: So do you think that the beliefs from then, the traditional beliefs of the “Good man” and Christianity are similar?

Lorna: Yes, they are. I tell you those people back then they were thankful for everything they got and they thanked that Good man up there. But after the Catholic Church came in, you know there was confusion. They took away their potlatch and their Indian singing, dancing all that. You know they forbade people to do them things. They push this Virgin Mary and all that on people and they came into confusion. I believe there is confusion there because they took away so many of their things that they do. You know like simple things to honour the Lord, you know. Even their singing, I think they were thankful.

I believe that working on this project has helped me to gain more knowledge and understanding of the Kaska people and how the White people affected and brought change to our lives. I think that there is a lot more knowledge out there that has to be preserved for the future generations so our culture isn't lost.

I'd like to thank all the Elders for contributing their knowledge and time to our project and all the researchers on the team. It has been a good summer and I hope to be back next summer.

Christabelle Carlick
RESEARCHER & TRANSCRIBER



Deputy Chief, Debbie Groat, and the Porter Clan taken in Fort Ware at the 1997 Kaska GA.

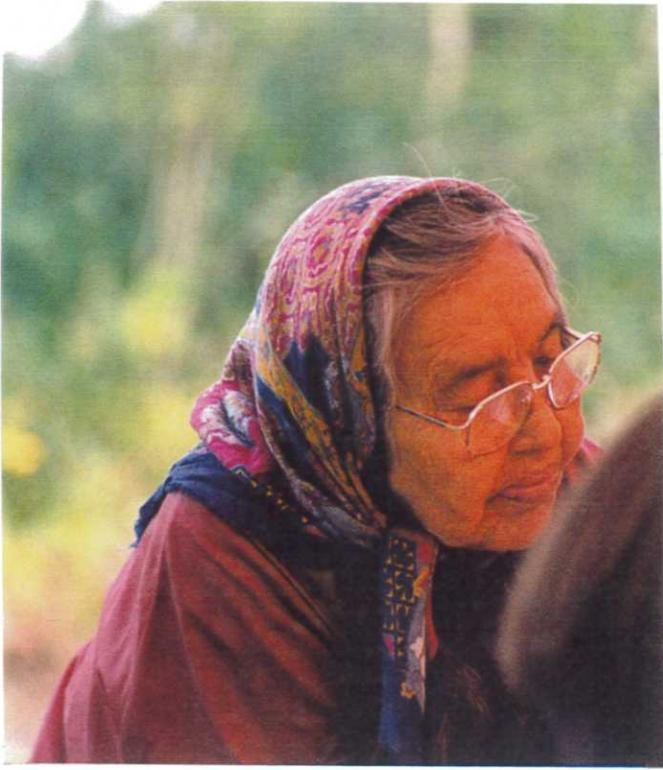
Frances Lake Elders Gathering (Aug. 2 to Aug.16)
A time to learn from Elders and share in traditional skills



Louie Boya looking out over Frances Lake.



Alfred Ceasar and Minnie Ceasar sharing photos.



▲ Mida Donnessy watching over bannock making.



▲ Angel Carlick fleshing a caribou skin.

Mida teaching Matt King how to scrape a moose hide. ▼





Mida's tools. (left to right) Moose hair-root scrapers, file, caribou shin bone for taking off fine flesh, and knife for cutting longer hair.



The finished hide that Matt scrapped. "lots of hard work", he said.

Frances Lake Elder's Gathering

By Matt King

The Elder's gathering at Frances Lake happened from Aug. 2nd to Aug. 15th. The Elders spent time telling stories, teaching practical skills like sewing, cooking, speaking the Kaska language, making dry meat, tanning hides, and other traditional skills necessary for living in the bush.

Even though the gathering was centered around the Elders it was very much a family gathering. Kids, their parents and their grandparents all benefited from the camp. Elders from Pelly Banks, Ross River, Lower Post, Upper Liard, Good Hope Lake and Watson Lake attended.

Louis Boya from Lower Post went to the camp and told some of his personal experiences and stories about the old days and about his days guiding in the bush. Louis has a long life, full of experiences and knowledge that benefits anyone who wants to take the time to listen.

There are few opportunities in most peoples lives to be able to sit, listen and learn from people like this., but there are very few better ways to learn.

