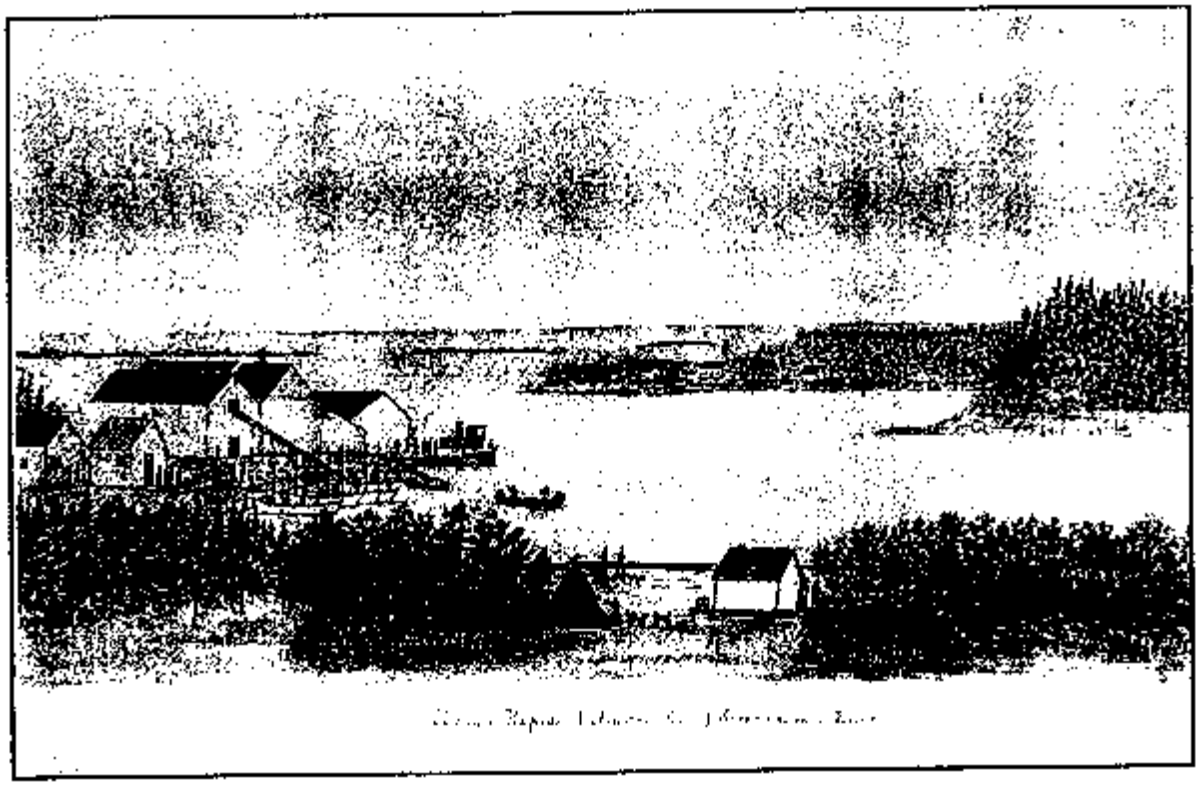
Grand Rapids Stories

Volume 2



Grand Rapids, 1891
Watercolour by James Settee

Contributed by Joseph Buck, Absalom Cook, William and Agnes McKay, Margaret Olafson and Audrey Hobbs, Bill Sallows, and Gladys Scott

**Collected by Jennifer Cook and Raymond Beaumont,
edited by Raymond M. Beaumont**

**Frontier School Division No. 48
1997**

Cover Photograph: **Grand Rapids, (Robinsons Fishery) Saskatchewan River,** Watercolour by James Settee, 6 October 1891. (Courtesy Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Manitoba Archives, Grand Rapids 22, N1290)

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When a person dies, a little bit of history is gone forever, unless someone has taken the time to record it. The following stories are an attempt to capture that history. They invite the reader to open a window into the past, and take a step back in time in order to gain new perspectives on life in Grand Rapids today. Representing only a fraction of the rich resources that are available within the community, they challenge us to record our memories - old stories, major events, and family connections - so that our children may pass on the rich legacy of their forefathers and mothers to the generations to come.

Contributed by Joseph Buck, Absalom Cook, William and Agnes McKay, Margaret Olafson and Audrey Hobbs, Bill Sallows, and Gladys Scott

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Acknowledgements

This is the second of two booklets dedicated to the history of Grand Rapids through the voices of its people. As such, it represents a continuation of Frontier School Division's commitment to the creation of community and Native Studies materials, so that by understanding the past, students may be better equipped to face the future.

Many thanks to Liz Pranteau, library specialist, and the Grand Rapids School Committee for providing the initial stimulus to get this project off the ground, and to researchers Jennifer Cook and Raymond Beaumont, for conducting interviews and preparing typed transcripts for editing and inclusion in *Grand Rapids Stories, Vol. 2.* Thanks also to Adele LaFrenière for providing editorial advice, Lee Heroux for his photographs, and to Raymond Beaumont for editing and layout. Also to Manitoba Education and Training, Compensatory Grant Programme, and Government of Canada, Human Resource Development, for supplying the funds necessary to complete this project.

Finally, a special thank-you to Joseph Buck, Absalom Cook, William and Agnes McKay, Margaret Olafson and Audrey Hobbs, Bill Sallows, and Gladys Scott for kindly sharing their histories and perceptions of life in Grand Rapids. Their stories provide a window on the past which has many lessons for our youth. By learning them, they can set a course for the future with greater confidence and hope of success.

Cam Giavedoni
June, 1997

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Introduction

Preparation for *Grand Rapids, Volume 2* involved considerable contact and follow-up visits with elders Joe Buck, Absalom Cook, William and Agnes McKay, Margaret Olafson and her sister Audrey Hobbs, Bill Sallows, and Gladys Scott. It was a delightful experience as each brought a unique and informed perspective to the history of Grand Rapids in this century.

I shall ever remember one meeting I had with Margaret Olafson at the old Campbell Store. I had gone to see her to arrange an interview, but also to tap her knowledge of Cree to help corroborate a story I had heard from one of her distant relatives.[1] Margaret is descended from a Cree woman named *Nahoway*. According to family legend, *Nahoway* received her name during the famine of 1782, when the French sailed into Hudson Bay and burned the Hudson's Bay Company posts at Churchill and York Factory. The provisions left behind at Churchill were insufficient to sustain the Homeguard Cree throughout the winter, and they feared to travel inland because of the smallpox epidemic raging to the south. Desperate, they headed for York Factory, unaware that it had been burned as well.[2] By the time they reached the fort, they were tired and hungry, and one little girl was so cold she could barely speak above a whisper. To commemorate the event, her family gave her a new name - *Nahoway* - which meant, "sounding afar off, faint." It was this meaning I sought to confirm.

Satisfied that she knew little about her roots, I told Margaret the name and asked if she had any idea what it meant. She looked off introspectively for a moment, then turned back to me and said, "You wouldn't say it that way in Cree."

"How would you say it then?" I asked.

Without hesitating, she replied, "It might have been *ay-nah-hah-wait*."

"And its meaning?" I queried.

She paused momentarily, then suggested, "One person's voice in the distance."

My hair literally stood up, as I realized she had confirmed in less than a minute an incident which occurred over two hundred years ago.

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[1] Bernice Hilts of Selkirk provided this version of the family legend.

[2] Fortunately Humphrey Marten, the post manager, was able to persuade the French to leave provisions behind at York Factory, too. These probably saved the lives of Nahoway and her family.

Another memorable incident occurred in the Bucks' kitchen, when I was reviewing with Joe the written transcript of his taped interview. Dora was listening in the living room, as I read "Not one fight in them fifty-three years," in reference to his marriage. "That's a lie," was Dora's quick response, and Joe had to acknowledge that maybe there had been a quarrel or two.

Absalom Cook was originally interviewed by Jennifer Cook, and the only one of our informants who undertook to write his own history. In follow-up interviews, we worked together amiably to ensure his story was recorded as accurately as possible.

William and Agnes McKay maintained a quiet dignity throughout their interview. I was particularly impressed by William's gentle, soft-spoken demeanor, and obvious sense of humour.

Whenever I think of Audrey Hobbs, I see a young woman sitting in a chair beside a dugout bank in Southern Manitoba. Now that was a deep yearning for the waters of home!

Gladys Scott I will remember for her strength in adversity, *and* the number of grandchildren she has, several of whom surrounded her kitchen table as I stopped there to review her story with her.

Finally, Bill Sallows brought a perspective to the discussion of hydro-electric power development at Grand Rapids that was both informed and philosophical. His interview helped to illuminate some of the grey areas in the continuing debate about the Grand Rapids Dam and its effects. His ideas about future economic opportunities in the region were provocative indeed.

The interviews illustrate the wealth of information that can be obtained from oral history. Only a few stories have been recorded, but hopefully they paint a picture of life in Grand Rapids in this century. Perhaps they will encourage others to record their own histories as well.

Raymond M. Beaumont
June 1997

Teacher's Guide

A reading must for any teacher planning a community study of Grand Rapids is Martha McCarthy's *Papers in Manitoba History, Report Number 1, Grand Rapids, Manitoba*, Manitoba culture, Heritage and Recreation, Historic Resources. An excellent overview of Grand Rapids, it might be assigned selectively to students in the higher grades. The reading level, however, is too difficult for most younger students.

Grand Rapids Stories, Vol. 2 is recommended for use in Social Studies classes from Grades 3 and up. Indexed for ease-of-use, it provides much useful information on Native and northern themes. Below are suggestions for integrating it into the provincial Social Studies curriculum. (See *Social Studies: K-12 Overview*. Manitoba Education 1985.)

Grades 3 *Grand Rapids Stories, Vol. 2* can be used to supplement Unit 2 of *Communities Today*, which calls for a study of a Manitoba Community. It supplies the teacher with information relative to history, needs and wants, and cooperation and conflict, all themes emphasized in the provincial curriculum at this level. Selections from the text might also be read to the students.

Grade 5 Unit 3 of *Life in Canada Today* is entitled "The North." *Grand Rapids Stories, Vol. 2*, with its emphasis on the impact of the dam, has direct reference to "influences of modern technology and resource development on the people and the region," noted on page 55 of the provincial overview. It provides the teacher with information to deal with 1. Overview of the North and 2. Life Today, pages 55-56.

Grade 6 *Grand Rapids Stories, Vol. 2* could be used in Unit 1 of *Life in Canada's Past*, especially Subsection 1, Origins and Settlement Patterns of Native Peoples. It could also be used in Unit IV, Subsection 2, Relocation of Native Peoples onto Reserves, and in Unit V, Life in Canada during the Twentieth Century.

Grade 7 Unit 5 of *Spaceship Earth* deals with "Human Threats to the Natural Balances and Cycles in the Environment." The environmental impact of hydroelectric power development discussed by the contributors to *Grand Rapids Stories, Vol. 2*, might be useful here.

Grade 8 Unit 4 of *People Through the Ages* deals with life in the modern world. Grand Rapids could be discussed as an example of life in a contemporary western industrial or developing society, depending on whether it is perceived as a first world or third world society. See pages 79-80 in the provincial overview.

Grade 9 *Grand Rapids Stories, Vol. 2* could be used in Canadian Studies, Unit II, Canadian Identity. For instance, what does it mean to be a Canadian for those with a history like Grand Rapids? Has multiculturalism been a positive or negative force locally? Can a community like Grand Rapids contribute to the enrichment of the country as a whole? *Grand Rapids Stories, Vol. 2* contains information on the impact locally of political and economic decisions that were made elsewhere. Did the fact the community was primarily Treaty Indian have any effect on those decisions? These are questions that press students to consider who they are, how they are distinct from other people, and what impact their identity can have on their own lives and on those in society as a whole.

Grade Ten North America: A Geographic Perspective is designed to inform students about the interaction of physical geography and human activity within a North American and regional context. It also provides opportunities for students to examine current, local issues of concern in each region. For example, Unit III, The North, has as its central theme: resource development and management. Grand Rapids Dam might be a focal point for study in Section 2, "The Forest, Geological, Water, and Wildlife Resource Base." Important questions are raised in Section 3, "The Peoples of the North," which could be answered in the context of Grand Rapids. Section 4, "Current Issues Within the Region" can also be studied with Grand Rapids in mind.

Grade Eleven *Grand Rapids Stories* could be used in Canada: A Social and Political History, Unit V. Here students could explore the influence of the fur trading companies on the people of Grand Rapids. Or the impact of the reserve system. What are the pros and cons of treaty and non-treaty status? Also, how did the depression affect the community? What action did the people take locally to respond to it? And so on.

Grand Rapids, 1921
Grand Rapids 7 (Courtesy Manitoba Archives, Provinical Archives of Manitoba)

Grand Rapids Stories

The following stories are based on taped interviews conducted between the summers of 1995-96 and spring of 1997 with Grand Rapids residents, Joe Buck, Absalom Cook, William and Agnes McKay, Margaret Olafson and Audrey Hobbs, Bill Sallows, and Gladys Scott. Although some editing has been required to weave these interviews into a cohesive whole, every effort has been made to retain the 'voice' of each contributor through the inclusion of many direct quotations. The aim has been to record the stories "in their own words" as much as possible.

