

Stories of the Mi'kmaq



Calvin Coish

College of the North Atlantic



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Max Perrier at Heaven Steady, near Lake Ambrose, 1961

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INTRODUCTION

"You're about 30 years too late." That's what Jerry Wetzel said when I talked with him about Mi'kmaq history. As Jerry said, many of the old-timers have died in recent years and taken their stories with them.

Another of those old-timers, Douglas Paul of Point Leamington died recently. Some of Mr. Paul's memories appear in this book.

I wish to offer special thanks to Jerry for his insights into Mi'kmaq and Beothuck history. He is really a wealth of information. Special thanks also to Bernie Hanlon of the Exploits Indian Band Council. Thanks to Howard Bailey, Lou Barker, Cassie Humber, Phil Jeddore, the late Douglas Paul, Nish Paul, Cora Petrilli, Nellie Power, and Denise Spencer.

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**Cal Coish
April 2000**

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HOWARD BAILEY

Leo Woods was a Mi'kmaq trapper. He lived in the woods year round and only came out for supplies. He came from the Port au Port area. He was about 6 foot four -- a big strong man.

His last year across the Noel Paul River he had no supplies. He knocked the side of his cabin down and made a raft and came across. That was the last time. He never returned; he died of a brain tumour. He was one of the last true trappers, because he lived off the woods.

Howard Young lived about three miles up the river from Leo. Howard was more 'modern.' He had a place there and he had a couple of Jeeps across the river and he did a bit of guiding. Leo was just a rough and tumble trapper. He went and spent some time with Howard overnight; they were going to get a moose. They were in one of the little overnight camps they had built. It was in the fall of the year. Howard was in the top bunk and Leo was in the bottom bunk.

Leo was the type of person who'd sleep outside with snow on the ground. Fire in that little place was nice for Howard but too hot for Leo. So, about two o'clock in the morning Leo got up and opened the door, cursed and swore on Howard and got back in the bunk again. Howard said he couldn't sleep because it was freezing cold. So he'd get down and shut the door again when he figured Leo was asleep. They did that I don't know how many times back and forth. He'd close the door because it was so cold and get back in the bunk. Then he'd hear Leo gettin' up and openin' the door and cursin' on him.

I didn't know about my Mi'kmaq heritage until six or seven years ago. I went to visit my sister over in Cow Head. We were talking one day and one of my half-brothers said something about me and her having rare blood.

I said, "Why is that?"

Brenda said, "I don't know, unless it's because of your great-grandfather being Indian."

I said, "What?" I followed it up from there.

My great-grandfather was a Mi'kmaq; his name was John Jack. He came from a reserve near Liverpool, Nova Scotia. He settled on the Northern Peninsula and took the name of Brophy.

I was adopted. It's funny how it worked out, because I grew up with the Pauls in Badger. My son John is dark and you couldn't get any more Indian-looking.

I've been around the woods all my life; it's just part of me and I can't stay away from it. The elderberry flower is a traditional Mi'kmaq medicine.

You dry out the flower and seed for a couple of days. You can drink it as tea or you can simmer it in hot water on the stove for poultices for sores and cuts. The Mi'kmaq also used tea berries -- white berries that grow in moss.



Wigwam

CASSIE HUMBER, with daughter BERNIE HANLON

Cassie talks about her father, Louis John. "He killed a moose or a caribou when he was 16, with a rock. It was on a Sunday and you weren't allowed to carry a gun on a Sunday. His father would give him a lickin' if he caught him with a gun. His father came and asked him where was the gun. He said, 'I never had no gun.'

Pop was a trapper, he was a guide, he took a good many people – Englishmen, Americans. I remember Mom telling me – Pop worked down in the slash mill. That was around 1909, whenever the mill opened.

There was a Mr. James came over from England; Pop didn't know him from Adam. They were all on their lunch hour one day and the men said to this Mr. James, "I think Louis John would take you on."

He said, "What are you talkin' about?"

They said, "Mr. James is a boxer from England."

Pop said, "I'm no boxer."

They kept it up and Pop said, "All right then, I don't know what you mean by boxin', but I'll fight with my bare fists. That's all I know."

Mr. James had on these big gloves. Pop said, "I don't know nothing about that, but you can put on your mitts or whatever they are, but I'll do this with me fists."

Mr. James said, "All right."

Mom was laughin', 'cause she said, this Mr. James was goin' around him like this with his arms up.

Pop was lookin' at him, thinkin' he was kinda strange, you know. Mr. James gave a smack at him and he missed. Pop up fist and give it to him right under the chin and knocked him out cold junk. When he come to he said, "My God, Mr. John, you said you didn't know anything about boxing."

"No more I don't," he said. "All I know is the fist fightin'."

The manager from the mill said, "Well, you can say that, Mr. John, that you knocked out one of the boxers from England." Pop had a big laugh over that, you know.

Another time, he took a crowd of Englishmen in the woods. Mom always had a lunch packed for Pop, with molasses buns and stuff like that, all homemade stuff. Pop was gettin' his lunch ready. He looked at those fellows and they were takin' those little packages out of their packs.

He said, "What have you got there?"

"That's raisins." they said.

Pop said, "You got anything else."

"No, no, no," the man said, "when we're goin' anywhere, we take raisins."

Pop said, "Not a very big lunch. We're gonna be here all day, and you mean to say you're not goin' to eat nothing else only the raisins."

They said, "Yes."

Pop said, "Okay." He got his lunch and he had his bit of meat fryin' and homemade bread, had his cup of tea ready. Those two fellows was eatin' those raisins, but they were lookin' at Pop and lookin' at the food.

They said. "Mr. John, what have you got there?"

He said, "That's molasses buns."



Chief Larry Jeddore with Cassie Humber

He told them to have a taste. When they took a taste of it, they said they never tasted anything like it. Pop got the plates out and he said they cleaned her.

Some company in America sent down and said they wanted a sample of all the berries on this island, and they sent Pop cases of bottles to put them in. Pop filled them bottles with every kind of berry and sent it away to 'em. They sent back a letter and said they never seen the like in their life.