Mida Donnessey from Upper Liard has much to share about survival in the bush. Mida knows how to do everything from tanning hides to sewing to hunting and trapping. She taught about the respect that must be shown towards animals and about the importance of hard work when living in the bush. She said how important it is to listen to Elders and to keep traditions and the Kaska way of life and language alive for the future.



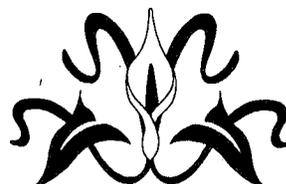
Mida Donnessey at Frances Lake

Elders like Mida and Louis and the others who were at the camp, are a wealth of information and knowledge that no book could share in the same way.

Elders have seen a lot in their lives and have a long life time full of experiences that they are willing to pass on. By sitting and listening to them we can learn and better our own understanding and views on life. Through interaction with Elders, we have the opportunity to be a part of the history that is passed on to the generations.



Minnie Ceasar, Pat from Oise, Angel Carlick



Current History...

The Making of a Constitution for the Kaska Nation

As the Land Claims and the Self-government process reaches it's final stages, a constitution for the Kaska Nation is needed. Here Phillip Knight, a lawyer who specializes in helping to create readable, meaningful, constitutional documents, is speaking to the assembly at the Kaska Tribal Council's Annual General Meeting in Fort Ware, BC. He is explaining what goes in to making a good constitution..

“A constitution is about politics. It is about government. A constitution is about some fairly boring administrative things, but more than anything a constitution is about vision, it is about who you are. It is about how you see yourselves, how you know yourselves. When you say you are Kaska, what does it mean? What it means will direct how you want to govern yourselves, so your constitution would be a statement of your vision of your nation and what your nation is.

You are challenged to have a constitution, but I will say to you that you have always had a constitution. Any people in this world who have ever governed themselves have a constitution... a way of governing, a way of knowing who is the authority, who is the decision maker. How do we make decisions, what happens to those that do not follow the decisions? These are the things that make up a constitution and just because you did not have one written down, doesn't mean you do not have one....

...A constitution should recognize the common things that brought you to a place, and the common vision you have for a

future. A constitution has to have a legal function. There is legal substance to all this wonderful stuff. It is not just poetry. Although an American lawyer said “Other legal documents can just make do with accuracy and precision, but a constitution should inspire poetry,” and I think he is right, parts of it should. There also has to be a legal function. What is that legal function? It is the legal function by which the Kaska Nation speaking as a whole, establishes structures, assigns responsibility, places restraint on those who are made responsible, [and] sets down minimum standards for it's government; it deals with internal things.

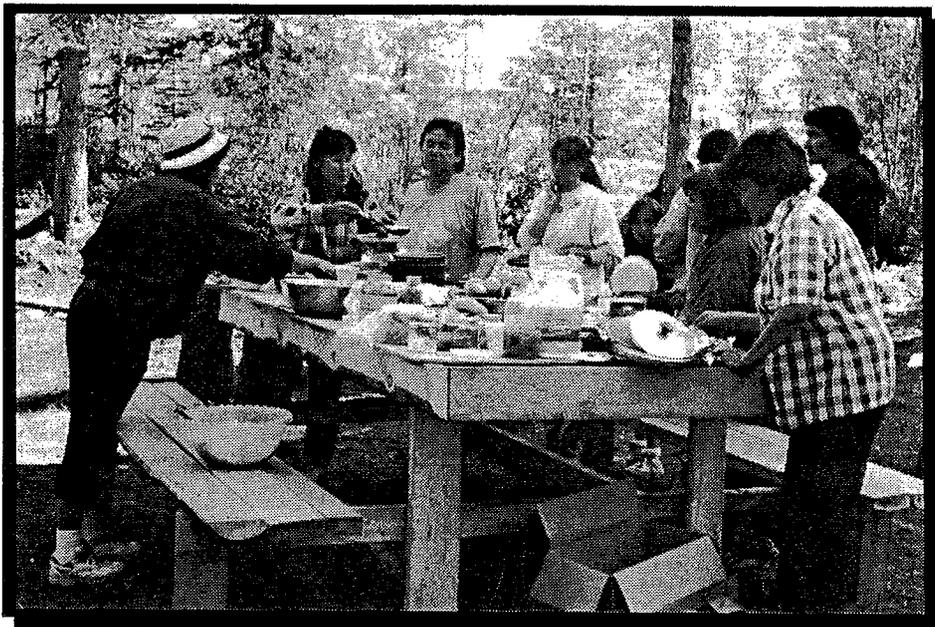


When you deal with negotiating treaties, negotiating land claims, negotiating settlements, you deal with other nations of the word, you deal with Canada, you deal with Yukon, you deal with others outside.