Joe Buck (Courtesy Lee Heroux)

Reserve Houses and St. John's Anglican Church, 1921
Grand Rapids 4 (Courtesy Manitoba Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Joseph Francis Buck

Joseph Francis Buck,[1] the son of Mary Buck, was born, 8 May 1921, at The Pas, but he was raised by foster parents at Grand Rapids.

> My dad I don't know. He was not around when I was around....I was sent to Grand Rapids when I was two months old....There was a Turner couple here...Elijah and Mary....They didn't have no boys. I suppose that was the main reason they adopted me....Their daughters were all dead. They had one boy; that one died, too. That's why I'm around. They all died with TB, and I didn't get that sickness. Now you tell me why? I guess it could be the different blood. That's the only reason I'm around, I guess. I had the German, and they had the Indian.
>
> I was raised on the reserve and I don't get nothing from the reserve. No treaty money, nothing....My mother is still treaty. I don't know why I shouldn't go to the treaty. Maybe I should try. My brother got into the treaty.[2]

Even though he was raised away from The Pas, he kept contact with his mother.

> I knew that one [his mother] very well. I used to go up there when I was seventeen, eighteen years old and visit with her, but we used to go there visiting her....in The Pas right by the lumber company. She was easy to find.

Joe remembers many things from his childhood.

> We used to have these long scoops. Scoops, from here to the door....Everybody. In order to eat fish, you had to use those scoops....[They were made of] birch and spruce. We had this birch and spruce around, and then the spruce handle, and of course you have the net around the birch. [The netting came] from the store and the line seaming twine. That stuff we would buy. We used to take that [scoop] to the rapids and scoop some big whitefish....That was one of the main bread and butter....You should see the fish then. Just sitting. And there's nothing now....They were delicious them days.

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[1] Joseph was baptised, 23 Jan 1927, at St. John's Anglican Church by Rev. R. B. Horsefield. His sponsors were Chief and Mrs. Cornelius Turner. At his confirmation 16 July 1939, his birthday was given as 8 May 1921, and his full name as Joseph Francis. (Diocese of Brandon, Register of Baptisms, Confirmations, Burials and Marriages, St. James Church, Grand Rapids, 1915-1940)

[2] Besides his brother, Aaron Engen of Cormorant, Joe's sister Dorothy Sanderson is also in treaty, but his other sister, Mary McKenzie of Thompson, is not. Joe was accepted into The Pas Band in February 1997 and immediately began the process for transfer into the Grand Rapids Band.

Not like what we're getting now. They have to come through the oil first, and filth and dirt. All that dirt that goes down from the powerhouse. I worked there for three years. I know all about it. They have to go through the dirt.

We dried the fish, and we made oil, fish oil for vitamin. Dried fish, oh, they're excellent! What you do is go to the rack for the fish and eat it. You don't have to cook it.

Joe recalls preparing the fish for the drying process.

All you have to do is cut them and then hang them - strips about an inch wide and then they would dry quick that way. You hang them over the racks. The sun dries them, and when they're dry you only have to get them and eat. Right off the rack.

Fish was also prepared by smoking it.

We did quite a bit of smoke. We still smoke fish...whitefish...four or five hours [using] White Poplar....It has to be in the [smoke]house.

That fish would not keep too long.

[You] keep them until they're smoked. The thing is with smoked fish like that, you have to eat them right away. You can't keep a smoked whitefish. Dried fish you can keep them forever.

Dried fish can also be pounded into a powder.

You have to wrap them [dried fish] before you pound them. Canvas. Roll them in canvas and pound it with an ax...turn it into powder. Then put that fish oil you make and sprinkle it on that...and salt....You eat it like that. There's your dinner.

Fish were dried all year and stored in boxes.

We used to store them that way. In them days, there's no choice, but dried. We didn't have the refrigerator.

Besides whitefish, there was also pickerel, but it was generally sold.

Buyers is crazy over pickerel. Pickerel, pickerel, pickerel. They don't want whitefish; they want pickerel.

As for sturgeon,

We don't sell sturgeon. We keep it. That's the best food this side of heaven....Throw it in the boiling water with salt....According to doctors that's the best medicine you can eat is sturgeon.

Fish oil came from sturgeon.

> When you boil them, the oil comes up to the surface, and you scoop it out. Boil it a little bit more, and there's your oil. We keep all that...in jars.

Besides fish, local people used to rely on their gardens to provide food. Joe recalls that the Turners had one.

> They have all kinds of garden. Carrots, turnips, cabbages, onions. Everybody had a garden. But now when you put a big garden out, some crazy boys destroy it. It's too bad....They'd store all their vegetables in cellars. They used to have cellars outside, slanted hill. That's where they used to have their cellars, so the water can't get at the vegetables. Put some hay first, then the vegetables on top. That would keep them all winter.

Mrs. Turner also picked and stored berries for winter use.

> Usually raspberries, cranberries, all those berries...just put them away in containers.

Joe remembers attending school when he was a boy.

> There was a school right by the Chief Beardy Centre. Where it is now. That's where I graduate...Grade Five. [It was] peaceful, no fighting [and only] fifteen or twenty [students]. My first teacher, I went to school to him for one day, and he got heart [attack] and he died. Mr. Wyatt was his name, from England. He had a dog team, and his heart was so bad that he died on the way from here where they were taking him to The Pas to the hospital. That's where he died. He was hurt so bad. Then Mrs. Wyatt took over that winter. And then some more teachers came. Jim Armstrong from England, that was the best one. He was a very good teacher. Mr. Mason, Mr. Donaghy, Mr. Horsefield, and some others. They are all from England....They didn't take nothing from Canada. Everything come from England.

School was quite different from today. For instance, whoever was first at the school in the morning lit the wood stove.

> All of us. We all helped. Whoever had the strength to help. Of course, we had to throw on the beans on top to cook for dinner. The Department buy us the food - beans, biscuits, some other stuff. We had a hot lunch, big meal, all you can eat.
>
> We used to have these exercise books and a pencil. We used to have these readers, one, two, three grade readers.

Although he loved school, Joe could not stay after he finished Grade Five.

I had to work because I have to live, and that's the main reason I quit school.

He was only about thirteen, when he went out on a trapline near Grand Rapids.

It was for everybody, that line. It was right around Grand Rapids...close, maybe ten, fifteen miles. The dogs wouldn't take long to get over there. It was for everybody, all the married couples. So I had to join them.

Joe had a dog sleigh he made himself and several dogs he trained. In his words, "You had to be independent to make a dollar." The fur he was after was "lynx, fox, coyotes, minks, all kinds of foxes, silver, red, cross," and prices were high.

Pretty high in them days, and the fisher was about four hundred them days. You were a millionaire when [you] got [one]. What we used to do in them days, when a person got lots of fur, lots of income, the others came to them to get something to eat from that guy. I think it was a good thing. People shared. Whoever had the most income, you went to him, and they get something to eat. Nobody gets hungry. This seems to be broken up, but I don't know why. Nobody seems to want to help each other no more.

Joe made sure he did not have to rely on others too often. Not only did he trap for furs, he also fished for a living when still a boy.

When I first went to The Pas I had a little bit of money coming. That week I had three minks and a red fox. I took everything to The Pas to buy whatever, a net and fishing gear I could buy. I went to The Pas with dog team. I think I had two or three nets and then I started here.

The adults of the community allowed him to fish with them, "right out here. Same place we go today...five or six miles...east, out on the lake." He had been taught by the Turners how to put his nets under the ice, and once they were in place, he checked them, "every day if possible, weather permitting." He would travel by dog sleigh from Grand Rapids, using dogs he had obtained in the community and trained himself.

I had seven in one team. It was quite a bit....I raised them and taught them how to go and how to work with me, and I fed them.

Ordinarily he would take his dogs back to Grand Rapids each day, but not always.

Sometimes we had to stay. If the storm catches us out there, we had to get in the shelter. We used to have little tents. They call them cabooses nowadays.

He ate some of the fish he caught, but most were stored in his tent until he was able to sell them to the fish buyers for cash.

> People came from Mafeking, some other places. They came down here, some of them with a truck, some with a team - team of horses. It was a lot of fun. A buyer would come and buy your fish right where you're fishing. We were overjoyed.

Even though he was an independent fisherman and trapper, he did not forget the Turners, who had taught him how to make his way in life.

> They were [good people]. Easy to get along with. When they got older and they can't work, I took care of them like they took care of me.

Joe continued to trap and fish. He is still winter fishing, although techniques have changed somewhat.

> I keep doing it the same way until I got these machines. Skidoos. Nowadays they are using trucks.

There have been other changes in Joe's life besides the technological ones associated with fishing. Fifty-three years ago [1996], he married Dora Cook, daughter to Solomon Cook, a commercial fisherman. He was just twenty-one years of age.

> There was a Christmas concert one time across the river; then this pretty girl keep an eye on me. Of course, I was young in them days. All of a sudden, she was close by. I could reach her hand. That's my wife. Not one fight in them fifty-three years.[3] Sharon Carstairs that time we celebrated our fiftieth anniversary, Sharon Carstairs sent that [letter of congratulations] to us.

After Joe and Dora were married in the local Anglican Church, the Cooks had a reception for them.

> We danced at their house, and we ate at her brother's house. A celebration.

Joe and Dora lived for a time in her mother's house before moving to their present location overlooking the Saskatchewan River. About forty years ago Joe purchased the old log house, which still stands today right next to their modern bungalow.

> Mr. McKay, Valentine McKay, he raised his family in that house. All his boys and girls. He raised his family. That's why I bought it from him. I raised my family in

[3] Dora, of course, has a different story. According to her, Joe did the chasing, since she was "only sixteen and didn't know any better." And never a fight in all their married life? "That's a lie," is Dora's response, but both she and Joe agree that they never came to blows.

that house....Three children. One's a registered nurse and [one is] a stenographer, and...my son is a commercial fisherman.

To support his family, Joe continued fishing in both summer and winter. Over the years, he has seen a great many changes.

We just had a little boat in those days, little lumber boats. Not what we have now. It's all fiberglass. [And] motors, Johnson motors, five horse power. Nowadays they have ninety horse power....We had such and such a line. The government set that one. We can't go over this line. You fish in here. Don't go over that line; you fish in here. That's the way the government operates in them days. Now the whole lake is open. We had one big quota for everybody them days; now we have an individual [quota].

The government watched the fishermen closely, and anyone caught fishing outside his area was fined. Only local fishermen were allowed to fish in the Grand Rapids area at that time.

In those days nobody was suppose to come from outside. Grand Rapids fishermen, that's it. [Now] they can come.

Although Joe was a commercial fisherman, he continued to trap as well. Along with others from Grand Rapids, Easterville, and Cormorant, he became involved in muskrat ranching. The government dammed a low-lying area

Thirty miles west of Easterville. It was all level then....They flood this area so the muskrat would grow. The rats were there because they had enough water. The water was there....It was all flooded and full of muskrat. That's why we used to go from here and trap muskrat....All the trappers from Grand Rapids. This is the time of year [January/February] they used to go....They stopped the water. Not like nowadays. We could still go, but the water keeps going up and down and then the rats are not going to stay the same....Sometimes dry and sometimes flood....The level is never the same because they [Hydro] want the water going up and down. Just forget about the level. Then the rats they suffer after that. The water keeps going up and down.

With the building of the Grand Rapids Dam, the muskrat ranching was ruined, but compensation has never been paid to the trappers for the losses they sustained.

Cormorant had a little bit of payout from that deal, and Easterville, but Grand Rapids never got a penny yet, not yet anyway....That was the end of that one, and there's nothing paid out. For us, we didn't get a penny.

If Grand Rapids trappers were to get a compensation package for the losses they sustained, it would amount to somewhat over $500,000, plus all the accumulated interest over the years on that sum of money. Each trapper based his claim on the average number of muskrats he got annually over a period of five or six years times the price he would have been paid for each muskrat pelt. According to Joe, their appeals for compensation have been unheeded, and as of 1997, they had not received a penny [See page 13 for details].

The construction of the Grand Rapids Dam ruined muskrat ranching, and it appears to have seriously affected commercial fishing as well. Joe still fishes, but he gave all his equipment and licenses to his son Robert, who has his own opinions on the industry.

> The quota system is okay, but the fishing is tough. The pickerel is gone....I think the problem with the pickerel is the rapids. It's dry now. No pickerel spawning in the river or anything. They're gone. All we get is whitefish, [and] they're smaller.

Robert does not think a commercial fisherman can make a decent living at the present time because of

> The shortage of pickerel. There's a big price difference there. You get $3.00 a pound for pickerel, and you get 42 cents a pound for whitefish. These last two seasons [1995-1996], the net income for most of the fishermen was only two or three thousand dollars...because of the lack of pickerel.

The outlay for commercial fishing can be expensive. Robert explains.

> For used boats and used motors, about $12,000.00. You need at least forty nets at $100.00 a piece with no corks and leads in them yet. Looking at a complete picture, you're looking at about $160.00 a net.

With such a high initial investment, and low prices for whitefish, it takes the fishermen a long time to pay off their start-up costs. Some get into even more debt.

> We have fishermen in the co-op now, who owe about $20,000.00 for the last three years because all they're doing is paying interest.

When Joe started out, "There was no interest." Fishermen bought their equipment "from the cheapest place" and they paid for it "right there when you get it." Commercial fishing provided

> Good income, because when you pay for your nets, that's all yours....Boat in them days not much [to buy] or you would make your own....[The motor a] Champion or a Johnson. When you go fishing, that's all yours. The fish is all yours. You have the right to sell any fish.