"Pop was a trapper, gettin' the furs – beaver, muskrat, fox. But he never killed an animal and left it in the woods; it always had to be brought out to somebody to eat. And he would never break open a beaver house. He just killed what he needed and that was it."

He spent a lot of time on the Gaff Topsails. He'd take Monsignor Finn with him and Bobby Morrow's father Bill. He took a lot of people and that's where they'd go. The ones that knew him they're all dead and gone, but I meet a scattered one and they'll remember my mother and father up on the Gaff Topsails. Pop got his name on the Camel's Hump on the Gaff Topsails, on a big bronze cross.

My brother Pete, he died at 95 two years ago. There was 14 children and I'm the last of 'em. Pete was only two years old. Pop was gonna climb up Mt. Sylvester and he had Pete on his back. Mom got kinda scared because the wind was blowing.

She said, "You go up and leave the baby down." So she took Pete and Pop went on up.

Pop said, "As you're climbin', the air gets thinner." At the top there's a big flat place. He said there was a big jar right full of pennies. Whoever went up there they'd sign their name on the birch parchment and the date and they'd drop in a penny. He said there was all kinds of pennies. There was them great big ones that you'd get from England and the jar was just about full then. A friend of ours was telling us he was up there last year and the jar was gone.

Up on Dog Pond, right upon this mountain, it's right flat and there's a great big round thing, like little rocks goin' right around and in the centre there's water. It might've looked round, but to the Indian it was a sign of a cross. Jerry Wetzel told me when you hoist up those rocks, there might be a little bit of silver under this one, there might be a nice fancy button under another one. There was all kinds of trinkets underneath. He told me all that's gone too. It was there years and years and years.

Pop used to go down to Railway Road and row a boat across the Exploits River down there. That's where the park is – Sanger Park. There was no bridge then. I said my father would be amazed now to see that bridge across there.

I like the woods. When Pop took me for the last time, he was haulin' up his traps. He was in his seventies then. He hauled up all his traps and he took me right on over to Puncheon Pond – the old trail is still there now. We walked to a place called Whale Back; it's a rock shaped just like a whale. We ended over on Three Brooks where the dam is now, where the salmon run. There used to be a bridge across there. You could go from there down to Bishop's Falls.

Pop said, "Look across there, Cassie."

"My God, Pop," I said, "the water's right shallow. We can walk across and there's the track and we can go on up the track."

"Yes," he said, "and what about my boat on this side.?" So we walked right back then to the old Portage Road. We picked up the rest of his traps and come on out and got aboard the boat and come on home.

When we were comin' back, I said, "Pop, there's somebody cuttin' wood."

He said, "Get down on your hands and knees 'til I show you the woodcutters." There was a little hummock there. We crawled up and when I looked this was the beavers cuttin' the trees, makin' a dam.

You could sit down and listen to him tellin' the places he went. My father and his buddies left Conne River and rowed to Nova Scotia years ago.

Pop was a half-breed. He had a brother Bill and a sister Margaret and they were black as the ace of spades. Pop had to go out in the sun to get a sun tan. He was snowy white. He wore his two-piece underwear summer and winter.

I used to say, "Pop, don't you find that warm?"

"No," he said, "what keeps out the cold keeps out the heat."

Pop's father was 75 when he walked in from Glenwood on the tracks. That's where he lived. He left Glenwood and went to Badger and when the mill opened up he came down here.

Logging was hard work. They went to bed soakin' wet. He said in the wintertime the stuff'd be froze on their feet. Pop said he didn't mind it, but, like the doctor told him, it took it's toll as he got older. He lived to be ninety-something. His heart was strong but everything else was weak.

He done a lot of travellin'. Great-grandfather came in from Glenwood and he left his knife on a hummock and he was gonna walk back. Pop said, "No, you can't do that father. You're goin' on the train."

He said, "But that's a good knife."

Pop said goin' to the dances in the night time you had to carry a torch, goin' from one place to another. Pop never drank beer, but this rum from Barbados, he used to get that. They'd make their sarsaparilla wine. It's pretty potent. It's a really dark wine, and there's a lovely taste to it.

Pop made what they calls a crooked knife. That was for skinnin' and other things he wanted to do. They used the axe a lot and this knife. We got a cane that he carved out of wood. It got some Indian markings on it, but we don't know what they mean. If he was in the woods and seen something that had a shape to it he'd take it and bring it home and he'd make something out of it. He was always whittlin', makin' stuff.

Sunday dinner, you'd push back your chair, they'd light up the pipe and they'd start talkin'.

There was a place up in the woods and it was called Sit Down Pond. Pop said when he'd be huntin' and he'd have his sack on, he'd have the band across his forehead. He'd sit down and his sack could lodge on the flat rock behind him. He showed it to me on the map.

If you went berry-pickin' with Pop, you had to pick your berries first. Then there was lunch. He'd get the lunch. He'd make what he called the ashes cake. He'd put a hole in the ground and put his pot down and put in his things for the cake and put the cover on and throw the coals over it. It was good too.

Pop would make Indian Brewis. That was moose and onion. You'd soak your brewis and put that in there after the meat was cooked. You'd put the cover on and let it simmer a bit and get a nice flavour on it. It was really tasty. I'm after givin' that recipe out a good many times.

We had a home down in Swift Current; it was called Piper's Hole in them days. Lost everything. Place caught fire and all they got out was what they were standin' in. We wanted Pop's birth certificate and down in Conne River they had a fire so that burnt there.

In them days, when a child was born, there was a man who used to go around for the government and write it down and bring it to St. John's. When he went out to St. John's they looked up the paper, the books. They said, "Yes, there was a lot of the men used to write it down, but it never quite made it to their office."

There was women here who'd sing out to Pop in the morning, "Is it goin' to rain, Mr. John. Is I goin' to put out me clothes."

They'd come and if they had some sort of illness, he'd go up there (on the hill), get something out of the woods, come back, mix it up and give it to 'em.

Mr. Burry had a bad stomach. Pop had to pass by his house to go down to get his boat. He said, "My God, Louis, I wish I could go like you."

Pop said, "What's wrong, boy."

He said, "I got a bad stomach. I believe it's ulcerated. Doctor said it was, you know."