When you sit down to write the Constitution, you deal inside, it is the rules by which the nation governs itself. This is not a document you take to somebody else, and ask "may we adopt these rules please?" This is a document by which, and through which, you assert your identity as a nation, as a body of people who are self-governing. You say these are the rules for how we govern ourselves. This is an expression of who we are...

...The making of the Kaska constitution should be done by the Kaska, not by somebody else offering to do it for you. If you asked me to help you make your constitution a legally valid document in terms of Canadian law, I would do my best to advise you on what should be in a constitution, what must be in a constitution, on how to express your ideas as simply as I know how, but the ideas, the ideas that make that document, must be your ideas. They must speak in the voice of the Kaska people.

There is a reason that I am so firm about this point. The constitution I told you about in the beginning is like no other law. Other laws can be enforced by the state, and by governments. A constitution must be enforced by the people, if it is to be honoured. If that is going to happen then the people must own it inside. The constitution is written from our heads, but it should be spoken from the soul of the nation. If it does those things, they are far more important than all the legal words, because if it comes from the soul of the nation, and is spoken from the heart, it's going to stick. People are going to honour it, people are going to defend it, people are going to uphold it for themselves and it will belong to them. You will hold it up and show it to the world with pride, take your place as a nation of the world with pride, and with an equal amount of pride to say to your grandchildren, we gave this nation a document that says who and what we are."



Windup at Frances Lake Elders' Gathering

LAND CLAIMS UPDATE - October 1997

Over the past twelve months, KDC has maintained a consistent level of negotiations at both the main table and the side table working groups. The Kaska Dena has managed to stay at a fairly high rank within the British Columbia Treaty Commission (B.C.T.C.) process. Some of the fundamental issues that we are currently dealing with are basically the same as last year. These issues include:

- - provinces lack of a clear mandate in forestry, wildlife and lands and resources sub - agreements,
- - the lack of interim measures protection is causing land alienation with logging, mining and third party development within our traditional territory.

Here is a quick review of where we are at in negotiations:

Stages:

Kaska Situation:

1-Statement of Intent

Completed in November 1994

2-Readiness

KDC completed the Readiness stage in July, 1995.

3-Framework Agreement

Was completed in January, 1996. The agreement lists the subjects that will be negotiated in the Agreement - in - Principle stage.

4-Agreement in Principle (AIP)

Work began on the AIP stage after the Framework Agreement was signed. The AIP will contain everything that will be in final treaty, but will not contain all of the details, the finer details will be worked out in the Final Agreement stage.