When Joe started fishing his outlay was well below a thousand dollars, while his income was over a thousand dollars a year. Now his son has an outlay of $26,000 and a net return sometimes as low as $3000.00. Joe concludes they were

> Better off in them days, but we have to do this now to get any work. You have to have help from the government now. [The quota is determined] per fishermen, per area. Yep, it's pretty basic. Once you fish your quota; that's it. You leave the lake.

Joe has ideas on changes that could improve things.

> I guess the first thing is to get more pickerel. Spawning beds. That's what we're aiming at. We're talking to Hydro.

When the dam was built, no provision was made for a fish ladder, and Joe feels the hatchery has not met expectations.

> The fish hatchery here is supposed to serve the community, but it's never ever done that.

After the dam was built, high levels of mercury were reported for the lake. Joe was working at the dam in the powerhouse at that time, and it still bothers him that recreational fishermen were allowed to fish, when the people of Grand Rapids were not.

> Sidney Green, he was a Natural Resource minister. That's the time they shut down the lake because of mercury. The commercial fishermen couldn't even eat the fish, but Sidney Green allowed it, that the sport fishermen can go and kill the fish and eat it. What makes me mad was when I was with Hydro them days, I was [on] the operating staff, twenty-four hours, then some guys used to come from Winnipeg and [use] those scoops. The pickerel were sick right by the cable, and I used to go look at them, for God's sake. Scoop those fish, dump into their car, and we're not suppose to eat them. And they took them away to Winnipeg and fillet them. That's what they did, when Sidney Green was head of that stuff.

The dam is still a bone of contention, as far as Joe is concerned.

> No such a thing as meeting. That's out. They [government] just went ahead and built the bridge, road, and the dam.

> There was quite a bit of work, but look at the fish....Right away, they wrecked the fishing. Completely wrecked the fishing. The fish in them days was just loads...take them to Winnipeg and fillet them, and we are not supposed to eat them.

The fish could no longer travel down the rapids to Lake Winnipeg from Cedar Lake,

> The fish, they're trapped in there now. Where else do they go? They have to stay there and spawn.

And from Lake Winnipeg to Cedar Lake,

> No fish can go up there. It's impossible. That much they told me. I was there for three years. In those propellers, no fish can go through there.

According to Joe, the people complained among themselves, "but that didn't do any good." In the meantime, the fish began to disappear, especially Joe's favourite, the sturgeon, and even the few they caught didn't taste like they had in the past.

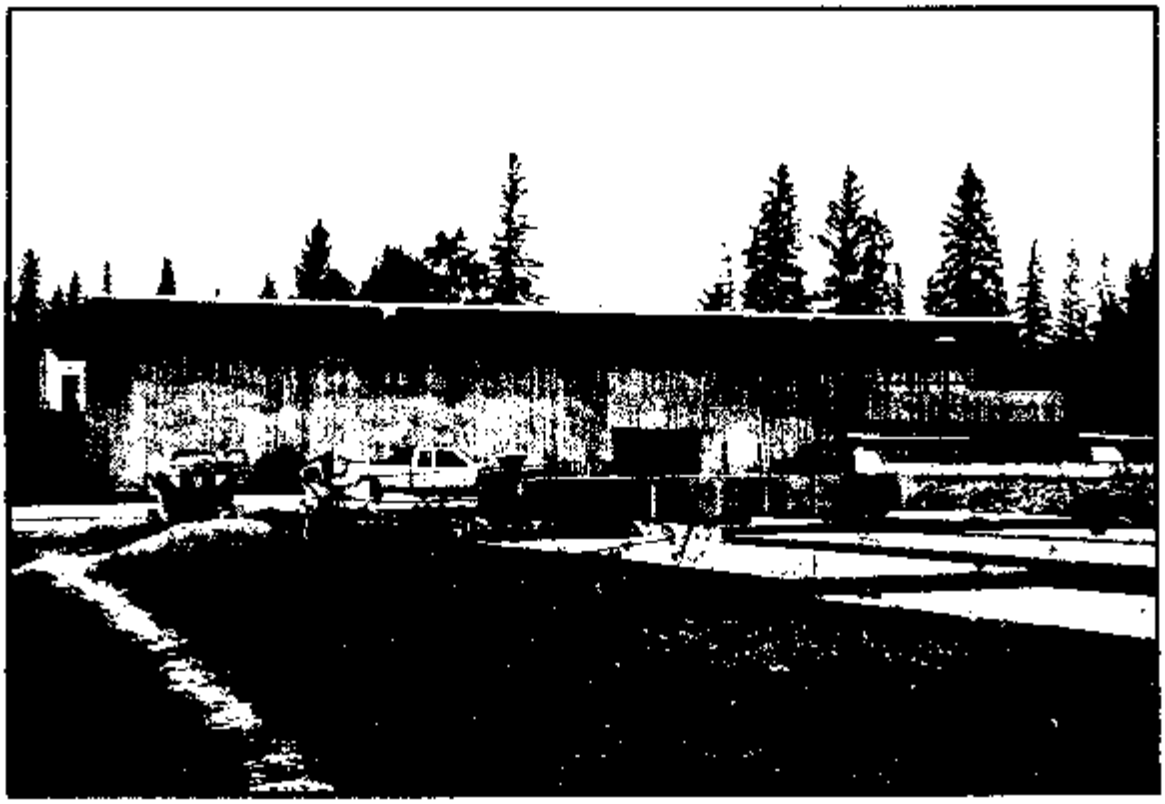
> I had one sturgeon two years ago. One sturgeon. I caught it back here. I put it in the boat. My wife cooked it at 3:00 p.m., and we couldn't even eat it. It was tasteless. Nothing. No taste to it whatever. I had to throw it in the garbage.
>
> As I told you before, they go through oil, filth, and dirt. I was there [working for Hydro] for three and a half years, and I was there emptying those things. I'm saying that, of course; I was there.

Joe continues to be pessimistic about the future of the fishery. Not only are the fish smaller than they were in the past, they no longer taste the same. His son Robert sums up the current situation.

> They only open the spillway a little bit, and it's not enough for the pickerel to spawn. We got some of their documents, and their materials. The spillway, there's a structural problem there. That's why they won't open it. I'm involved in negotiation with Hydro and the fishermen. I'm president of the fishing co-op here. So we're trying to get the pickerel spawning back again, but Hydro puts up a strong argument. Now we found there's a structural problem there. That's why they won't open the spillway. We just found that out about four weeks ago.

One wonders what additional information Grand Rapids citizens will discover as they struggle to restore their fishery. In recent years, attention has been directed more and more to the often arbitrary and heavy-handed measures governments

take to push through major projects like dam construction. Massive undertakings, like those of James Bay and South Indian Lake, have received a great deal of public attention, and many questions have been raised concerning them. Of particular importance to the people of Grand Rapids are those related to the environment and local economic control. For instance, were the proper environmental studies done? Did anyone in authority consider the impact the dam was going to have on the local trapping and fishing economies? Were local people involved in decision-making in any meaningful way, or was their acquiescence obtained by manipulation and misinformation? Why, when it became evident that trapping had been ruined by rising water levels, did the government not compensate local trappers on an individual basis for the losses they sustained? According to Joe Buck, they have never received a cent. Such questions can be embarrassing to large crown corporations, private companies, and provincial governments, but they need to be asked until satisfactory answers are provided. Oldtimers like Joe Buck can sound the alarm, but it falls on the shoulders of the younger generation to continue the struggle.



Grand Rapids Fish Hatchery (Courtesy Lee Heroux)

The Grand Rapids Trappers' Compensation Claim

As late as 1997, the Grand Rapids trappers had received no compensation for the flooding of their muskrat marshes by the damming of the Grand Rapids. Below is a list of the names of these trappers, the number of muskrats they caught, and the loss each sustained at an average price of $6.03 per muskrat.

Name of Trapper	Number of Muskrats	Value of Muskrats
Buck, Joseph	2795	$16,844
Campbell, Albert	842	$ 5,074
Chartier, Henry	2281	$13,746
Cook, Ben	1198	$ 7,220
Cook, Bill	750	$ 4,520
Cook, Dan	4252	$25,625
Cook, John	1195	$ 7,202
Cook, Norman	2168	$13,065
Cook, Russell	763	$ 4,598
Cook, Solomon	2496	$15,054
Ducharme, Adolpheus	2252	$13,572
Ferland, Donald	1050	$ 6,328
Ferland, Stanley	1745	$10,516
Ferland, William	3102	$18,694
Hudson, Roderick	2182	$13,150
Johnson, Eigill	200	$ 1,205
Lavallee, Roland	1248	$ 7,521
McKay, Colin	1305	$ 7,865
McKay, Ferguson	1205	$ 7,262
McKay, Norman	300	$ 1,808
McKay, William	2055	$12,384
Mercredie, Alex	2040	$12,294
Mercredie, George	3405	$20,520
Mercredie, Isidore	4355	$26,245
Packo, Ben	750	$ 4,520
Packo, Gabriel	1150	$ 6,930
Pranteau, Andrew	1474	$ 8,883
Pranteau, Henry	2409	$14,518
Sinclair, Esau	1656	$ 9,980
Sinclair, Robert	2083	$12,553
Sinclair, Lawrence	4375	$26,366
Sinclair, Norman	980	$ 5,906
Sinclair, Stanley Jr.	410	$ 2,471
Total		$364,441

Cook Alpheus	3285	$19,797
Cook Dan B.	79	$476
Cook, Hugh	300	$1,808
Cook, Neil	4504	$27,143
Cook, Peter	3702	$22,310
Ferland, John	1875	$11,300
Garrioch, Reginald	1690	$10,185
Guiboche, Larry	325	$1,959
Leask, Joe	1500	$9,040
McKay, John	3298	$19,875
McKay Morris	1785	$10,757
Packo, A. J.	3331	$20,074
Pranteau, Gorcan	2746	$16,549
		$171,273

Absalom Cook (Courtesy Lee Heroux)

Absalom Cook

Absalom Cook's history began in the first quarter of this century at Grand Rapids.[4] Born 10 April 1923 to Neil Cook and Katie Turner, with her death in 1929, he was raised by his grandparents.

> I can only remember from 1930, but I'm trying to write what I remember since, from year [to year]. I only remember my mother a little, because she died when I was only five years old. After she died, I was raised by my grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Turner.

They lived along the river on the Grand Rapids Reserve, and his grandfather's brothers lived nearby.

> They were five brother[s]. I remember them good. The oldest one['s] name was John, James, [then] Elijah, Albert, and my grandpa, Cornelius. And Absalom, he was the youngest. The three of them lived just across where we got our house. I remember all four of the brothers. They used to come and visit at grandpa's. We lived where they got the swing. They used to take turns telling stories. And before they go home they were saying Grace or Prayer.

Absalom remembers that his uncles told the old legends, including the one about Wesakayjack and the shut-eye dance, when Loon warned the other waterfowl about the danger they were in. They also told stories about the weetigo, stories which frightened Absalom and his friends, because they thought they were true. The old uncles took turns. One would finish a story, and another would start the next one. This is how they used to entertain their grandchildren and friends in the days when there were no movies or television. Usually the stories were told in the winter months, because, as Absalom explains it, "they were busy in the summer."

Grandfather Cornelius was chief, but he also worked as a trapper during the winters at Morrison Lake, or Crawduck Lake, as it used to be called. Besides carrots and other vegetables, they grew lots of potatoes during the summer, and in the fall stored them in a large hole covered with hay, so that they would have them available all winter. Life in Grand Rapids was very different in other ways, too.

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[4] Absalom Cook recorded his own written history, which has been transcribed as faithfully as possible to the original text. Additional information, based on interviews conducted in August 1996, has been added where appropriate.

Houses were made of logs and partially insulated by a layer of mud-like clay, which was repaired and painted each fall.

> The men they make their own lime to whiten their house in the fall.[5] Between the logs they used to have clay there. They dug that from shoreline the clay between the logs and then lime after. There was no bright light in the house at night. Just one coal lamp and the women used to sew at night.[6]
>
> Because they eat lots of wild meat and fish, in the fall around middle of August that's when they used to go to Two Rivers. And dried some moose meat. They only used canoes and paddles. They were no outboard on them days. And they only shoot bull moose. They didn't shoot cows. And after they came back from hunting. And then they went to the rapids to dry some white fish and make some fish oil which they last them all winter.
>
> In the spring they used to be lots of fish. They just went down to the river to scoop fish, white or pickerel. But there was a strong current.
>
> I remember...sturgeon...that's when I was a young boy. On Sugar Island they used to have cabins, my grandmother, Sid Turner's dad, James Turner, and the other guy, Joe Turner and James Atkinson...That's where they spent their winter. That's where they used to kill lots of sturgeon.
>
> And just about every [one] have cows. Some had three and four. And they had gardens, planting potatoes, carrots, onions, and corn. They were no horse. They had dogs to haul their wood in the winter.
>
> We had to help when they do something like putting up hay for the winter for their cattle. They help each other a lot for nothing. Like cutting logs for their houses. I seen them when they were building a log house. When they put about six logs high. two men were on each end up there. Them were the one[s] who were doing the chopping, and they had four men lift the logs to them.
>
> In the winter when somebody died they had to take [the body] to the cemetery by sleigh. And in the summer they used a canoe. Same thing when somebody got

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[5] They used to burn their own, 'cause there's lots of old limestone there along the shore...and they made a big bowl there. They used to get wood from the rapids, and they'd...bring the wood down. They used to take turns burning that lime.