Pop said, "You takin' anything for it?"

"Yes,' he said, "but it don't seem to be doin' me any good."

So Pop said, "I'm goin' over fishin' now. When I comes back, I'll make up something for you."

I can see Pop now with the cherry tree. He skinned it out and he took the inside of it and he skinned it all and he boiled it all down. He put it in a bottle and he brought it down and give it to Mr. Burry.

He said, "Mr. Burry, you drink some of that every day, and when that's gone and you wants more I'll make you more."

Pop must have made him a couple of bottles, so one day Mrs. Burry came out and called us along to the fence. She said, "Is Mr. John with you?"

Mom said, "Yes, Louis is comin' behind."

She (Mrs. Burry) said, "Don't be talkin'. Husband was up to the doctor this morning and he got no more bad stomach."

Mom said, "What happened?"

"Remember," she said, "your husband was makin' the cherry bark and my husband was drinkin' it."

Mom said, "Yes."

"She went up and doctor attendin' him said, 'Boy, your ulcer is gone.'"

He said, "I never had one to begin with."

The doctor said, "Well, it's gone."

Mr. Burry said, "Well, thanks to Louis John and the cherry bark. I'm gonna keep on drinkin' it."

When Pop got up to the fence, Mr. Burry come out. He said, "Louis, I'm a cured man."

He lived a good many years after that. I can see him now, an old man, and every time I used to pass by the fence he'd call me along. He said, "I never forgot your father and his cherry bark. He showed me what to do and every now and then I used to make up a bit and put it in a bottle and have a swig."

He worked a long time in the mill. He hunted and fished all around. He took people in the woods. No matter where they come from he went with 'em.

That must be a good many pounds, the skin of a bear. Pop scraped all the fat off and then he had to roll that up and put it on a thing and carry that on his back. He even took some of the fat – it's snowy white – and brought it down and Mom went and rendered it all out. They had these wooden tubs in them days. She filled it up and they put it up in the cellar to let it get hard. Well, I thought it was Crisco when she took the cover off, it was that white. Mom used to do all her baking with it.

Pop said he was in the woods one time with one of the Pauls and the bear grabbed Mr. Paul. He said, "Louis, kill me, because the bear's gonna kill me anyway."

Pop said, "Don't say nothing. Just be still."

Pop said he was waitin' for the bear to turn a certain way. When the bear turned his head away, Pop let him have it (shot him), and the bear let the man go. Mr. Paul said Pop saved his life.

They were all up in the woods for months. Mr. Paul was comin' out and he fell over a stump. The stump went between his legs and ripped out his privates; the scrotum come out of the sac. So they brought him back to the camp where Mom was.

Mom said all she had was her needle and fishin' line. She said she cleaned it as best she could and put everything back and sewed it up. They took Mr. Paul to Grand Falls. Mom was still up in the woods. She said when she come down there was a big commotion and they said, "The doctor wants to see you."

She said, "My God, he never died, did he?"

So she went up (to the hospital). Dr. Scott said to her, "And you did this, Mrs. John."

She said, "Yes."

He said, "My God, you did a wonderful job. I can't get over the good stitchin' too. Only thing is, you know, he'll never father a child."

Mom said, "Well, the main thing is we saved his life." Mom told me Mr. Paul had eleven children after that.

Mom could muck it out with Pop too. She could go side by side with him. She said to Pop, "You should have learned Cassie all about the woods. She could have been a guide today." I love the woods.

I should have wrote it all down, but I didn't. Too busy growin' up enjoying myself. I enjoyed myself, I must say.

I was a real tomboy. I can see my father now. He said, "My God, Mary, I'm goin' to have to bring her down to Goodyear's (blacksmith shop) and get her shod." I'm tellin' you, I'd have the dresses tore off myself, hems hangin' down, boots wore out. I'm still young at heart. I might be 72, but when I'm in the woods and I'm travellin', I'm only in my twenties. My brother lived to be 95, I got to live to be 100. I'm the last of the Mohicans.

DOUGLAS PAUL

I'm not sure what we were, because the Mi'kmaqs and the Beothucks intermarried. Father (Andrew Paul) didn't know if his relatives were Mi'kmaq or Beothuck. I wasn't interested; when you're younger, you don't see the benefits of these things. Father told me a few things about their ways and things they did. There's a lot I don't know.

I went to work when I was 12 years old. I went to work on the road from here to Botwood. I went to work as a water nipper, taking water to the men. I went to work with the paper company the next year.

Father was pretty well up on it, I think he was. When he was seven years old, he went through the country from Seal Bay to Badger, him and his father and his stepmother. I believe they spent a week or two up there, just outside of Hodge's Hills, on the big bog there. They had a wigwam there.

Father lived in Seal Bay so long, and so long in Badger Bay. Seal Bay is just the other side of Leading Tickles; there's no road to it. They lived in Badger. I'm not sure if they went back to Hall's Bay after that. They were living in Hall's Bay for a while. They had a piece of land up there; father was supposed to own it.

Father used to talk about trapping. You could kill caribou then; you didn't have to have a licence. They used to live nearly entirely on meat. He told me my grandfather would go in the woods for a couple of weeks and he'd only take about three slices of bread and the rest would be meat. He had his little tin pot. He'd take a bit of baking powder and flour. He'd cook his meat and eat the meat and take a bit of bread just to wipe up the liquor out of the pot.

They'd take some animal fat, drive a stick through it. They'd roll it in flour then, and put it up to the fire until it baked or partly baked. They'd roll it in some more flour and bake it again. That was kind of their bread.

They used to bake things in the sand. They'd get nice clean sand and put a fire on it, heat the sand, dig a hole in the sand, put the dough in there, put more hot sand on top, light another fire on top of that. When they took the dough out of the sand, every bit of sand would fall off it.

They lived in camps and wigwams. They used to pretty well live with the animals – the bears the beavers. They respected the beaver. Beaver was a good food; you could work all day on a meal of beaver. They had a couple of young bears one time. The bear could get up and take a saucer of milk off the window sill and put it on the floor and wouldn't waste it. They'd keep a beaver in the wigwam, and in the night the beaver would damn off the door of the wigwam, same as if they was dammin' of a river. They knew all about the animals.