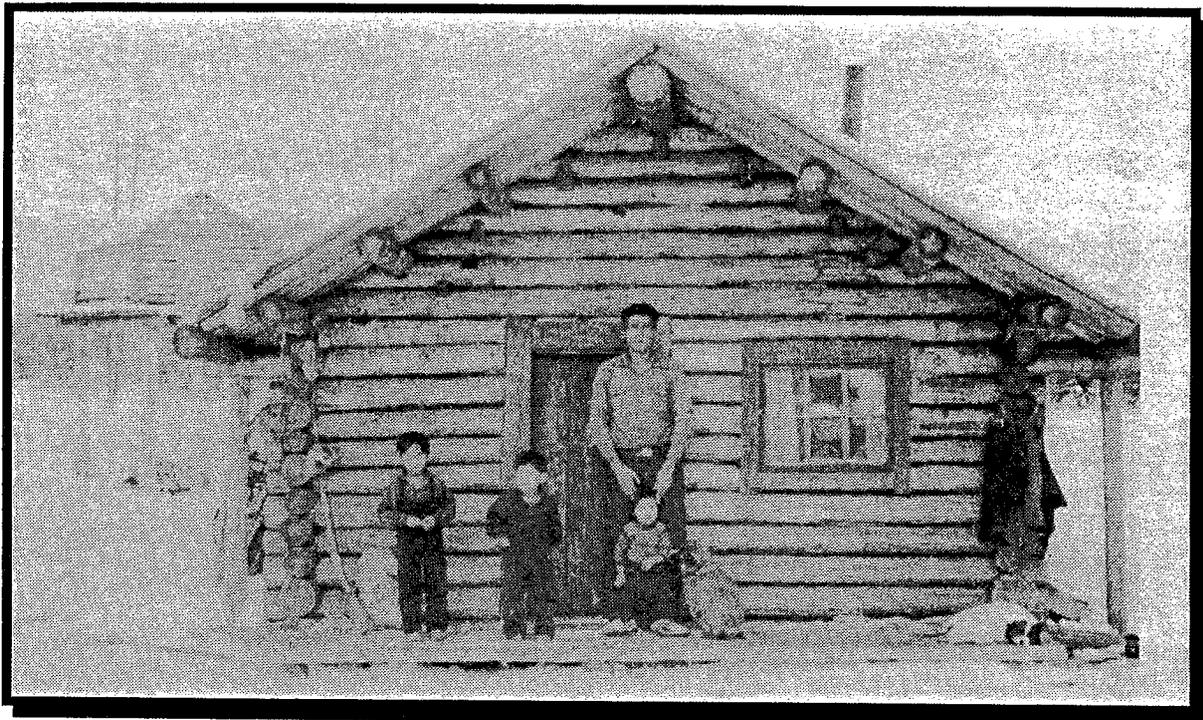
5-Final Agreement

Negotiation of the final treaty will begin as soon as the AIP is completed and ratified. The Final Treaty will be your treaty with the governments of BC and Canada. The Final Agreement will be protected by Canada's Constitution.

6-Implementation

During this stage all the agreements finalized will be put to the test to see if it will work. This could be a long process. Eg the COPE Inuvait Agreement in the NWT which was completed in the October 1984 is still in the implementation process.

Over a year ago in January 1996 the Kaska Dena Council signed off the Framework Agreement, which sets out the agenda for the negotiations in the Agreement - in - Principle stage. All of the Sub-agreements which are set - a - side will be completed at a later date. Each will be marked with a draft number which means that it is the last draft completed until further negotiations.



Jimmy Porter, Don Porter, Charlie Porter, Eva Porter

Below are the Sub - agreements currently being negotiated by the Kaska Dena Council.

Sub-Surface Resources

Draft #7 (including revenue sharing)

Definition: Minerals, Coal, Petroleum, Natural gas, Geothermal resources, earth, soil, peat, marl, sand and gravel, rock, riprap and stone products.

On Settlement Lands (Lands Selected)

Kaska Dena will own Sub - surface Resources and administrate and manage them according to Kaska Dena laws except where otherwise agreed.

Off Settlement Lands, Kaska Dena is looking for 50% interest in everything.

e.g. Administration, management, revenue sharing, employment opportunities and any type of boards created to manage Sub - Surface Resources.

Expropriation

Draft #7

Definition: taking lands from owners for public use or other needs by the Provincial and Federal Governments without the consent of the First Nation. Kaska Dena wants expropriation to be justifiable, be approved by cabinet, be the smallest interest and for the shortest period of time.

The draft agreement covers the maximum compensation or replacement of any settlement lands expropriated by government other than Kaska Government

Parks and Protected Areas

Draft #18

Includes: National and Provincial Parks, Protected Areas, Ecological Reserves, Canadian Heritage Rivers and National Historic sites all within the Kaska Traditional Territory.

Kaska's will have to be consulted if there are any changes to Parks and Protected Areas. Kaska Dena will also be part of the management structure and benefits from any economic opportunities which should arise. e.g. Jobs, training and any type of contracts.

Access

Draft #11

Definition: What rights do non-natives or third party interest have to settlement lands that they would not otherwise have.

E.g. resources roads

This agreement will set out the rights of non-natives have to settlement lands, KDC will manage access to settlement lands and set out regulations on access to settlement lands.