[6] Coal oil and lamp wicks were purchased at Campbell's Store.

married, they have to walk. There was only one, one grave yard. That's the one down here [St. John's on the reserve].

Nobody talk[ed] English. They all talk[ed] Cree. And you knew everybody was your friend. You never did hear anybody yelling at night or swearing. But now you can hear kids just about all night. There were no break-ins. Nobody ever got into trouble.

And if you want to go some place like hunting in a winter you have to walk. Not like now. They just jump in a car or a truck. Maybe some don't even get out to shoot a moose or deer. If you don't like walking. You would have stayed home. But you would have [been] chased outside and do something. They never want anybody laying around. Like now everybody got electricity, water inside, washroom. Just watching TV. You don't have wood or water ready. They just turn the switch on and they can relax all day. Not like us. That's what we used to be told. Get to bed early and start early in the morning. That's the only way you'll be a man. And if you listen what you'll told, and you'll be not disappointed on your life ahead of you. Yes, really [they] worked toward support their family, because there was no welfare. When they killed a moose, they didn't waste anything. They even took the jaws and moose nose.

Once I remember the store was short of flour during the winter. They send dog teams to Mafeking to get some flour. Sometimes the women bake[d] spawns bannock. They took the spawns from white fish and mixed them with flour. It was really taste good.

There wasn't much to do [for entertainment] on them days. When evening comes, you'll be send inside. You can't go outside alone. That's how strict they were. If you don't do what you [were] told you'll get spanking. My grandpa teach me lot of things.

If Parents and grandparents were strict in those days, so were the teachers. Shortly after he went to live with his grandparents, Absalom started school.

I start going to school when I was seven years old. My first school teacher was Rev. R. B. Horsefield. He was a preacher. He used to be a good [teacher], but he didn't stay very long. And the next one was Rev. Mason. Also, he didn't stay long, about two years. And the third one was Gilbert Armstrong. Also he was a preacher...Boy, he was mean. When you turn your face or whisper, he'll throw a blackboard brush or crayon at you. Once I remember he throw Bill Beardy and Boniface Packo outside. And another was a small boy by the name of Andrew Turner. He hang him up by the hood of his parka. He can hardly touch the floor. We had to run to school every

morning. And come home for lunch at noon.[7] Rain or snow or shine or cold in winter. And that's when I quit school. I only went to grade five. Because my grandfather was getting sick, I have to do the chore[s] for my grandma.

We never have a good cloth to wear on a cold winter months. They used to make moccasins to wear, and they knit our mitts. But we have to work. There were no saws. You have to use an ax to chop wood. And have the wood in the house. Same thing you do with water. You have to save it in the house. Before dark every day. You go [in] the winter [when] the ice was thick at the river for water.

When Absalom reached eleven or twelve years of age, he began to accompany his grandfather to his hunting grounds. Travelling by dog team and staying out for one or two nights before returning home, they trapped for coyotes, lynx, mink, and foxes, but mainly the red variety, as the silver was extremely rare. There were no martens or fishers that Absalom can recall. At the end of the season they traded their furs at Campbell's store.

When I used to go camping with my grandpa, that's what he used to tell me not to forget and pray. He used [to] say wherever you go, whatever you're doing, even if you're walking, say your prayers. And that's what I told Eva [his wife] many times now. While she's driving, I pray so we'll have a safe trip where we're going and back. The old people on them days lived better than our years now.

Many of times I think about the guys I raised with. Where we used to play, we never used to hear about cars. Now when you go outside all you see is cars and truck and dust and kids riding on their bikes. But me, I don't even know how to ride a bike. I guess I'll never ride one. My grandpa used to [give] me Bow & Arrows. That [was the] only thing we had to play with in the summer. Some times baseball. The women used to make baseball[s]. They use[d] to use moose hide.

Once I remember they had two men cleaning up on the reserve. They went [to] every yard picking every little thing that's lying around the yard. Their names were David Ross and Dan Turner. Everybody had to, for his living, because they were no welfare. Not like now, you see lots of young people walking around during the day. There's too much welfare.

[7] As Absalom explained later, the children didn't always have to go home for lunch. Indian Affairs sometimes supplied biscuits and beans, with salt pork and molasses.

As a boy, Absalom certainly had plenty to do. Cornelius Turner kept four or five cows, and an ox for hauling the wood, so Absalom hauled wood and also milked cows. The cows wandered all over the community - the bull belonged to Archie Scott - and every spring there would be new calves. When it was milking time, Absalom could usually find the cows down by the creek, and if he couldn't see them, he would hear them because the lead cow had a bell around her neck. It is a long time ago, but Absalom remembers one of the cows was named *Eskwasis* or "Girly." His grandmother used to make butter from that milk, a much harder job than going to the store and buying it like we do today. Absalom remembers how hard all the women worked.

> And the woman, when they washing clothes, they only used wash tubs and a washboard. We have to haul water from the river. And in the winter they melt some snow. They made their own broom, a stick and Red Willow [or Balsam] to use for sweeping floor. Everything by hand. They didn't have pampers. They had to buy flannelette to make diapers. And wash them every other day.

The women, including his grandmother, also tanned moose hides for leather which was used to make moccasins, jackets, pants, and other clothing articles.

> Sometimes they used to go hunting and around Gull Bay there, the two rivers there, they done their tanning. But they didn't finish their hides there. They just scraped out the inside part and the fur. I mean the hair side. They dried them and rolled them. It made it lighter that way and after they're done, that's where they tanned them. [Tanning was done after they got back to Grand Rapids.] They'd put them in the water, and then took the water [out]...then they pulled [or stretched them]. They'd smoke it after.

People rarely tan hides now; it's a skill that has gone, like the people who once lived and worked at Grand Rapids, oldtimers fondly remembered by those who knew them.

> There was a preacher, he was kind to everybody. His name was Rev. Donaghy. He never want to hurt nobody. He even didn't want to kill a mosquito when it bit. He just push it away.
>
> There never used to be a doctor here. The only time the doctor was here was in the summer when it was treaty day. He came on a boat by the name of *Bradbury*. When somebody got sick they used Indian Medicine. When you have a tooth ache, and if it's loose a little string just pull it with a thread.

Once my uncle, late Walter Cook, told his wife was sick during the night. So he went to get Mr. Donaghy. He said he [Walter] had a canoe and an outboard. But Mr. Donaghy had a little dock by his landing place. Where the drop-in centre is by the [river]. And he said he [Walter] went and woke him up. And he [Donaghy] told him to wait for him where he had his canoe. And he [Donaghy] came down minutes after. And he was standing at the dock. And then he [Walter] said, told him, to jump in. He said he [Donaghy] jumped in. But he [Walter] said he just about broke the ribs on my canoe!

I'm going to write about my teen age life. We used to work hard. They made us cleaning up when they brush cutting. They were cutting by hand with axes. They all had a nice yard. Because they didn't have machines. But now everybody can see, all the piles that on the yards. What a mess. They didn't even have rakes. They made their own brooms. They used red willows [or balsam] and a stick.

About when I was fourteen, I used to go out to the lake and help my uncle Walter fishing. We just used dogs. There were no needle bar. We just use a chisel. It was only four feet long. Sometimes it didn't reach the water. We used to leave early before the sun up and came home very late in evening. There was no shelter, very cold. Nothing was nylon. Nets or rope, everything cotton.

In 1938, there was a big fire. There was lots of smoke. I guess a plane was flying around town trying [to] land and it end[ed] up crash[ing] at Morrison Lake about half mile from the lake. And there were lots of guys searching. They found the plane, but no survivors. And that fall me and Fred Atkinson and Walter Turner went and trap there in the fall. So me and Walter were walking along the shore. There was ice along the shore. And then we seen something on the ice. We thought it was a bear head. And then I went up to it. He [Walter] was at the shore. And he yelled at me, "Look," he said, "There lots of tracks -weasel, foxes." It was high ground, and we follow the weasel. And he stop. He was ahead of me, and he stopped and said, "Look at the shoes." And both of us went to check the shoes.

The shoes were attached to a headless body which was lying on the shore just under a low ridge.

Both of us got scared when we seen the body. It didn't have a head. That was the head that was on the ice. So we asked ourselves what we're going to do with it. We can't leave it there. So we took a long stick and shove[d] it to shore. And it was getting late in the afternoon. So we came to where we had our tent. And our partner

was not there yet. He came back before dark. We told him what we found. So he said we have to go back home, and tell what you guys found. So we got home very late that night. Mr. Armstrong, he was a preacher. We went to his place. And he told us to go there with him in the morning. So [we] went there and stayed there over night with him. There was no way to send a message them days. Only by mail. And the ice wasn't safe yet to go to The Pas. The mail only went out once a month. It was very late in November when they came and picked up the body. They came by plane.

Two men died as a result of that crash. One was never found. The other, a man named Porter or Portier, or something like that, from Montreal, actually died of drowning, even though the plane had crashed on land. Absalom has his theory about how he came to his end.

He had a broken leg....I guess he must have heard a plane or searching party....He tried to crawl straight to there, to the lake, eh, but he couldn't make it. This ridge, I guess...he couldn't climb. Maybe that's where, if he had a broken leg, he couldn't go over the ridge.

In other words, a desperate young man dragged himself to the lake and fell over the ridge into the water below, either drowning then or later because he was too weak to crawl back up over that ridge. It was a tragic end.

Absalom was fifteen by this time. Since his grandfather had died a year earlier, he was the only one at home to help his grandmother, a situation which changed when her youngest daughter married Adophus Ducharme and moved in with her. Free now to set out on his own, Absalom was soon away from home.

When I was sixteen, my dad took me to go and help him fall fishing. So we went south; the place is called Flower Point. That [is] east side of Lake Winnipeg. They didn't have [the] kind of anchor, the kind they got now. They just used stones.

And we came home late in the [fall]. My Grandpa, Solomon Cook, had a gas boat. We all came home on it. And we were fishing, too, on the [lake]. And the limit was forty thousand pounds. I think it only last[ed] a couple week[s]. But after they got the limit, they went and fish[ed] at Cross Lake. And on the spring time, we used [to] trap muskrat. We didn't even have knee boots. We just wear moccasin rubbers. It was cold water.

Muskrat trapping occurred at Summerberry on Cedar Lake. The government had extended the marshlands along the lake to encourage expansion of the muskrat population. It worked so well that many local people were able to supplement

their incomes by trapping there in the spring. Neil and Alpheus Cook were among the local fishermen who took advantage of this opportunity. They were paid twenty-five dollars a month, and Absalom remembers he would sometimes get as many as five hundred skins in a season.

> That summer, My Uncle Alpheus Cook took me to Moose Lake to go and help fish. And [I] was kind of sorry to leave my Grandma after all the years she work[ed] to raise [me]. But I told her it's time for me to look after myself. And we [were] fishing at Moose Lake. I went to The Pas. And from there I went to Swan River. And I got a job there to work on a farm, threshing and stooking. One thing I didn't like was driving [a] team of horse[s]. But I got used to them. I was working at a little [place] called Kenville.
>
> After I finished there, I came to Swan River. And I got a job there to come and fish at Dawson Bay for Glen Burrell. We stayed at Overflow River. There was nobody there. They were only four of us there all winter till March. Of course, [there was] the highway, but hardly anybody stop[ped].
>
> And after I fishing on March, I hop[ped] on a train to Winnipeg because there was no way to come home to Grand Rapids. I was all by [my]self all the time. I didn't stay in Winnipeg. I was walking on the street one day. A car stop[ped]. And a guy stop[ped] and ask me if I wanted a job. I said O.K. He told me to get [in]. I picked up my cloth[es]. I didn't ask him what kind of job. And after we were out [of] Winnipeg, he said, you are going to Ontario. You'll be on a plane from Lac du Bonnet to Red Lake, he told [me]. So I got on the float plane. When I got there and a guy came and met us and ask[ed] me my name. He took me to a doctor and gave me a check-up. And that evening I was under ground, and they explain [to] me what to do - pushing the cart from the s[h]oots [chutes]. Sometimes I was alone down there eight hours, but the mine captain used to come and check on me twice a night. I met a few guy[s] from Ontario. They became my friend[s]. I was there just about four month[s], and I hurt my hand. And they told me that they'll give me a week off. So I catch a first flight to Lac du Bonnet, and I didn't go back.
>
> Once when I was walking in Winnipeg, and there I met two friends of mine. They were from here, which I didn't see them for a couple of years. They were Sidley Turner and Sammy Easter. So we get hired to come and fish on Lake Winnipeg. I was at Sandy Island working for, his name was Peter Walker. And after fishing I went back with him to Selkirk. And he gave me something to do for him. But he was

paying me a little, and in the fall fishing was starting. I went to Clements Point. There I met some of the guys from Grand Rapids, and after fishing they ask[ed] me to come home with [them]. But I didn't. Instead I [went] back to Selkirk. I was used to be[ing] alone. I never used to write back home.