They used to do a lot of traveling. They'd kill a caribou and take all the meat off the bones. I suppose they'd put a bit of salt on it; I'm not sure. They used to dry it and hang it up in the wigwam and smoke it.

We learned a lot about survival. Where a lot of fellows would freeze to death, we fellows would have it fairly comfortable. Light a fire at the base of a hill and warm the ground and the side of the hill behind you. Move the fire so far off then. Between the fire and the bank, you can have it pretty warm. Animal skins are a good thing too. Put the moose skin or the caribou skin side down. You can sleep under that when it's pretty cold. It keeps the caribou and moose warm.

The old fellows used to tell some stories. One they told was about how the bear come to have a short tail. The bear asked a Mi'kmaq how to catch trout. The Mi'kmaq said go out and put your tail in the water and when you find something make the jump. So the old bear went out on the ice and put his tail in the water. When he found something bite, he give the jump. His tail was froze in the ice and he broke it off.



Douglas Paul

I used to make about 60 or 70 pairs of snowshoes a year. I used birch. I did use maple – sycamore maple – and I used juniper, but birch mostly. Juniper usually had a few knots in it; ‘twas a job to keep clear of the knots. You steam the wood to make it soft; then you can bend it around your knee.

When father was 12 or 13 years old he walked across to Baie d'Espoir from Badger. There was an old gentleman up there was going over. I believe it was Peter Jewel and he was going over from St. Anne's Bay. He knew the country on the other side, but he didn't know it on this side, how to get up to the open country, to go down and connect with the river. My father was used to it up on this end because he used to be up there with his father.

So he went up there and guided the old fellow up to the open country. Instead of coming back he went on with him for a couple of weeks or so. They used to wear skin boots then; they made their own. He wore out his boots and an old lady over there made him another pair. They used caribou skins. A lot better than moose skins; it wasn't as thick, and it was supple. They used birch bark to make wigwams.

There was a couple of good salmon rivers here. They had a place up here on the river – they had it fenced off. The salmon used to get in there and they'd spear them because they didn't have nets. Some white people was at that too in the same area. They killed one fellow there, a Rowsell. I think there was a dispute over the salmon. They carried his head up on Rowsell's Hill there and put it up on a post. That was before my day.

I've often thought about it. The Beothucks and Mi'kmaqs were here in Newfoundland a long time. You got a job to see a mark they left. There's gonna be a lot of marks from the white man.



Ancestors of Douglas Paul:

**Back Row (l-r): Jack Paul, Mary Paul, Louise
Woodworth, Frank Paul**

**Front Row (l-r): Andrew Paul, John Paul, Margaret
(Paul) Patey, Annie Bowns Butt**

IGNATIUS (NISH) PAUL

My grandfather came from Eskasoni in Nova Scotia. They came here because there was good hunting and fishing. We grew up on the Exploits River in Badger. At one time there was a reservation in Badger, called the Badger Brook Reservation. They claim the Paul family had Beothuck blood.

The Beothucks used to hide because people were looking for them. They would head out to the mouth of the Exploits River to do their fishing. They went back into the interior in the wintertime to trap and hunt.

My father spent most of his life in the interior. Sometimes he was gone three or four months before he came home. I remember one time he came home he was all dressed in bearskins and he had skin boots on. He had what you call the shanks – that was the moose skin sewed up and turned inside out with the hair to the ground – over his skin boots. That was to stop the frost. He lived off the land.

There's a place on Sandy called the White Hills and a place called the Dog Tits. They called it the Dog Tits because there was five knots in a row. My father had built a trapper's camp there. The roof was made from birch rind and it's still there today. His buck saw is hung on the front of the cabin.

He was in there one time in February month and he cut himself. He was there for two weeks; a big storm came on and he couldn't get out. Whenever he wanted anything to eat, he'd shoot a caribou, and take a quarter and drag it back to the camp.

He didn't care where night overtook him. I remember my father telling us stories about way back years ago. If you had a box of matches, they'd probably have to do you for months. They had three or four different cabins and they'd travel.

Whenever they'd light a fire to lunch up or something like that they always made a torch from a birch. They tied it around the end of a stick and when they were finished lunching, they'd light up that torch and wave it in the wind every once in awhile to keep it lit so they could light the next fire and save on their matches.

They trapped all the way through from Badger, up to Badger Lake, Twin Lakes, right over to Triton. They trapped also up to St. Anthony. They trapped all the Exploits River, to Red Indian Lake, Lloyd's Lake, right over to King George Lake. They trapped over on Trappers, Sandy Lake going towards Baie d'Espoir, and Noel Paul, which is named after my great-grandfather. There are many brooks and rivers around here that were named after the native people.

The Mi'kmaq people used different plants. They used the yellow root for poultices. They used myrrh bladders for cuts. They used berries for colouring dyes. There's a berry called the tea berry, which grows underneath the moss. They used that for sweetness. They use sweet grass for spiritual healings and stuff like that.

When native people took sweet grass they never cut it. They always twisted it off so as not to hurt the root. They always left a gift behind, a trinket or something like that. It's too bad there wasn't a book written about my father and my people because they were extremely good hunters and trappers. It's been noted by the Newfoundland government that we are good guides and good people in the country.

A man named Captain Storm came here one time and he wanted to go across from Buchans to Baie d'Espoir. My father and them did the trip by canoe. When the waters turned to go down to Baie d'Espoir, they condemned the factory-made canoe and built one out of skin to make the rest of the trip so they could carry it. There's a brook in the Noel Paul area called Captain Storm.

I grew up in Badger and we had many people living in Badger who worked for the A.N.D. Company. We were allowed to go and split their wood, but we weren't allowed in their houses. If they passed you a piece of cake or a glass of syrup you had to sit on the chopping block and eat it outside.

After I got out of school, I went to work in the woods with my father trapping. I also worked for the A. N. D. Company, cutting wood and on the Badger Drive. I went away to Ontario and went to work up there. I think I was there for twenty years or something like that.

While I was up there, lots of times I had to be out in the country. I used to sit by the side of the pond and watch the fish swimming around. That was part of my culture; I grew up that way.