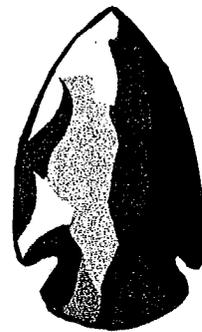
Wildlife

Draft #1

Definition: all mammals, birds, reptiles amphibians.

Kaska's right to hunt and harvest through out the traditional territory will be constitutionally protected. Kaska want a role in wildlife management throughout the traditional territory - on and off settlement lands.

Migratory birds - Kaska will be able to hunt but will be subjected to regulations.



Environmental Management

Draft #2

This sub-agreement was set - a - side for further discussion by the Chief Negotiators regarding Jurisdiction.

Here are the First Four Sub - agreements set - a - side for further amendments:

Eligibility & Enrollment

Draft #6

To benefit from Kaska Claims in BC - an individual must be of Kaska ancestry and at any time prior to 1940 was ordinarily resident in, or used and occupied that portion of the Kaska Traditional Territory in B.C. or a descendent of that person regardless of any intervening adoptions.

Also (3.2a An individual who does not meet the eligibility requirements but ordinarily resides in the Kaska Traditional Territory can apply for enrolment under and benefit from the treaty if: before the conclusions of a treaty, all Kaska leadership jointly adopt criteria allowing such a person to apply to benefit under the treaty).

Approval & Ratification

Draft #6

Approval of the Agreement In Principle (stage 4 of the British Columbia Treaty Commission 6 Stage process) by the chair of the Kaska Dena Council, who has been authorized and directed to do so by a resolution of the Kaska Dena Annual General Assembly together with the resolutions of the councils of Kwadacha Indian Band, the Dease River Indian Band and the Deputy Chief and Council of Liard Indian Reserve #3.

To Ratify the agreement the Kaska Dena shall hold a vote that will be open to all eligible beneficiaries of the Treaty.

Amendment of the Final Treaty

Draft #5

Amendments to the agreements maybe made with consent in writing by Canada, B.C. and Kaska Dena. The Kaska Dena's consent many be given by the Kaska Dena Council or such other Kaska Dena authority as may be provided for in either the Agreement - in - Principle or Treaty.



Dispute Resolution

Draft #6

Disputes may be referred to the Mediation process outlined in the Agreement - in - Principle, by any of the three parties involved. Or disputes may be referred to a Binding Arbitration process. Last, disputes can be brought to Court in a Litigation process.

Land Selection

Kaska Dena Council will present an initial land selection at the October main table in Vancouver. Consultation took place, prior to the main table negotiation, on a three land selection options with the members.

KDC Board Meeting

Updates were given during the KDC board meeting include:

- ◆ - main table treaty negotiations
- ◆ - land and resources side table
- ◆ - programs and services side table
- ◆ - the Kaska Dena Council/ Liard First Nation Letter of Understanding
- ◆ - KDC Transboundary Claim (Yukon)
- ◆ - KDC Constitution

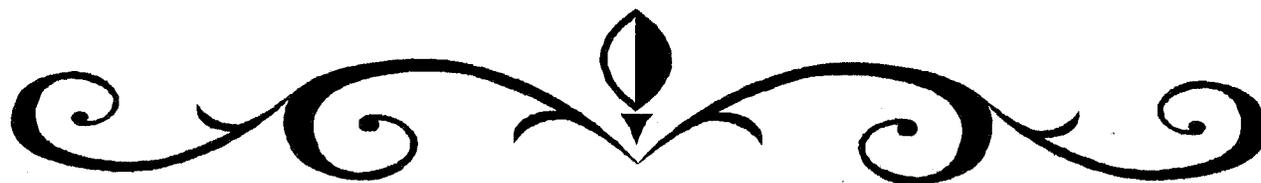
A brief overview of the meeting with BC Premier Glen Clark covered an announcement of a creation of a new park. A large portion of the new park is located in our traditional territory.