Then I went to Winnipeg from there, and then I met Sidley Turner and Sam Easter, Arthur Ballantyne. We got hired to go and winter fish. At Hecla Island. But I was sent to go to Black Island. And I stayed there most of the winter. When I came back to Hecla Island after fishing, they were gone already. So I was alone again. But I met one guy from Fisher River. He asked me to go with him. So I went with him. We went by train. It went as far to Hodgson. And from there went by team of horse, a mail man from Fisher River. And I stayed there about three months cutting cordwood. And one day an old guy came and see me. He asked me if I can come with them to Matheson Island. He said he had a canoe. So I said I would. Just him and wife. His name was Jim Kirkness, and when we got to Matheson Island, and I met Pete Walker, and he asked me again to go and work for him at Sandy Island. And after fishing, that [was] when I make up [my] mind to come home.

So I got home after summer fishing, and my Grandma was happy to see me. So I lived with her, with my Auntie Emma Jane. But she was married to Adophus Ducharme. There was no job here. Only thing was to do was digging seneca root for fifteen cents a pound. But I was working for my Uncle Walter Cook on winter fishing.

It was about this time, that Absalom began to pay attention to a young woman named Eva Beardy.

One thing here was strict. When you want to see a girl. You have to go inside and see [her] there. The parent won't let her go unless she have an escort, brother or sister. Not like now, you see young girl walking around just about all night. Any way, I got married on Feb. 1945. Because I listened to my Grandma. She didn't want to see me leave. I stayed here after that....First we stayed at her parents place, way down Beardy's Point....for a while. The next summer they built a log house for us here...next to my uncle [Don Turner].

Absalom soon had a garden, and stored his potatoes, carrots, and onions in a cellar underneath his house. However, there was no cow for milk.

After we got married, everything went, and there was no cows. We had to get our milk from the store...the can, but no fresh milk.

Now that he was committed to staying at Grand Rapids, Absalom had to find work in the vicinity.

> We used to cut cord in the summer because the S.S. *Keenora* was burning wood. It's on the dry dock at Selkirk. In the spring we went and trap[ped] muskrat. There was a muskrat ranch past Chemawawin. That's all flooded now. The farthest I went was at Twin Island. I had five sleigh dogs. It took us four days to get [there]. We passed the Summerberry River. They gave you so much to get, sometimes three hundred or five. But if [you] go where there [were] no rats, you'll stay there longer. And you have to take your family with you. There was nobody here to look after them. Because you can't leave them behind, they gave you seventy-five dollars to get your traps, your groceries, whatever you[needed]. Some used to stay in one tent, and after when you get your catch, around June your cheque would come. It was only twenty-five dollars a month for all the work you done for two months to feed your family.

Absalom vividly recalls the trip he took by dog team out to their trapping spot, a trip his children enjoyed, but

> not us, we - five or six kids - we had to take everything of ours. That one time I went...we stayed first camp we were where Easterville is now, just on the north side. The next camp was Cheemowin, that's two nights, and the next one was Hill Island, that's three nights.[8] Hill Island, that's the one, and then we passed Summerberry River, and it took us all day from there, from Hill Island, where that we got there in the evening, and that where we...trapped.

Life at the trapline was hard. They brought flour, lard, sugar and tea with them - the basics - and occasionally an unwary duck or goose would wander into one of their traps. They weren't allowed to take a gun with them. Muskrats could also be cooked up into a delicious stew. When it was time to come home, they came with Absalom's Uncle Walter.

> He was trapping at Moose Lake, when we came home with him. He had a canoe, or an outboard. He didn't take his family....We came home by the river. We got to the river, the Moose Lake River, then we got stuck there. That ice was jammed, so we had to stay there until it let go, so we had to go back to Moose Lake. We couldn't come home this way, 'cause Cedar Lake, the ice was weak there. We didn't make it until around close to June anyways.

[8] Cheemowin is more commonly spelled Chemawawin.

It had been a long trip, by the time they got to the Grand Rapids, and everyone was anxious to get home, although Eva was hesitant about making too fast a trip on the last couple of miles!

> It was getting late, and we were in the canoe, saying, "Oh, well, we'll go down the rapids." My wife didn't like it. So we shot the rapids with all our stuff. She didn't like it coming down on that rapids.

Was Eva angry about the risk he was taking?

> Well, not after. She was glad when we got here. We want to get home 'cause it was just about two and a half miles to come and walk to get a horse....Why not come down, take a chance coming down?

Once the family was settled at home again, Absalom was off to another job.

> But every summer we used to commercial fish. And there were lots of Pickerel. You didn't have to go far that little past the Bridge beside the co-op dock. Norman Chief, he was living beside where the bridge is now. He never went but [to] the lake once. One summer. He just set his net from shore, and he got his limit [when the] limit was twenty five hundred pounds. Now when we tell something to the young guy[s], they just laugh at us because most of them weren't born. And they don't believe.

The limits, of course, were enforced by the provincial government, and Norman McKenzie was the man from Natural Resources who came in from time to time to see that everyone was obeying the rules. "He used to come from The Pas. He was using a snowplane, they called it." Norman was a brother of Annie McKenzie, Absalom's Grandmother Cook, so he was Absalom's great-uncle. His employer was another uncle, Walter Cook, and they fished together for a number of years. Walter was a commercial fisherman, who worked on Lake Winnipeg. There were quite a few fishermen from Grand Rapids in those times.

> They had a small quota. I think forty thousand pounds worth in the winter. They got it in a week.

There were also fishermen from other places, who had their quotas, too.

> And I remember they used to fish at Eagle Island. They started soon as the ice was thick. They frozen their fish. They put them in one hundred lbs boxes. And late in the winter. They were about forty teams or more horses. Came from Mafeking to pick catch.

There were other buyers besides those from Mafeking. Campbell's Store purchased fish, and there was an Icelander named Thordarson, who also came up to buy them.

After he stopped fishing for his uncle, Absalom went to fish for himself. He used dogs in the winter for transportation, and when outboard motors became available, he used either a two and a half or five horse motor to power his boat. Buyers came from the south during the summer months and bought at Grand Rapids itself. Absalom recalls J. R. Spear's boat from Winnipeg. They also went out to Horse Island, where the commercial fishermen were stationed. During the winter months, fishermen could fish anywhere they wanted, but in summer the lake was divided up into sections, and fishermen had to stay in their own part of the lake. There was an imaginary line drawn between Eating Point on the north and Reef Point on the south, and the pickerel fishermen had to stay inside that line closer to shore. The big gas boats stayed on the other side. They were the commercial fishermen specializing in whitefish.

Absalom recalls that there used to be lots of pickerel.

> There used to be lots. You didn't have to go very far to get your limit. The limit was 2500 [lbs.]. Easily not even a week to catch your limit, [but] nothing now.

This was just one of the changes Absalom has seen. One of the biggest was the road to the outside, and the dam. Before dam construction, everyone in the community knew everyone else, but soon there were people coming from all over the place. Fortunately for Absalom, he was able to get employment with Hydro guiding a geologist, because he knew the country well. However, once the dam was built, he declined the opportunity to work at the powerhouse.

> That wasn't the way I was raised. I said, just walking around, I didn't do hardly anything. This wasn't how I was raised, so I gave up that job. I was raised to move around, not to stay in one place.

Absalom isn't optimistic about the future of fishing at Grand Rapids. "One guy told me yesterday [2 Aug. 96] that he had to pull his nets out for two days he only got two pickerel." He is also skeptical about opening the dam during the spawning season, so that the water levels below the dam can be raised and the fish encouraged to come back to spawn.

> That's what we tried to tell these young guys...we don't believe they'll ever come back. The way I used to grow up, there used to be lots of water. Now how can they go up there? It's all bush up there. They won't go there.

With a fishing career spanning many decades, Absalom should know. He remembers what fishing used to be. He can see with his own eyes what it has become as a result of changes which have transformed the rivers and lakes around Grand Rapids. It remains to be seen if those changes will prove as disastrous to the local fishing industry as oldtimers like Absalom say they will.

Grand Rapids Reserve Home, 1961

Grand Rapids - Homes 1 (Courtesy Manitoba Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

William McKay (Courtesy Lee Heroux)

Unidentified Metis Family, Grand Rapids, 1907
Charles Hall Family Coll. 91 (Courtesy Manitoba Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

William McKay and Agnes Mercredi

William McKay and his wife Agnes (née Mercredi) have been married for the past forty-three years. William will admit they "fail [fell] out sometimes," but it was never serious enough to worry about. Agnes was a widow with four children when they were married. She had been married previously to Gabriel Campbell, a fisherman from The Pas, and they had four children, Albert, Victoria, Charlie, and Marie. After Gabriel's death, she married William, and they had two more children, Linda and Bill.

Agnes is a daughter of Norbert Mercredi and Charlotte Stove. The Stoves came from Moose Lake and were descended from a Scotsman, who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. After her marriage to Gabriel Campbell, she lived at The Pas for "about fourteen years." William, on the other hand, has lived at Grand Rapids all his life. His father, Lawrence McKay [pronounced McKie], was a son of Henry [William says "Hendry"] McKay and Ellen Arabella Inkster. Lawrence had a number of brothers and sisters.

> Mary married a guy from The Pas, a Mr. Venables. And Molly, she lived in Winnipeg. She married an Austin, Mr. Austin....Eleanor stayed in Winnipeg, married Kennedy....Reg lived in Winnipeg; was town police in Winnipeg. And Valentine, he was here, raised his family here.

Besides these, there was Arthur, who also raised his family at Grand Rapids, and Florence Campbell, who ran a local store. William especially remembers this aunt when he was a boy because "Mrs. Campbell used to put up a big Christmas party, every time. We all used to gather there."

William's mother was Lily Ballantyne, a daughter of Donald Ballantyne, who lived on the reserve. William remembers his Grandfather Ballantyne well.

> Indian Department sent out three oxen out here, and my Grandfather had one, and used to haul wood, used to come in leading his oxen to his house there with a load of wood, eh. Ice going on his moustache! [laughter] I always think about that.
>
> And my brother Johnny bought a team after. He hauled wood. And I got a team. We both had teams. And we hauled wood for people here....We made hay here. Around lake shore. Cross Lake.

William was raised on the north side of the river, because the McKays were non-treaty. As he describes it,

> A little ways down, just where Johnny's garage is, just a little past there.[9] That's where we stayed; yeah, that's where we lived. Dad had a big house there....It had an upstairs, and I don't know how many rooms. Four rooms down below. Log house....
>
> He had a little store [and sold] a little bit of everything. He had a warehouse, too.....But he went broke on the hungry thirties, eh. Went broke, eh? He fished after he lost the store, eh....He fished in the wintertime....I worked with my dad.
>
> Cooking was most of her [mother's] job. [laughs]....She made clothes, whatever clothes she [needed], she made them....There was thirteen of us in that family. Only one living of the boys. There was six boys of us. And there is three girls living. I was third. There's three sisters left, three sisters, one, two, three. See? One, two, three. [laughter]

William holds up his left hand on which two of the fingers are fused together. This prompts a story.

> I stayed in the hospital one time. My grandfather took me. And used to drink quite a bit, and he never thought about this, eh? Now when I was ready to come out of the hospital, he thought about it. And he asked the doctor how long it would take. The doctor said another four days. I said, 'To heck with it. Leave it like that.' That's the way it was. (laughs)....No problems, it didn't bother me....It didn't bother me at all. This one [right hand] I got shot.

William explains,

> I got shot right here in the [right] shoulder...when I was about twelve, thirteen years old....Accident, with my brother, my oldest brother....We seen these chickens, eh?...After I came out of the bush, I gave him the gun. I wanted to shoot the chickens, eh? Never used a gun before. I gave him the gun. He held it like that. He had a 22. And he was sitting down, and he was going to get up. He moved his gun like that, and a little stick got in the trigger, I guess. Boy! Bang! And right here...smash in my arm twice....Then the blood started, just had a little surge, hot summer day, the blood just poured like that, eh? Oh, I was scared. It was about

[9] The reference is to Johnny McKay, William's brother. Neither he nor his wife are living now, but a daughter lives in their home. The garage was not a business, but a storage shed for John's equipment.

three and a half miles home. Remember used to be a tramway here long ago, Hudson's Bay tramway? We were on the other side of that.

Oh, he didn't know what to do. He was gonna leave me there. And he was gonna come for the help. That would have taken a long time. I said, 'I'll walk,' I said, 'I'll walk.' Oh, he couldn't, he couldn't. So he says, 'Get on my back,' and I got on his back. Hot summer day! (laughs)

And there was a little hill we had to come up first there, five hundred feet, eh, right on the edge, eh? Boy the sweat! And I got on the hill there. So I got off and I said, 'I'll walk.' I walked quite a ways. He carried me, carried me. I walked. My uncle used to go up on the tramway there quite a ways, and he had a horse. He brought me home to my place on horseback. I was riding horseback. (laughs)

Of course, there was no doctor in Grand Rapids at the time.

Dad had to take me to The Pas about two weeks after....You see, when we went here, they were just paddling, eh? No motors then. And we got to see the lake. There was a Hudson's Bay man there, and Dad talked to this guy. And it happened that a fish inspector came down from The Pas, to check in the lake, and Dad talked to that fish inspector. He knew him, eh? And he had a little 'put-put' there. That was the best thing they could get then, eh? And dad asked, like. And this fellow says to him, 'I'll take him, I can take that boy. He'll be there sooner.'