When I was six years old, my father and them were in the camp trapping and they used to take me along to catch the fish for them, so they'd have a meal when they'd get home in the evenings.



Nish Paul

I own a hunting and fishing lodge on the Exploits River. I'm still using my father's trails along the river. So people can still walk in the footsteps of the native people. My father had a cabin at Black Duck all his life.

My father was overseas on the Second World War. They were never looked at as war veterans until later years.

There's a lot of native people coming forward now. They're learning more and they're getting more out into the schools and the media. I'm sure there's enough history out there now to say that I'm a Micmac person. We're off-reserve, we're non-status.

It's a funny thing, but for me to go to any part of Ontario or Nova Scotia and walk into a store, I don't even have to show a card for tax free, because I look Indian. Nobody questions it. I don't know what the problem is, but it'll never happen here in Newfoundland, unless you really got the card.

I don't think it's fair to all Mi'kmaq people. I think that if you're Indian, you're Indian. Why should one be treated any different than the other one? I can go to Conne River tomorrow and become a status Indian. I grew up in Badger. The government wants me to live in Conne River and then they'll tell me I'm an Indian. I'm Indian no matter where I go.

When my father and them would go out trapping, no matter when darkness came, no matter where they were, they'd lie down. They'd build a bough whiffen around them and then they'd build a fire outside in front.

My father always said to me, "If you build a fire, always put your feet to the fire." If your feet was warm, your whole body was warm. Build your camp with the wind blowing at the back, because the wind curled around and brought the heat into your camp.

They would get moss and set it in a pan and catch it afire. You get smoke from that and that'll keep the flies away. When they built a teepee, there was a hole in the roof so the smoke could go up. If you're lying on the ground, you don't get that smoke.

They'd put their meat on an open fire and roast it so it had probably a quarter of an inch of thickness on it. Then they'd bury it in a bog. You could leave that there for six months and bring it up and cut off that quarter inch of outer meat and you'd have fresh meat again. It was the same thing with their fish. On a sandy beach, they'd dig a hole, put their fish down in the hole, bury it over with sand and build a fire on top. That would roast their fish.

Father might be gone three or four months. My mother would always say to us, "Boys, get the wood in, your father will be home tomorrow." I don't know how she knew.

One time my brothers were trapping with father. Father said, "Boys, we're going home tomorrow. There'll be a new baby when we get there." There was, when they arrived. They didn't have no watches or anything like that, but they could sense it.

My father had a dog one time. The dog sometimes used to cry. He weened to go home, that's what it was. If my father never said to the dog, "Go home," he'd never go home. But if he said to the dog, "Go home," the dog would come home to Badger and if there was anything wrong he wouldn't go back. But, if everything was okay, he'd be back the next day.

If the dog didn't come back, father knew he had to come home. In later years, when my father came ashore in his boat, the dog stayed at that boat day and night, with no leash on him. He'd stay there and protect that boat. Nobody got aboard of that boat.

I got a lodge on the Exploits River. Every time I look out my window or sit on my balcony, I can see my older brothers and my father passing by. They worked like dogs to try and provide for the family. It's something you can't forget.

They went up and down that river in the middle of the winter with the slob and ice, two fellows on the shore with a rope towing the boat and he out keeping the boat off from the shore. They walked twelve or fifteen miles along the riverbank.

For years and years and years, when the river became high, my father was the man they used to call on to bring the men back across the river. In them days, they used to have a scow going across to Badger and a cable boat. When the water would get really high, they couldn't use it.

When the A.N.D. Company men would come down from the woods, there was no way for them to cross the river. I've known my father to get out of his bed at four o'clock in the morning and go across that river in the dark and bring these men across to go home. He didn't have any fear because he did it all and he knew what he was doing.

He corralled the caribou one time, when they wanted to send them to another part of Canada. I remember the first grouse that ever came to Newfoundland; my father was appointed to look after them. He knew the country and he knew where the grouse were; he done the study on them.

CORA (PERRIER) PETRILLI

When I was growing up, the word Mi'kmaq wasn't even to be mentioned. People would call us Jack-o-tars and Mi'kmaqs. My father would get really, really mad. He would say, "There's no Mi'kmaq in us."

I'd ask my grandmother and my grandfather why people treated us different. I said, "Is it because we're Mi'kmaq?"

My grandmother said, "There's no Mi'kmaq in us. My father was French, and my mother came from Ireland."

I was proud of being Mi'kmaq, but I was never allowed to say that I was. My mother would yell at me, or my father would yell at me.

On my mother's side, her father's mother, her grandmother was full Mi'kmaq. Then again, when they were growing up, nothing was mentioned. It's half-French and half-Mi'kmaq. They had a hard time growing up, even because they were French. When the base came to Stephenville, they started to teach English in the schools.

My father was from Flat Bay. His mother was Mi'kmaq; I'm not sure if it was one side or both sides. My grandfather's mother was Mi'kmaq.

My grandfather on my father's side was a trapper. In 1924, he had a prospector's cabin across the field over there; he was prospecting at the time. It was only torn down a few years ago. I just found a picture of the cabin, and got that enlarged and laminated.



Max Perrier

I got pictures of everything, from way back. I got pictures of my grandmother's grandparents. They were really, really tiny people. I got pictures of my grandfather's father. That was so far back it was done on tin.

One time my brother was in hospital in St. John's for a while. There was this teacher there and she put on some music one day and I started dancing and she said, "Where's your family from? Are you from Newfoundland?"

I said, "Yeah."

She said, "What's that dance you're doing?"

I said, "I don't know. I'm just dancing to the music."

She said, "Is there any native in you? Are you Mi'kmaq or anything?"

I said, "Yeah."

She came here one day and wanted to talk to my grandmother. I used to tell her all these things about my grandmother, how we lived and everything. My grandmother turned her away.

When I was little, there were no roads here, so, wherever we went, it was by dog team. You couldn't really ride the train unless you worked with ASARCO. Things would come in on the train for us. If you wanted to go to Millertown or if you wanted to go to Millertown Junction, they hooked up the dogs and got the sleds ready and we'd go by dog team. My grandfather built the first bridge across the Mary March River.