The meeting also included updates on Forest Renewal British Columbia (FRBC) projects:

- ◆ - forest strategy and traditional land use

Upcoming Meetings include:

- ◇ - October 28 to the 30, 1997 main table negotiations in Vancouver
- ◇ - November 12 to the 14, 1997 side table in Vancouver
- ◇ - December 9 to the 11, 1997 main table in Victoria
- ◇ - December 16 to the 18, 1997 side table in Victoria

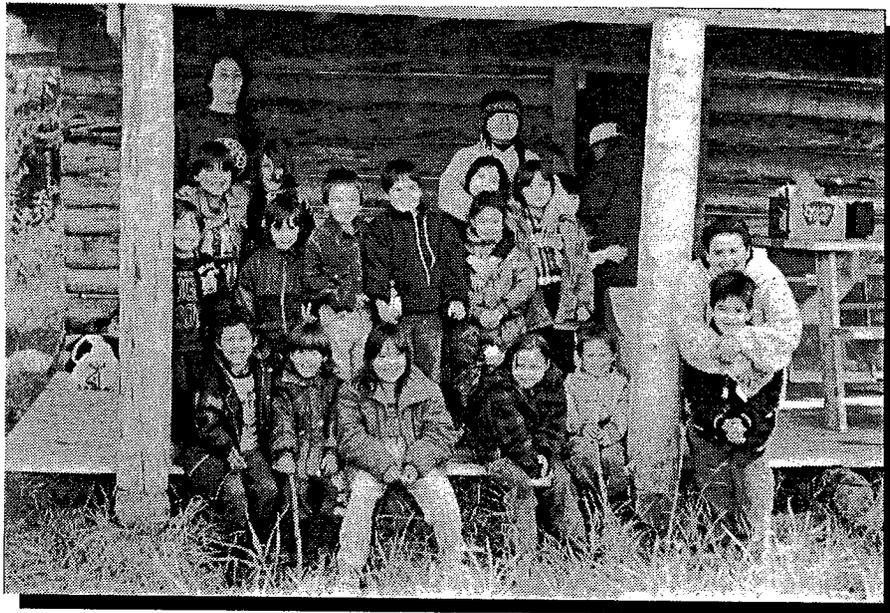




As the Research Project Evolves...



"We need to get more Elders involved.
We really appreciate their contributions."
Debbie Groat - Deputy Chief of L.P.F.N



The Next Generation. Denetia school students and teachers
at the Davie Trail head. September 1997.

Coordinator's Report

By Suzanne Hale

The Kaska History and Cultural Research Project that began this summer is a good beginning. There is still much to be learned and many people to be interviewed. We have not accomplished all we set out to do. Next year's project and goals are currently being considered. Ideas and suggestions from the community are vital - they will contribute directly to the project's future success.

This past summer has been one full of many learning opportunities. When we started out, the research team spoke about what was important about this work. The idea and importance of a strong 'identity' was mentioned a lot. If defining and strengthening one's own identity is a life long process, then trying to define and learn about a cultural identity must be of process of many, many lifetimes.

In one short summer, we learned a lot of new skills and gathered some great photographs and information. We are working on getting these raw materials put onto CD Rom for future projects.

I would like to thank everyone who played a part in this summer's project. The entire Research Team worked hard in situations that were constantly new to us all. The band administration, Lower Post community and the Kaska community as a whole supported our vision, and our goals. Everyone was generous in sharing their many resources with us.

In whatever form this project takes in the future, I am confident it will continue to enrich those people who would like to be involved with it. For me, this summer has been an incredible opportunity, I am very grateful to have learned so much about Kaska history and culture.