So he took me up the next day. We went to The Pas. I went in the hospital there. I see the doctor. The doctor, I seen him once and the nurse...and he said, 'That bullet is in there,' he says, 'and it done the damage where it went in. It will never hurt you if you leave it there. But if you want me to take it out, I'll take it out.' 'Leave it there,' I says. So it's where it is. I was out and glad I'd went to The Pas (laughs) That's the way I buggered up my hand, eh?

These are dead here [fingers on right hand]. When I was fishing, I used to freeze these....I used to freeze easy. The blood doesn't circulate. That's what it done to it. Same bullet.

William's story illustrates how vulnerable people were when an accident occurred at Grand Rapids.

If you got sick, you had to get in a canoe, any kind of a boat you can pick up, and start rowing it to Cedar Lake up to The Pas, right through to The Pas. No air waves? nothing. (laughs)....It was hard to get anybody...that was sick out of here.

William remembers when no one could laugh about the real dangers of living in a place far from medical help.

> There was a trapper...an outside guy...that got shot, way up at Limestone Bay. That's where they were trapping, at Limestone Bay, and they were pulling a sleigh, and...they were getting close to Grand Rapids here, about fifteen miles out. They were gonna go to Horse Island there. And they were doing something to the sleigh, and this guy pulled the trigger on the gun. Hit him. Don't know, but he didn't die right away. So they had to...they brought him in. There used to be Hudsons there [at] the island. And they brought him in here. Still alive. And this guy's partner looked for sombody to take him to Mafeking from here. So they got old Solomon Cook. He had nice dogs here, and they got him. And he took him right away, as soon as he got ready. Took him across Cross Lake, and that's where he died. That's as far as he went, so he brought him back. That was hard here, when anything happened like that.

Hard indeed, and worse when you knew the people involved, as in the case of William' cousin, Francis Campbell. It was late in the fall, October, right after the end of the war [W.W.II]. Francis had gone to The Pas for the mail, and was on his way home, when he lost his life in a tragic accident.

> He drownded over there. He was on a mail trip. And uh, my Uncle Alfred was with him, eh? And they were coming down from The Pas. And they came down fifteen miles from The Pas. They built camp there. And Frances told his man there he had to go back. So he got another man to come with him and go from there, from where he was, and they went about four miles, and that's where he drownded. Right in the middle of the river....A young man, yeah. He'd just come back from overseas. And when we heard here, it was pretty bad. Mrs. Campbell had to go out right away. So [s]he asked us to take her. Me and Johnny. And we took [Henry] Chartier with us, three of us. And we came to this, where he had drownded, and we seen the mounties there. And they were telling us that they looked all over...nothing.
>
> So when we were ready to go, and we said, 'We'll be down to help you tomorrow. We're just taking Mrs. Campbell to town.' Her sister was there. We took her up to The Pas, me and Johnny. The next day [s]he gave us grub to come down. 'Twas getting late in October. October, that was, and [s]he told us, 'If anybody wants to come in, for something,' [s]he says, 'Just one of you guys come in and let the other fellows stay with the other guys.' That's what she told us, eh? We came the next

day to where the accident happened, me and Johnny, my brother. And, we couldn't do nothing. Snowing, just couldn't see across. Couldn't see nothing. So we made a camp there. We made a camp there, and when we woke up the next morning, it was clear. Sun was shining. And as soon as we had breakfast, we went out. I was with Hendry [Chartier], and Johnny was alone. And Walter Cook was there, too. He had his boat. He had his partner. We started driving from up there. About where they said the accident was, Johnny was in the centre there. He was the one that picked it up. Boy, me and Hendry was coming down....All at once I seen them wheeling, and I knew right away....Francis. My partner, yeah....*Nice* fellow. Couldn't meet a nicer guy....He was a friend of everybody, too. Friend of everybody, yeah. Yeah, it was hard.

Accidents were a reminder of the vulnerability of a small, isolated place like Grand Rapids at the time. With only a few people living on and off the reserve and limited resources, it is little wonder that medical care was inadequate. Neither was education comparable to what it is today. There were two schools in the community. "There was one on the other side and one on this side." Since William was non-treaty, he attended the school "on this side." There were "about thirty, forty" students in that school, including Agnes, William's future wife. As he explains, "That's where I met her." [laughter] William describes that school.

We had a...day school....just the one-room school....A log building. One room, log building [Agnes] There was a big stove in the middle there. Wood stove. William] We had to cut wood for that stove, too....They used to send us out to get birch wood. (laughs) We had to go get it.

And the teacher used to come out in the fall, last trip of the boat, used to come out, and stayed with Campbells, eh? That's where she wintered....They came from all over, teachers. We had an Englishman from England here. Yeah. Williams. I think he was from England. He was an Englishman, eh.

Nine o'clock, we used to be open, school, eh? Nine. And then we had recess at Eleven. And Twelve o'clock we were out for dinner....Went home for dinner, back at one o'clock.

William recalls that "all spoke Cree" at Grand Rapids when he was a boy, although his Dad "talked a lot of English." At school, children were expected to speak only English, and could be punished for lapsing into Cree. Occasionally, this policy led to amusing situations.

We learned quite a bit of it in school, too...when we were taught to talk English at school, eh. And...kids used to tell on each other. Like one time there, sombody passed with a dog team. And this one kid said '*Muskobear! Muskobear!*' That's a leader, that dog. That's his name. And somebody went and reported to the teacher, 'This guy's talking Cree.' [laughter] The teacher said, 'That's the dog's name!'

Such incidents lightened the load at school, which could be tedious at the best of times for active children. However, there were other things to divert them. William recalls skating during the winter months.

We went skating. Used to make our own skates, too. [laughter] A bit of steel in there, put them on a block of wood, and tie them with string. [laughter] You could play. They weren't fancy or anything. Had lots of fun with them. You never see anybody with skates. Never....Steel at the bottom of it. Some of them just used wood, eh? But used to be good here. This bay here, where the power house is, that was just a bay, eh. Right where the power house, that's as far as the bay went. In the wintertime used to flood over, and my uncle [Arthur McKay] stayed right where the powerhouse is, up on the hill there. That's where he had his house....His kids knew when that ice was just right....And...when they come to school, they would tell us, it's all flooded over. So that means you come and play. [laughter] So we'd all be there in the night, nice moonlight night.

William also recalls other enjoyable activities, like the unique way children and adults participated in New Year's festivities in the old days.

Used to carry bags around to town. Had a little bag. Every house, you went to, every house, and...you'd get a cookie [in] your bag. That's the kids. And the old people, they just walked around. They came behind. Walked around. They go into every house. Had a little bit to eat. Every house. Cross the river and all around....You know, the old people, some of the old people, they couldn't get around at New Year's Day. So they saved it for the next day. That's the time they walked around. Seen everybody. Wished them all a happy New Year. You seen all the old people.

Dances were popular, too, and fiddlers always had a place to play.

They used to dance, too. Had their own fiddlers. Ben Sanderson was one of the best ones here. An old guy, yeah. There was quite a few. Magliore Chartier. He was a good fiddler. Oh, heck, they used to have good dances. But the only thing is they had to borrow a house where to dance, eh? There was no dance hall. Sometimes

> they got the school....Never no trouble. There was...nothing to drink, eh? Started making moose milk later on, eh? Kind of buggered things up, eh? [laughs]...Long ago, used to dance till daylight. Keep it up till daylight. Specially a marriage. Somebody got married. We [William and Agnes] had a dance at the school, at the old school....Dance till daylight, yeah....We used to laugh at the old fiddlers. They would put on their boots, make little kickin'. And they would be there all night, making a little kicking. And in the morning there would be sawdust on the floor.

William stayed in school until he was a teenager. Then, he went to work.

> I had to work, eh? (laughs) I had to quit. Working, eh? I was, I don't know, about sixteen, I guess.

One person he worked for was his Aunt Florence, who operated Campbell's Store. It had been established by her late husband, Geddes Campbell, whom William remembered.

> He wasn't here long. He was at Cedar Lake. My grandfather took her [William's Aunt Florence] over there to get married. And I remember when Mr. Campbell got here, after they were married.

It was after Mr Campbell's death in 1929 that William worked for his aunt, who employed him to do a variety of chores.

> Had lot of garden work there. Just worked in the garden....They had different places. If the ground was better that way, that's where they had their garden. That's where the ground was good. They had different gardens. Cows used to break in, fences, eh. That used to be our job, fixing fences. Cows get in the garden...all over the place. Quite a few cows here.

Agnes also worked for the Campbells.

> I worked for them before I got married. And when I came back, I went back and worked for them a while....They were pretty good to work for, yeah....Used to cook for them, and do housework....I used to go every morning. And sometimes - They used to have cows, eh? - we used to milk cows. I don't know how many they had. Horses, too. [William] They always had a milking cow. [Agnes] There was quite a few working there, working for them. [William] They always hired people from here.

Agnes worked for the Campbells for "quite a few years," or as William quips, "Till I took her away from there." [laughter] William worked for them much

longer. He recalls taking Mrs. Campbell by dog team over to Mafeking when she ordered supplies.

> If you were gonna on a trip some place, you had to go to five or six dogs. If [you] ever take somebody. Like me. I used to take Aunt Florence to Mafeking. For her stuff to order. Her stuff, for the store.

William would set out from Grand Rapids with his Aunt Florence bundled up on the sled and he running along side.

> Mostly running, yeah. Mostly running. Travelled the same way, but lotta times you'd have to break your road right all the way....When you used dogs, you had to break the trail....We'd leave at the first lake here, this Cross Lake. Cross that and another road takes you to Cedar Lake....And you take another road to High Portage. That's a five mile portage. You take that to Winnipegosis. And from Winnipegosis, you follow the...islands up to [the] west end of the lake. That's where you cross....It used to take me about five days, six days [return]....I used to leave Aunt Florence there. She would go to Winnipeg....on the train.

Ordinarily the trips were uneventful. According to William, "We'd just go through....We had to stay as far as we could go, eh?" The aim was to settle for the night at a fish camp along the way. "We used to stay in them houses....Fish camps. *Nice* camps." Occasionally, however, they didn't make it and had to sleep under the stars.

> At High Portage I couldn't make it. I couldn't make it. I left here too late, and it was a stormy day, eh? I got to High Portage, and I made a fire there and made a bed for her....She was fine....I slept good there. Lots of blanket there....We went in the morning after we had a cup of tea. We set the dogs and away we went. But if it wasn't for that bad weather, I'd a made camp that night, but we couldn't do it.
>
> There was fishermen on Lake Winnipeg[osis] and them people there, they were *real* good people. They were just like goin' into your own house. Yeah. They'd be having supper, '*Join* us.'...Just like gettin' home...in your own home....*Oh*, they were nice people.

These hospitable people were the Fredericksons, brothers Oscar and Sturni, who both had fish camps on Lake Winnipegosis. William recalls staying at Sturni Frederickson's.

> They would be all there. The whole family would be there....Fish sheds and all that. They had a bunkhouse, too. I stayed in the bunkhouse....She [Mrs. Campbell] always stayed in the house. Yeah. Sturni Frederickson. He had a house on Spruce Island, too. That's not far from Mafeking. If you could make there, you could get right into Mafeking.

The last stop before Mafeking was Glen Burrell's camp, where William left the dogs. Glen's children looked after them, while he drove Mrs. Campbell and William by truck into town. After William had completed his business, he usually hired one of Cecil Roger's daughters to drive him back to Burrells for the return trip to Grand Rapids. In the meantime, Mrs. Campbell would travel to Winnipeg, make her grocery order, and arrange for it to be sent to Grand Rapids.

> And her stuff came out here in the summer time, the fall, in the boat, on the boat, eh? And in the wintertime, I guess she must have got some of her stuff through the freighters. There used to be freighters hauling fish from Mafeking. I think that's how she got it out, this winter stuff that she ordered, eh?...They could haul stuff here, too. Not very much stuff, eh? Just sometimes.

In the early years, freighters came in regularly to pick up fish. They travelled much the same route as that followed by William and Mrs. Campbell, except that they used teams of horses and "*big* sleighs."

> Mrs. Campbell...had the first tractor in Grand Rapids. George [Mercredi] was the driver of that tractor. There was a tractor train....He used to fetch to Mafeking, fish. He used to fetch fish. After that, they got bombardiers, and things started to get easier all the time, to travel with, eh.
>
> Once they started getting trucks, and stuff like that...they used to have a plough on the road, on the tractor, eh? On the truck, I mean....Plough out themselves...any place they go. A good road right after....They made their own road, yeah.

The freighters generally worked for the fishing companies.

> Booth Fisheries had Cecil Rogers from Mafeking. They were hauling for Booth Fisheries....They brought teams from all over. Make a big outfit of it....the season's outfit, yeah....They all have teamsters. All these guys came with their horses, eh? They all handle their own horses....They came from all over....There was people from Roblin on there.

> Booth Fisheries and other companies there in Mafeking, they had big sheds, and they all sent their fish in [to Winnipeg] when they brought it in, eh. [They went] about fifty miles from here, north. Eagle Islands. That's where there was fishermen. And these guys used to go there, these freighters used to go there. That far out. And get that fish, claim that fish.

William's dad was a winter fisherman, but not at Eagle Islands. His fishing spot was out on the lake just beyond the river's mouth. William recalls that he usually had help.