They came here from Flat Bay and Muddy Hole. Before they came here, they went to a place called the Water Chute, near Grand Falls.

I was down to the club one night, about 18 years ago. There was a man over there and he said to me, "You look awful familiar." This guy was up in his late sixties. He said, "When I was a kid, my best friend looked just like you."

I said, "Yeah. Where did you live?"

He said, "Just before you get to Grand Falls."

I said, "No relation to me, because we came from the west coast."

He said, "Yes, this guy did to. He was 12 and we were best friends. We were best buddies, because there was nobody else around to play with."

I said, "What was his name?"

He said, "His name was Max."

I said, "Was it the Water Chute?"

He said, "Yes."

They lived two miles I think it was from Dad. He said his father's cow would get loose and go over to my grandfather's and get with his cows. He would bring them back, so this 12 year old, Max, would come back with him. He said, "For three or four years we were best buddies. Then he left and I never heard from him after. I guess he's dead now."

I said, "No, he's living here in the Junction. Why don't you come over and see him?"

He said, "Well, I don't have time right now. I just got down from the woods after three months up there and I have to get home."

I said, "The next time you come up, let me know when you're coming and I'll have a little dinner ready."

That night when I went home from the club, I woke my father up and I said, "Dad, when you were 12 years old, who was your best friend?"

He didn't even have to think. He said, "John."

I said, "I was just talking to him."

"No way."

I said, "Yeah."

He said, "I thought he was dead."

I called him a couple of weeks later, and he said, yes, he was coming up. I had some smoked salmon, I had a whole bunch of stuff ready for when they came up. The day before he was supposed to come here he died of a heart attack and my father never did get to see him.

When we were kids, there were three of us kids who grew up together. My grandmother reared me up along with her two children. Grandmother was strict. She sent the older one away to the convent at St. George's to go to school.

When my father was 15, he had a brother 14 and another one 17. They went in to Seal Pond. My grandfather went with them. I'm not sure if they were hunting or picking berries; I think they were picking berries. A year before that there were some Americans down here who brought 'water wings' and told them that, if they got in the water, they wouldn't drown if they had these on.

So, off they went to Seal Pond that day. But, they didn't know how to use the water wings. They must not have had them on right, or something was wrong. When they got out in the water, they started going down. They started fighting with each other to keep above the water. My grandfather yelled out for them to stay apart, not to touch each other, but you know that's not going to work when you're drowning.

My father was the one who was away from them; he got clear of them. When he came up he was a ways from them, so my grandfather said don't go back there. My grandfather got this longer and put it out, but he couldn't reach them. The only one he could reach was my father, and the other two drowned. That was about 1934 or 35.

The following year, one of the younger ones – he was 13 or 14 – got up on Sunday morning and he went out to check his snares. He wasn't dressed properly, so one of the boys went and got him and brought him back again. My grandfather wasn't home at the time; he was up cutting a line for something.

After dinner, when they looked around, he was gone again. So they went in to look for him. All he had on was a pair of those short rubbers and a sweater. They came back and said they couldn't find him.

They went up and got my grandfather. My grandfather started at the center of the river and made a wide sweep around, couldn't find him, so they contacted the mines in Buchans and got 500 of the men to search for him. Two weeks they searched for him and they never did find him.

The year after that, Cliff, the youngest one, died from pneumonia or something. His temperature went up so high that he had a stroke. Then in '54, Aunt Millie, my father's sister, died and left two children behind.

My father used to have a sawmill back there. He cut all the wood himself for the house. I think the only things he brought in were the doors and windows and the floor. Everything else was sawn.

Twenty years ago, you weren't allowed to have any Mi'kmaq artifacts, the stuff you picked up on the riverbanks or stuck in trees – arrowheads and stuff. You weren't allowed to have it. If the Mounties heard that you had it, they came and took it. There were families in the Junction who had arrowheads and the skivvers – sharp rocks for skinning animals. The Mounties came and took them all. They said it had to go to the Archives in St. John's.

I miss those days. All our meat came from the woods. We had our gardens. My grandmother made our clothes. I don't ever remember her carding her wool. I imagine she did, but I was too young to remember it.

We had our own butter and vegetables. We had our salt come in. My grandfather would get salt by bulk, to salt his own meat. He salted pork, because he had pigs. We had our own milk, because we had cows. We were self-sufficient.

JERRY WETZEL

(Jerry Wetzel is a Shawnee Indian from Ohio. He is married to Edwina John of Conne River. He has done a lot of research on the Mi'kmaqs and Beothucks, or Red Indians, as he prefers to call them.)

There are various stories about where the name Beothuck comes from. It first appears when Cormack comes back from his trip across the island in 1822. If you read Cormack's diary, you'll find that as he went across the island, he was being guided by a Mi'kmaq fellow named Joe Sylvester. Sylvester kept him just about on the line between what the Mi'kmaq considered Beothuck country and what the Beothuck considered Mi'kmaq country.

One of the interesting people that Cormack met was James John at Crooked Lake. Just a few miles north of Crooked Lake is where Beothuck country would have been at that time. There's a brook there called Noel Paul's Brook that comes out into the Exploits River. Noel Paul's Brook rises just north of Crooked Lake.

Cormack sits down with a James John, who I believe was my wife's great-great-grandfather. Cormack asks John — this was in October — "Where are the Red Indians?" That's what the English called the Beothuck up to the time of Cormack's trip across the island.

James John tells Cormack where the Red Indians are, what they're doing, and where he'll find them at this time of the year. The information that Cormack was getting from James John was clearly information that only somebody who had associations with the Beothuck would have known. By this time the Mi'kmaq and the Beothuck — those who had intermarried with them — all knew that the English were hunting the Red Indian people.