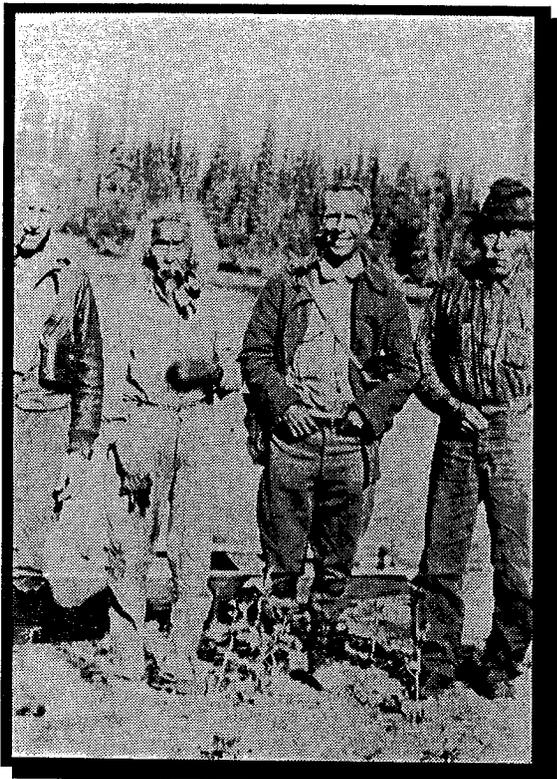
Shared Resources

There are other Kaska history projects which by their very existence, have offered support and resources to this project. **Kaska Tribal Council** organized the “Elders Gathering” at Frances Lake this summer. (Please see “Frances Lake Elder’s Gathering Report” in this issue.) Another gathering may be in the works for next year. It was such a great way for people of all ages to work with Elders and learn first hand about traditional skills.

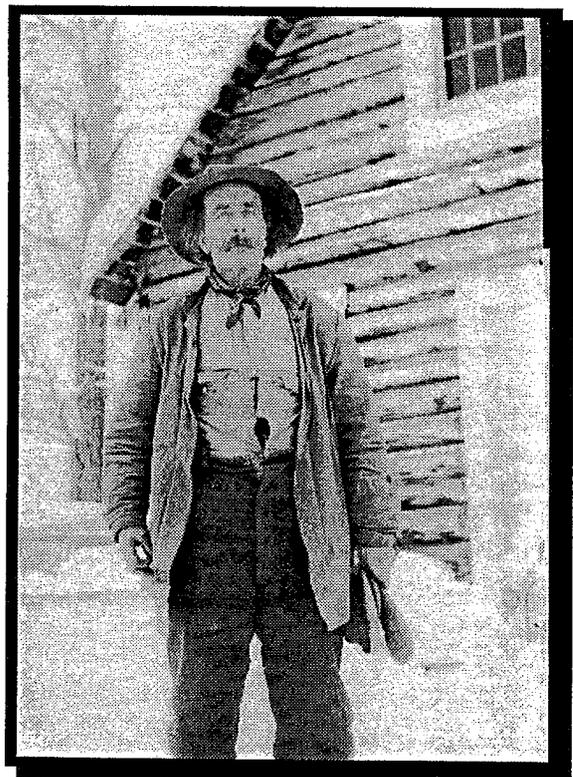
As a result of this year’s gathering, transcripts of stories will be made and eventually resource materials will be published to be used in the schools for Kaska classes and the Native Studies curriculum. Lower Post will also have access to these materials.

Kaska Dena Council has just received boxes of research undertaken as recently as 1996, by Doug Elias. The range of this material is huge. It includes historical reports and archives from collections all over Canada. Dr. Elias did a search on Kaska history and culture that included the Hudson Bay Archives in Winnipeg, the Museum of Man in Ottawa, and the BC Archives in Victoria, to name a few sources. He also interviewed Kaska Elders throughout BC and the Yukon.

As soon as a loan system is in place, these materials will be made accessible to community members. A space has been set for all research materials including this project’s, in the Map Room downstairs at the Lower Post Band Office.