> About three guys, I guess. There was no big outfits here. You couldn't get a big outfit....That's what they did here, fished. Had their own dogs. Go out in the lake and fish....You...try and pick up a good place. You'd tie up a few nets one place, and if you get fish you just sit there....We didn't have a quota then.

Lawrence McKay used dogs in those days for transport. "He [also] used to run races with his dogs, my dad. He just about won, one time." William recalls how easy it was to train new sled dogs. All they had to do was harness them up with the experienced dogs, and they followed. Likewise, once they had travelled a trail, they remembered it.

> We've been lost on the lake, but never spent the night out, but we've been lost. Sometimes you can't see nothing at all when it's snowing, eh? Miss that....The dogs knew where to go....I remember one time I used to be temporary game warden there at one time, on the marsh.
>
> I was checking the trappers' catch, how much rats they got. They marked them down. I was picking up these papers, and taking them to the control house. They had places where the game warden stayed, eh? That's where I used to take...them....[records of] each guy's catch....We were just checking them on the field, I guess....They had to report what they have, eh?....Summerberry Ranch.
>
> And I had these dogs, running around the houses, and I was checking people, trappers, eh? And next fall I went back, and I had the same dogs. And where I used to go to these portages in the ranch there, there was high grass in the summer, eh? And willows covered all my trail there. You couldn't see where the trail was, and one time Baldy, my dog there, my leader, he just knew where to go. He went straight there. I never said anything, and I stopped them. I stopped my dogs, and I was going to make through first. That dog was sure that he was gonna try and pull the others, eh? And I went and checked through, and I found that, through the bush

there, where all these willows growing, that's the portage there. That dog knew. It's smart.

The McKays used dogs for winter fishing. They also had a little shack, or "caboose" as they called it, where they set their nets. Setting nets involved the use of a jigger.

You got to make a hole first, yeah, big enough so you can get your jigger in. Jigger is the one that guides your line, eh? Start pumping your jigger in, start. And you listen to it at the other end, where the end [is]. All along your net is, you measure it. And you make another hole there, and you take your hook and you grab for that line. And that's where it was nice that you could hear good. Be able to find that jigger, eh? In three feet of ice, you gotta find it.

Did he ever dig the second hole in the wrong place?

Oh, lots of times. (laughter) But mostly hit that line there. Pull it up. The other fellow sets the net over there, and you just pull it back towards you.

Once they had caught some fish, it was either frozen solid or packed in ice to keep it cool and sold as fresh fish.

We kept them out, frozen fish, we kept them out in the open. But...fresh fish. You had to keep them in a warm[er] place, eh? They fished fresh fish, later on, after, too. They put in fresh fish all the way to Mafeking. We...packed them in ice....Later on, when things started to pick up, they had trucks [to transport fresh fish]. Trucks come in here. Just like a town here, when the trucks started to come. (laughs)

As fishing expanded, so did government regulation. And as William recalls, that's when Kjartan Olafson arrived in the community.

He was kind of cranky sometimes. [laughs] He used to be the fish inspector here. I used to drive him around here. Dogs. Checking all the fish nets. Small mesh nets, pull them out.

The government was determined to preserve the fish stock through these measures, but local fishermen had what they thought were good reasons for disobeying the law.

If they get smaller nets, they'd get lotta small fish, eh? That's what they're after. Use to go out check fish, check nets. [They were fined] if they were caught.

It took a while for the fines to have any effect, because so many were breaking the law.

> Oh, everybody did, small mesh nets, I guess, trying to get more fish. See, these five and a quarters [5¼s] you can't get very much fish. You get big ones, but not very many, eh? But you get smaller mesh, that's when you get fish.

When people were caught, they were dealt with.

> They had to go to court for that, eh? Sometimes they had to go to, some of them had to go, any closest place they could get to, eh? Norway House, The Pas....There were people in Norway House. I had to go there one time....My brother [Morris] was caught fishing a net, which he was fishing for dog feed. And he got caught. Right after the closed season. The next day after the closed season he was caught.
>
> And they took him to Norway House. I went with him....He never got fined for that. Mr. Olafson...was here that time. He was the one that got him, yeah....He took us there in a gas boat, fishery boat, eh? He wasn't there himself, but we went to that Norway House court. Seven days we were on that [boat]. Boy, we don't know what we were served, fish or, we had our lunch there, eh? [laughs]....And we got there. The magistrate wasn't home, eh? Was up north, further north. Had to wait for him....Had to feed us. [laughter]
>
> I don't know if Morris got catched for that. No, I had to pay a little bit. That's right. I had to pay a little bit. I don't know what I paid though. I know he was sitting there, and I went and paid, and I came out. I says, 'Lets go?' '*Now*,' he says. [laughs]

William paid the fine for his younger brother, and had a good laugh because the government had more than paid it all back to them by feeding them for a week.

William has seen other changes in fishing over the years.

> The nets made a big difference anyway. You get better nets as the twine came out, finer twine came out.

And fish stocks have declined, although William is not sure why.

> Well, for a long time it was good, and, but now, there is no fish. I don't know, what's the trouble. There's something wrong now. They couldn't get fish this summer [1996]. They fished Cross Lake there, too. That's where they back all the water, eh? There's no fish there. They tried fishing there. There's no fish. Cedar

> Lake. Those Easterville guys. They've got that lake to fish, eh. They didn't get fish at all this summer. And same here. There was no fish. I don't know what's doing it. But there's something there.

However, according to William,"The fish always tasted the same to me." And Agnes agrees, "It tastes the same, yeah."

Although he doesn't blame the dam for the decline of the fish, William feels it contributes little to the community.

> It hasn't helped Grand Rapids much anyway. Just a few people working, that's all....I worked for Hydro....about seven years, I guess....I was mostly with surveyors....And after the dam was built. All kinds of roads and stuff like that. All the buildings, and stuff like that.

Now that he is retired, William have left issues like the dam to others. He and his wife Agnes are too busy with other things.

> We travel. Go to The Pas once in a while. When we feel like it. Got the car. Jump in. [Agnes] We've been to Vancouver twice. I've got a sister there in Vancouver. [William] Linda drives us all over. Takes us for a ride once in a while, too. Oh, yeah.

Surrounded by children, grandchildren, and friends and living in comfort that makes "the good old days" seem far away, William and Agnes can look back now from the perspective of old age. Life may have been hard, but they have lived to reap its rewards.

Audrey Hobbs (Courtesy Lee Heroux)

Unidentified men with dog team, Grand Rapids, 1908
Charles Hall Family Coll. 94 (Courtesy Manitoba Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Margaret Campbell Olafson and Audrey Campbell Hobbs

Margaret Campbell Olafson

Margaret Campbell Olafson and Audrey Campbell Hobbs have long been involved in the business life of Grand Rapids. Indeed, for much of the twentieth century, commerce within the community has been synonymous with the Campbell name. Daughters of James Geddes Brown Campbell and Florence Lillian Louise McKay, they are the children of traders on both sides of the family, and in their mother's case, that tradition goes back at least two hundred and fifty years. Their father was one of three brothers, originally from Kyleakin, Isle of Skye, Scotland, who came out to work for the Hudson's Bay Company late in the nineteenth century.

William "Big Bill" Campbell arrived in 1885 and was "Clerk in charge" at such places as Island Lake, Oxford House, and York Factory, between 1892 and 1910, and ended his career in the same capacity at Green Lake, Saskatchewan, in 1912. In 1897 he returned to Scotland for a visit and brought Margaret and Audrey's father back with him. His diary reads,

> I left for Canada in August [1897], taking my brother Geddes with me. Sailing from Liverpool to Montreal, we arrived in Winnipeg in September. My wife met me here. She had spent her holiday with Tom Linklater and family on their farm seven miles west of Selkirk. Visiting the H.B.Co. offices, I presented my brother to the Commissioner, asking him to give him employment. He instructed his assistant, Chief Factor Clark, to have him sign a contract and give him an appointment. He worked in the Wholesale Department for the remainder of the Outfit and went to McKenzie River in 1898.

Geddes was just seventeen years of age at the time. His brother Forbes also came out to work for the Company, and although he eventually returned to Scotland and married there, two of his daughters later emigrated to Canada.

The Campbell brothers were sons of George McDonald Campbell and Annie Brander, who had four other sons and two daughters. Three of them also left Scotland, like thousands before them, because there were few opportunities for work at home. George Jr. went to Africa during the Boer War and remained there. Another brother settled in Australia, married and fathered two sons, both of whom became doctors. Another was a purser on a steam ship and died at sea. Edward remained in Scotland and had a daughter, Isabel McGregor, one of whose sons emigrated to Canada and became a banker in Toronto. The other was a metropolitan policeman in London, England. Both sisters remained in Scotland. Annie married a man surnamed Donald and had one son who died at sixteen of polio. Veda married James Horne, who was manager of Lord Lovitt's estate at Beauly.[10]

Geddes Campbell worked at a number of places for the Hudson's Bay Company, but his last posting was at Chemawawin on Cedar Lake. It was while he was manager there that he met Florence McKay, who was living then at The Pas. Florence came from a distinguished background which included English, Scottish,

[10] Beauly is located in the Northwest Highlands of Scotland on the Beauly River, which flows into Moray Firth.

and Cree ancestors. Her father was Henry McKay of Grand Rapids, whose forebears had worked for the Hudson's Bay Company since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Her mother, Ellen Inkster, belonged to a well-known Winnipeg family with fur trade ties to the equally prominent Sinclairs and Todds.

Florence was a good friend of Mabel Morris, who was the wife of the minister at St. Albans, Cedar Lake, and it was in this church that Geddes and Florence were married 2 April 1918. While at Cedar Lake, their first two daughters were born, Margaret, 19 May 1919, and Dorothy May Louise, 9 July 1920, both at The Pas. After they moved to Grand Rapids, they had two more children, Francis Henry Forbes, 18 October 1922, and Audrey Eleanor Brander, 16 June 1924.[11]

In about 1921 the family relocated to Grand Rapids. Geddes took over a store, which had at one time been operated by the Hudson's Bay Company, but was now owned by a man named Morrison.[12] The family moved into a house located just a few feet away, which Margaret remembers well.

> It was a log house with three bedrooms. What I remember about that house was a time at Christmas. In those days the hard candy came in these twenty-five pound wooden pails. For our stockings, my dad had brought in the candy pail from the store and hid it in the kitchen cupboard. So the next morning after Christmas, I remember asking my mother, 'How come the same candy as was in our stockings is in the pail from the store under the cupboard?' She said, 'Well, I guess Santa Claus was in a hurry and forgot it.'

Perhaps it was her growing suspicions about Santa Claus that imprinted that house on her memory, because Margaret has no recollection of the family's move to another log house downriver on a piece of land her father purchased in about 1923. It was here that he built his own store and established a business which was to prosper for nearly seventy-five years.

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[11] Information from family and church sources. The Diocese of Brandon, Cedar Lake & Moose Lake, 1909-1927, provided birth/baptismal information for Dorothy, Francis, and Audrey. In some instances, they contradict family sources. Dorothy is recorded as born 9 July 1920; Margaret says it is 19 July. Audrey is recorded as Audrey Eleanor Brenda, when it should be Audrey Eleanor Brander. Her birthdate is also incorrect. She was born 16 June 1924, not 13 June as stated in the records. This just proves everything written down isn't necessarily accurate!

[12] This store was located close to where the Roman Catholic Church is today.

Margaret remembers many times from those early years. Although her grandmother had died in 1916, she recalls her Grandfather McKay, who was postmaster, police magistrate, and fire ranger at Grand Rapids. He had been the postmaster at The Pas prior to that.

> All I know about his life in The Pas was that he had a tame moose that he used to harness, and he used the moose to go and pick up the mail. The story goes that either New Zealand or Australia wanted moose from Canada, and they shipped about forty moose overseas. They claimed that 'Billy,' my grandfather's moose, was one of the few that survived the trip.

Margaret remembers that her Grandfather McKay was a strong Anglican.

> He used to have church services, when there was no minister. Then, when there was a minister, he acted as a layman. He used to read the lessons and taught Sunday school as well.

He also valued education. His daughters had been sent out to school in Winnipeg, because opportunities for advanced education were very limited in the North at that time. Florence attended St. Mary's Academy for awhile, then returned home. Her sisters remained in the city. Margaret recalls.

> Actually she had three sisters that were in nursing, but Dorothy, the youngest one, quit when her sister Margaret took the flu during that flu epidemic of 1918. Margaret was nursing in St. Boniface, when she caught the flu and died. We had another aunt, Connie, and she was married to Ray MacGachan, who I believe worked for Winnipeg Hydro. He died when their son Howard was only about four or five years old. Aunt Connie then decided to move to the States, where she had a private nursing place in Beverly Hills. My mother and Aunt Molly travelled down there to visit her.

Grandfather McKay also had four sons, Arthur, Valentine, Lawrence, and Reginald. As Audrey recollects,

> They were commercial fishermen, and trapped as well. Arthur was the forest ranger for many years, working for Mines and Natural Resources. Uncle Reggie was in the Canadian Navy for four years during World War II, serving on a destroyer and a mine sweeper.

Margaret adds that Lawrence ran a local store.

> My grandmother had a little store, and when she passed away, my grandfather gave it to Lawrence to run. He ran it for years, then returned to commercial fishing.

Although she remembers that store, Margaret was too busy being a little girl to be much interested in business. Her father, on the other hand, was even then preparing his children for the future. That is one reason why he did not allow them to speak Cree at home, preferring instead to have them learn English.