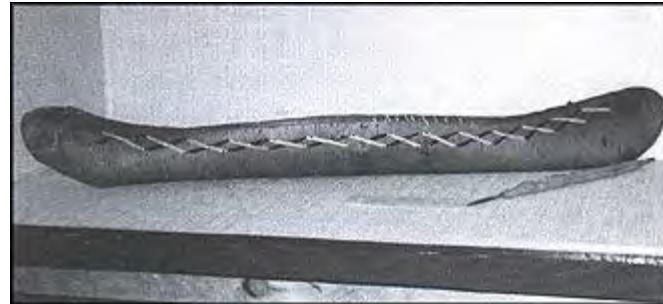
So, you find that when the people that are supposedly Mi'kmaq are asked by Englishmen what they are they'll say Mi'kmaq, they'll say Montagnais or they might say Naskaupi, but not Red Indian. There's no record I have seen that mentions Naskaupi being on the island. There's some record of Montagnais being on the west coast of the Island. James John told Cormack that he was a Mountaineer (Montagnais).

The John families are associated with Placentia Bay. It was in Placentia Bay that some the earliest contact took place between Mi'kmaqs and French. This was during the 1500s and 1600s. We believe the John family came from near Swift Current — a place called Piper's Hole.

There's no record of Europeans trading with Beothucks. Actually, the Mi'kmaq name for Beothuck is O-say-yana, which means the Northern People. When Cormack was on this trip he kept asking all the Mi'kmaq families he met, "Where are the Red Indians?" They probably said 'Pi taw', which means 'above here' . After that he starts calling them Beothucks. I think he confused a direction with the name of a people. Pi tawagk means 'the people above here . To an English person it sounds like 'Bee-da-wach'.

In 1610, John Guy came upon 'savages' at what is now Bull Arm. In his record of that encounter, Guy says he found a wigwam that was covered with canvas. Guy also said, "We saw a trail chopped up through the woods." He found iron items and tea kettles and things like that in this sailcloth-covered wigwam. He followed the trail from Bull Arm over to Placentia Bay and found a birch bark canoe, with French fishing gear inside. Obviously, these people have been trading with the French.

Guy didn't know a Mi'kmaq from a Cree from a Mohawk for that matter, and he never called the natives he met anything but savages. It's only later that Newfoundland historians began to put a different spin on it. So, when you read the history of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuck in Newfoundland, you're going to read a very Europeanized and very biased account. You later find Newfoundland historians calling people that Guy met Beothucks. On what grounds did they call them Beothucks? Well, Guy described the shape of a birch bark canoe belonging to the Indians he traded with at Bull Arm.



Model of a Birch Bark Canoe

These people signaled Guy to come ashore. They wanted to trade. So, obviously these people knew the Europeans had something they wanted and they had something the Europeans wanted, because they were waving skins at Guy.

So, Guy and his men go ashore to trade and they do trade. Of course, Guy can't understand Mi'kmaq, Cree, Beothuck or any other aboriginal language. All he's doing is looking at them and showing them things and they're looking at him and showing him things they want to trade.

Who are these 'savages'? Well, they have a wigwam that's covered with canvas, and they have a trail cut over to Placentia Bay. At the end of that trail there's a small birch bark canoe that's full of French fishing gear. They've got tea kettles and axes. Obviously, they've been trading with the French. There's no record of the Beothucks ever having any kind of trade with the French at Placentia. The only aborigines in Placentia Bay trading with the French were the Mi'kmaq.

The canoe that Guy describes sounds very much like the classic Beothuck canoe, with a crest at the center. The Mi'kmaq also made seagoing canoes that came up in the center. The Mi'kmaq canoes have more of a rounded center and the Beothucks appear to have more of a pointed center. Nobody's ever asked the question, "Couldn't it have been a combined Mi'kmaq-Beothuck extended family?".

Mary March told Bishop Fleming about a common village the Beothuck shared with the Mi'kmaq in St. George's Bay. This is also in Mi'kmaq oral history — that they lived with the Red Indians at St. George's Bay.

Halley also recorded stories he got from fishermen in the outports, particularly around Hall's Bay. That was supposed to be one of the last holdouts of the Beothucks. There was a family in Hall's Bay named Rowsells; they were supposed to be famous Indian killers. Anyway, in the early 1800s, these Indians disappeared. Several families appeared in Conne River at the same time as these people disappeared from Hall's Bay — the Jeddore, Joes and Pauls.

My research suggests that James John was probably a Beothuck who married into a Mi'kmaq family. There is also evidence that the Pauls were part Beothuck. This information can be found in Speck's book, called Micmac and Beothuck.

John Paul, who settled in Badger, died there in 1924. He was baptized in 1846 at Burgeo; that's where the Catholic priest was at the time. Speck was a famous American ethnologist who came to Newfoundland in 1914 to collect Mi'kmaq oral history and to investigate what happened to the Red Indians.

He interviewed John Paul and John Paul told him it was the English who killed the Beothucks. John Paul told Speck that his great-grandfather guided for Cartwright. Louis John, my wife's great-grandfather, whom Speck also interviewed, told Speck his grandfather had also been a guide for Cartwright.

That places the Paul and John families in central Newfoundland around the mid-1700s. So, they're guiding for Cartwright on his first trip up the Exploits River. According to John Paul and Louis John, the guides would go ahead of the English and warn the Red Indians the English were coming. That's why Cartwright never made contact with any Red Indians.

A couple of years before Speck came to Newfoundland, he met a woman named Santu in Massachusetts. She told him she was part Mi'kmaq and part Beothuck and that she was born near Red Indian Lake. So Speck gets real interested. There's a whole section in his book about her and what she told him. Santu was an old lady at that time, in 1912.

After reading Speck, I talked with the older Pauls at Badger about their grandfather, John Paul. I asked, "Was he an only child?"

"No," they said, "he had a brother named Ben and a sister named San — that was her nickname."

When John Paul's father died, their mother took their younger sister and went back to Nova Scotia. They told me they understand she married a Chief.

I said, "Okay, where are their children today?"

Ben lived on Wigwam Point, down near Peterview, and that is where all his children were raised. John lived in Badger and all the Pauls in Badger are descended from him.

Speck had asked John Paul, without telling him anything, "Did you know of a woman named Santu?"

John Paul said "Yes".

Speck asked, "What do you know about her?"

John Paul said, "She was part Beothuck and she left with her mother some time ago and went to Nova Scotia." He said that she married a Chief down in Yarmouth.