Unknown Man, Old Chief (Bessie Carlick’s Father),
Anton Money, Old French



Fred Allan

Future Directions

Genealogies

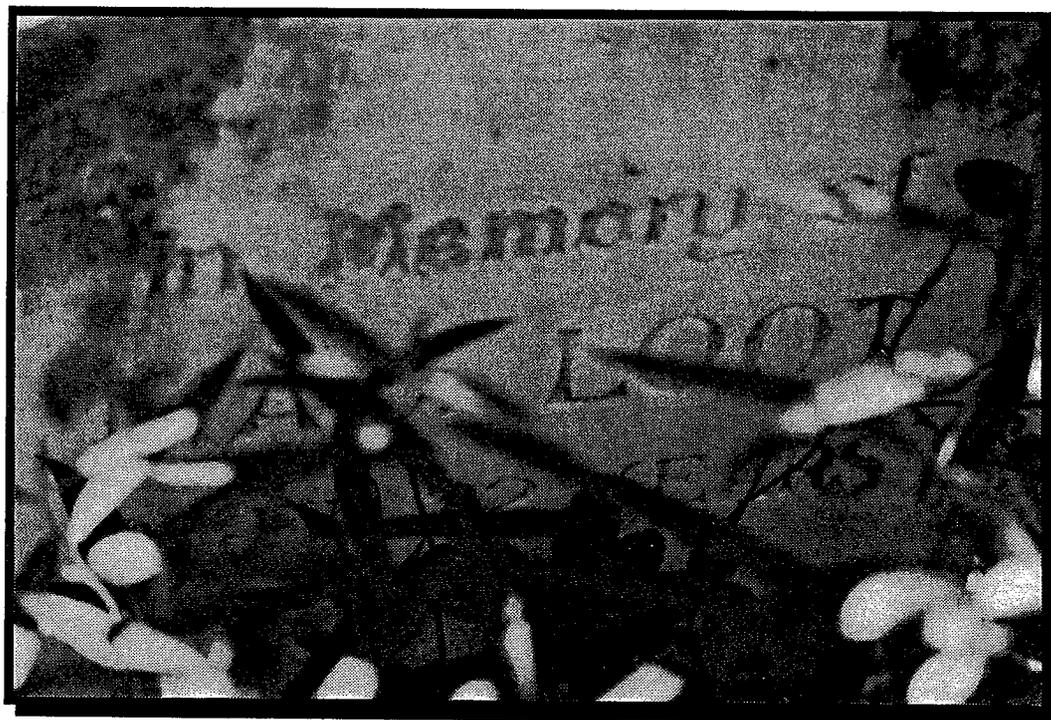
As part of our project we did a community workshop on genealogy. Doris Park – genealogist – came up from Fort Nelson and shared her expertise with us. She showed us some family lineage maps - one of them took up half the wall! Doris also provided workbooks and suggestions on how to write down a family lineage or genealogy. (We still have some workbooks for reference use.)

As another way to research history, Doris encouraged us to go to the cemeteries in Lower Post. We got there with the help of Fred Lutz who ferried us across the Liard River and Louis Boya who guided us around the cemetery's gravestones and unmarked sites.

Louis told us some interesting stories about how people lived and died. He showed us gravesites that we would not have seen because much of the cemetery is now grown over with brush and willows.

Louis kept saying “too bad, too bad” as we walked around. He told us that before, he had cleared the whole place out by hand, but that now, he just can't do it. Doris talked about how the gravesites could be restored and mapped as a great way to learn more about community history.

We all saw how valuable the cemetery is. We learned a lot just being there. Perhaps, clearing it out, making a map of who is there, and researching who the people were, would be a great beginning for phase 2 of the history project.



Headstone located across the Liard River in Lower Post

Contributions

The Elders We Worked With

As this research project progressed we worked with many Elders. All of them were enthusiastic and very generous in sharing their understanding and memories. They were also very patient with us, as we tried to find the best way to listen and learn. We would like to thank the Elders who have contributed to this project:

Louis Boya, Lorna Carlick, Eva Johnny, Mida Donnissy, Clara Donnissy, Liza Magun, Agnes Stoltz, Alfred Jakesta, Angel Carlick, Lillian Boya, Mary Jane Poole, Charlie Poole, Tom Poole, John Poole, Wayne Poole, Micheal Abou, John R. McCook and Dickson Lutz.

We also had the opportunity to interview some community members in Lower Post who have vision and dedication to their people. They are not yet Elders, and so we have called them "Youngers." We thank:

Francess Carlick, Bernice Ball, Dave Porter, Dennis Porter, Walter Carlick, and Steven Jakesta.

Thank you to Father Pouillet and Father Tanguay for their photographs from the 1930's to the 1960's. They have provided many people with warm memories and also taught us a lot about history.

And to all Lower Post community members, and Debbie Groat, Roma Tibbet, Rosemary Gill, Sherry Geddes, Fred Lutz, Kaska Dena Council, Kaska Tribal Council, CYFN, Bob Charlie, Tony Chief, Arlene Corcoran, Doris Park, Reg Wolfe, Liard First Nation, North East Native Advancement Society (NENAS) and the dedicated people at Aboriginal Language Services, thank you for the encouragement, the insight and the many resources that you shared with us.

Thank You!

Subject Bibliography

(These materials will be available to people for research purposes)

Part of our work this summer was to create a central resource bank of useful materials on Kaska History and Culture. Below is a list of what we have found to date. (Sept. 1997) We will continue to build on this list, contributions are welcome.

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