Speck already had this confirmed from Santu herself. Speck did not know and John Paul did not volunteer that Santu was his sister, but she must have been. It's too much of a coincidence that John Paul said that he had a sister whose nickname was San who left with her mother and married a Chief in Nova Scotia. This is identical to Santu's story.

Speck didn't make the connection that Santu was John Paul's sister, and he never asked him. But he did ask John Paul if Santu was part Beothuck. John Paul told him, "Yes, that's right."

Speck asked, "How did that happen?"

John Paul said, "The Mi'kmaq and Beothuck used to intermarry all the time."

Speck asked, "Why don't the English know about that?"

John Paul said, "Because we wouldn't tell them. They had a bounty on Beothucks."

I think the Joes and Jeddores who came from Halls Bay also had a Red Indian connection. The Johns had a Red Indian connection from the Placentia Bay area. Mi'kmaq names that came from Piper's Hole are John, Barrington, and Bernard. As the English moved into these areas the Mi'kmaq/Red Indian families moved to Bay d'Espoir.

By the time the English replaced the French in Placentia Bay, Piper's Hole had stopped being a Mi'kmaq community, as the natives had moved back into the interior.

Halls Bay was one of the last places in the northeast coast to be settled. When the English moved in there, Mi'kmaq/Red Indian families moved down to Bay d'Espoir. Bay d'Espoir was one of the last places on the Island that the English came into in the 1850s. There were also Mi'kmaq communities in Burgeo and St. Georges. When the English came there, the Mi'kmaq families moved to Bay d'Espoir.

There were different groups of Mi'kmaqs on the island of Newfoundland. You have a Burgeo-West Coast extended family. You have people between Burgeo and Bay du Nord on the south coast that are interrelated and intermarried — the Benoits and the Pulletts. They're in St. Alban's now. They came from Bay du Nord and intermarried with people from White Bear Bay and Grandy's Brook.

The Paul family were originally up in the country behind White Bear Bay. They intermarried with Red Indians and ended up going down Red Indian Lake, out through the watercourses of Halls Bay, back around the coast, down through Exploits Bay, and back up the Exploits River again. John Paul had wigwams at Badger, Hodges Hill and between Point Leamington and Wigwam Point.

The Joes and Benoits stayed on the south coast. There were also LeBows, now called Olivers, who lived in St. Georges. There was also an Englishman named Stride who married into the Bambo family in Conne River. There was also a Mi'kmaq reserve in the middle of Gambo; there were Joes and Pauls who lived there.

I just got a very interesting map from the Public Records Office in England. It shows that the Newfoundland Colonial Government set up a Mi'kmaq reserve in the Codroy Valley. Current maps show it as Roman Catholic Church land. I'm not sure of the family names on that reserve, but I think there were some Glodes , Stevens and Georges. I don't know what happened to these people. There are Glodes and Stevens in Deer Lake today.

The Stevens also lived at Halls Bay too, but instead of moving to Conne River, they moved to Deer Lake. There were some Jeddorees who moved from Halls Bay to Deer Lake as well. There are some Mi'kmaq families still in Deer Lake.

There are Barringtons in Badger who came originally from Piper's Hole. My wife's been doing a family tree. The Johns and Bernards intermarried some time ago, before they moved to Conne River.

Any book written by a white Newfoundland historian about the Mi'kmaqs or Red Indians is probably not accurate. There's a prejudice against the idea that the Mi'kmaq were here before Europeans came.

Newfoundland archaeologists say that Mi'kmaq people couldn't cross the Gulf, but that's been proven wrong. There's evidence that Indians were using the Magdalen Islands 6,000 years ago. The Magdalens are the same distance from Cape Breton as Cape Ray is. If those ancient people could get to the Magdalens, they certainly could have gotten to Newfoundland as well.

According to Mi'kmaq oral history recorded by Speck in 1914, the Mik'maq came to Newfoundland before the Red Indians and intermarried with them. The Mi'kmaq elders Speck talked to called these ancestors who first came to Newfoundland 'the ancients.'

The Mi'kmaq often named places based on geographic features. The Mi'kmaq name for Newfoundland is Taqamakuk, which means 'where the wind blows the waves over to the far shore. The Mi'kmaq name for Conne River is Miawpukek, which means 'fast current in the middle. The biggest river coming into Bay d'Espoir is the Conne River and it's in the middle of the bay.

The Mi'kmaq had a knack for living off the land. Certain families used certain areas. They had their family territories for hunting, fishing, trapping and berry-gathering. They knew where every resource was that they had to depend on to live.

A family established a claim to an area after using it for seven generations. When you had used an area for seven generations, then you had a right to exclude others from it or to give it away or to invite people into it.

There was a site down on the south coast, the Paul family territory. It's right on a big caribou crossing. We found old wigwam sites, probably from the late 1800s or early 1900s. A short distance away we found older campsites with stone arrowheads. The Newfoundland archaeologists who worked for me said that it was a coincidence that the two sites were so close together.

I don't think it was a coincidence to go and camp at a place where you knew the caribou are going to be at certain times of the year. That's the way those old people lived. They would go in the country in the winter and they would go where the caribou were. They would stay near them, because that's what they lived off in the wintertime.

It's hard to get non-aboriginal people in Newfoundland to believe that the Mi'kmaq were in Newfoundland hundreds of years before the early Europeans came over, even though the evidence for that is growing. We met with some Montagnais on the North Shore of Quebec and they said, "We have Mi'kmaq ancestors."

I said, "How can you have Mi'kmaq ancestors?"

They said, "The Mi'kmaq used to come across to the North Shore 150 years ago and they married some of our women."

The old people who were in their seventies and eighties when I talked to them in 1970 said the Mi'kmaq have always been in Newfoundland. So did the Mi'kmaq/Beothuck elders that Speck spoke to in 1914.

Newfoundland Mi'kmaq history has been misused by English people to fit and justify their claim as the discoverers, colonizers and settlers of Newfoundland. This myth is used to rebut any kind of Mi'kmaq land claims. Their theory is that the Mi'kmaq killed all the Beothucks before the English came here and when they came it was an empty land. That is what I call the English Mi'kmaq Mercenary Myth.