> My Dad wouldn't let us speak Cree to the children we played with. He wanted us to talk English. All the kids we played with spoke Cree, and we soon learned the language. I still love to speak Cree, as it is a very expressive language.

Knowing Cree was a real asset in a community where everyone else spoke the language, but fluency in English opened doors to the larger world beyond Grand Rapids. That is why Geddes insisted his children speak only English at home, a custom which continued even after his death in 1929. There were other customs from Margaret's early years which did not change either.

> When we were small children, we always ate in the dining room with a white table cloth. This continued for many years. Today anything goes.

She recalls her first trip to Winnipeg by boat.

> I don't know which boat we travelled on, but my first trip to Winnipeg was when I was between seven and eight years old. My mother and the four of us travelled down the lake to Winnipeg.
>
> The boat was ahead of schedule, so it docked in either Victoria Beach or Grand Beach. I remember we played in the sand there all afternoon. The thing that stands out the most in my memory was all the stores and the Walker Theatre. We went to the Walker Theatre, and I remember this little man dancing up on the stage. Whether this was a film or actually Charlie Chaplin, I can't recall.

One store was Piggly Wigglys, and it sold "lots of candy and stuff that interests little kids," which certainly impressed young Margaret, who was soon to become a storekeeper herself. Indeed, her father's untimely death in 1929 meant that she had to assume the responsibilities of adulthood much earlier than would ordinarily be expected.

> The first time I was left with the store alone, I was ten years old. My father passed away in May, and in August, Captain Hokanson, of the steamship freighter *S. S. Keenora*, informed my mother that the last trip of the season would be in two weeks

time. He said to my mother, 'If you don't make your orders now, you're not going to be in time for the boat's last trip.' She couldn't sit down and quickly start making an order for enough supplies for the winter. She decided to take Audrey and my brother Francis and travel to Winnipeg to order the winter stock for the store. My sister and I were left to look after the store. My grandfather slept at the house at night, but in the daytime we just had this fifteen year old girl with us.

As soon as her mother returned, Margaret went back to school and worked in the store part-time. With few other options available to her, Florence's decision to keep the store open was a wise one. What she had not learned from her mother and husband, Florence soon learned for herself, with Margaret learning right along side her.

It was a small store, and three to four years later, I started working in it more often. I'd be thirteen, fourteen years old. In between attending school, I worked at the store. By the time I was sixteen, I was doing all the dry goods ordering from Robinson Little Wholesale in Winnipeg.

The store operated quite differently from stores today.

We didn't stay there steady. If people needed something, they would come to the house and get us. We never spent all day in the store.

When she was older, Audrey helped in the store as well. In 1943, she went to Winnipeg to take a hair dressing and beauty culture course at the Scientific Beauty School on Portage Avenue. Dorothy also left Grand Rapids and took a business course in Winnipeg. As Margaret recalls,

I don't remember her working in the store. During the war, she got a job with Indian Affairs at the Rossville office in Norway House. She replaced one of the clerks, who had been drafted into the army.

Audrey adds,

Dorothy also taught school in Grand Rapids. I don't recall how long. She taught on permit, because there was a shortage of teachers at that time.

In the early years, supplies for the store came via Lake Winnipeg. Florence and Margaret would make up their order and send it in with the boat. In later years, they occasionally sent it by air. Margaret recalls those times.

> The pilots were very good. They would take your mail and post it for you. In the fall we had to get in all the supplies. We had to order enough to last the winter.

Supplies were basic.

> Groceries at first, then we went into dry goods, hardware, clothing, and footwear. Flour, tea, sugar, salt, baking powder, corned beef, pork and beans, cookies, raisins, rice, currents, Lilly White syrup. They used to make syrup pie with cracker crumbs. Those were the days when the cookies came in those big, wooden barrels. We had to weigh everything out; everything came in boxes or barrels - raisins, cheese, tea. The cheese came in little five-pound wooden boxes. The tea came bulk in forty pound lots and had to be weighed out.

Goods were brought in on the freight boats, the *Wolverine*, the *Grand Rapids*, and later on, the *S. S. Keenora*. Florence did not limit herself to the sale of groceries alone. As Audrey recalls,

> She used to sell cordwood in four-foot lengths to the *Keenora* to fuel the boilers for the steam engine. This wood was cut and hauled to the dock by horses. We always had horses.

Florence also purchased beadwork and locally made handicrafts to sell to the tourists who travelled from "up south" on the steamers to see the Grand Rapids.[13] She bought Seneca Root from local people, too.[14] Margaret explains.

> Local people would go way down the lake to dig Seneca Root, and would sell it green. It had to be dried before shipping. We spread it out on these big canvas tarps, and had to turn it every day so it would dry out. Then we packed it in great big bales made from two burlap gunny sacks split and sewn together. In those days, Seneca Root was about twenty- five cents a pound, but you could buy a sack of flour for

[13] "Up south" is commonly used in old fur trade communities in Northern Manitoba. It originated in the days when men took Hudson's Bay company freight on York boats upriver from York Factory along the Hayes and Nelson Rivers to Lake Winnipeg and Red River. Since the men were going *upriver* in a *southerly* direction, the term "up south" made good sense. It still does, and northerners can be proud that they have retained this little bit of their heritage.

[14] Seneca Root or Seneca Snakeroot (*polygala senega*) is a North American milkwort, which apparently derives its origin from the Seneca, who used it as a remedy against snakebite. Senega Root/Senega Snake Root or Seneka Root/Seneka Snakeroot are alternative spellings. The dried root is used in herbal medicine as an expectorant in the treatment of bronchial asthma, bronchitis, and whooping cough. It is also an emetic in large doses.

> ninety cents. Baking powder was only thirty-five cents; now it's four dollars and a quarter. Corned beef was just twenty-five cents a can; now it's over three dollars. When I think of all the prices. Cereals are so expensive today. I used to sell cornflakes for fifteen cents a package.

Everything was cheaper then, and the key to success in business was balancing sales with expenses, so as to make a profit. Florence was always on the lookout for new possibilities. She even bought furs occasionally, and travelled to the Summerberry Marsh to buy muskrats the first year it opened. Her enterprising spirit did not end there. As Audrey recalls, "We had some cattle and horses, so she used to have to get hay cut in the meadows, hiring local people for this work." Margaret adds,

> We usually had four or five cows. We'd usually kill a steer or a heifer in the fall for meat. My mother used to can hundreds of quarts of vegetables, chicken, fish, and moose meat. The basement used to be filled with quart sealers. We did a lot of gardening in those days.

Audrey interjects, "There was a garden everywhere." Laughing, Margaret agrees, "Wherever my mother spotted any good soil, she put a garden in it." Without missing a beat, Audrey quips, " From one end of town to the other."

Of course, she needed help to do all that work. According to Audrey, "She'd have one girl working in the house" most of the time, and during canning season, "she would hire another to help." There were always men hired from Grand Rapids to cut wood and haul supplies.

Florence was a kind person, and generous with the community. When the cows were milked, the neighbourhood kids would come for their portion, as she gave most of the milk away. She helped in other ways, too, as Margaret recalls.

> She spent a lot of time caring for the local people, when they were ill. All hours of the night they would come and get her, to go and tend to a sick infant. Sometimes I know she used to come home in the wee hours of the morning. They would bring her back across the river. Children with the flu, bad colds, convulsions, kids with meningitis she tended to. It's odd she never caught any of these sicknesses herself. She stayed in good health.

When she had the resources, Florence had a large house built on her property, just like the one in which Margaret resides today.

> This house is an exact replica of the first house that stood on this property. Two Natives, Peter Beardy and old Jonas Chartier, hand hewed the logs for the house. The logs were already on the property. My Dad had intended to build a house, but when he passed away in May of '29, my mother didn't have enough money to carry on the business and build a new house. So the logs were there for, I don't know, two, three years. When she decided to build, she finished the downstairs part first. It was all finished inside with fir - what they call v-joints - and stained. The following year the upstairs part was finished.

The upstairs consisted of six rooms and a large hallway. Over the years, they boarded many people.

"Anybody coming to Grand Rapids, and staying overnight, stayed at our house," Audrey recalls. Margaret adds,

> Major Burwash was one who stayed overnight with us once. I think he had something to do with the investigation of Sir John Franklin's expedition up north. I think that's what it was.
>
> Miss Mary Kennedy, the daughter of Captain William Kennedy, was a long time friend of my Grandmother McKay. My mother sympathized with Miss Kennedy, who lived in Winnipeg in a small suite, and would pay her fare on the *S. S. Keenora*, so that she could come to Grand Rapids. Miss Kennedy would spend a month in our home enjoying our lovely summers.
>
> We used to have Catholic priests sometimes stay over. Pilots, doctors and nurses, Indian Affairs agents, the R.C.M.P. in the winters, when they would make their patrol from Norway House.
>
> My mother would board schoolteachers for twenty dollars a month, room and board. Teachers weren't paid very well in those days. Some of them, she boarded for nothing, just for the sake of keeping the school open. When the school ran out of firewood, the kids would come to our woodpile and take an armful of wood back to the school to keep the fire going. It's a far cry from the way things are now.

Indeed, many things are a "far cry" from what they were sixty years ago, including transportation, which was changing even then. In the thirties, for instance, the

Campbells began to bring in their goods by land as well as by steamer. Margaret explains.

> In the late '30s, there was some commercial fishing. There weren't too many people living in Grand Rapids. Fishermen fished in the winter, and buyers came from Mafeking to buy the fish. They would also bring freight out for us. This was before we went into the fish buying business.

This freight had been ordered from Winnipeg and shipped up by train to Mafeking, which was an important regional transportation and distribution centre.

> Booth Fisheries would store it and ship it out with Cecil Rogers, who freighted with horses out of Mafeking. They used to transport the fish with teams of horses. I don't remember how many, about forty teams, I think. Some of them would go all the way to pick up Stefansons' and Murray's fish at Eagle Islands, and haul them back to Mafeking.
>
> From Grand Rapids, they would go across Cross Lake to Stable Lake, through McKenzie Portage to Cedar Lake, south to Lake Winnipegosis through High Portage via Oscar Fredrickson's camp.

The Fredericksons were fishermen on Lake Winnipegosis and the route which meandered across country between Grand Rapids and Mafeking passed through their camps. Oscar was located at a place called Oscar's Point, while his brother Sturni was at Spruce Island. From Sturni's, the route continued on to the highway, near Burrell's camp, and from there on to Mafeking. Margaret and Audrey remember a trip their brother Francis made on that route. Margaret describes that journey.

> I remember once my mother was anxious to get mail out, and Francis volunteered to go. He wanted to take his dog-team. We always had a number of dog-teams. He was thirteen or fourteen when he made that first trip to Mafeking. My mother was a little apprehensive about letting him go, but he said, 'I'll be back here Friday afternoon at 2:00 p.m.' He said, 'I can do it.' So he took off with the dog-team and went to Mafeking. You know, he was only five minutes late getting home.

It was Audrey and Francis who raised the dogs. As Audrey recalls,

> We raised the dogs, my brother and I. He used to fish, and he needed all these dog-trains. When he was about fourteen, he fished with a couple of local men. I

> remember helping him get food for them and feeding them. In the summer, it was a lot of work, as there was between thirty and thirty-five dogs to care for.

Margaret adds, "She raised some of the dogs that won the race at the Trappers' Festival in The Pas once." Audrey explains, "I raised those that Steve Pranteau, a local man, used when he won the championship dog race at the Festival." She found it easy to train the dogs. "Once you have a good lead dog, the others aren't too hard to train."

As the years rolled by, Margaret, as the eldest of Florence's children, assumed more responsibility in matters related to the store. Even her brother Francis deferred to her. Audrey recalls that, "Francis always helped, but Margaret was more of the leader, and he listened to her. He always worked hard; he did a lot." Indeed, Francis was kept busy training dogs, fishing, and travelling for the mail. When the war broke out in 1939, he could hardly wait until he was eighteen, so that he could enlist. After he was accepted and completed his training, he went overseas where he served on the front lines in Belgium and Holland with the Princess Patricia Infantry. Margaret recalls that the absence of her brother meant adjustments at home, involving, among other things, the mail contract which her mother had taken over from Grandfather McKay.

> When my grandfather passed away in 1936, my mother applied for the mail contract. She maintained this contact from '36 to '58. When my brother joined the army, Audrey had to take over the mail run to The Pas.[15]

Audrey remembers those trips well.

> I made the trip to The Pas many times, every month in the summer by canoe with Alfred Ballantyne, from across the river, acting as guide. My husband always laughs because nowadays they use such big motors. We had a five and a half horsepower at first, then got a ten horse. We thought we had such a big motor. We were really travelling!

At the end of the war, Francis returned and went to work freighting on the tractor trains which had replaced the horse-drawn sleighs by that time. It was while on a trip for his mother to pick up the mail at The Pas, that he was to lose his life in a drowning accident. Dorothy was married and living in Beauseuour at the time,

[15] Florence was also postmistress. The post office was located in Campbells' Store for fifty-one years. Margaret took over as postmistress in 1958 and continued until 1985. Audrey was postmistress from 1985 to 1987.

and she and her husband, Lawrence, travelled to The Pas and chartered Lamb Airways to fly to Grand Rapids and inform the other family members of the accident.

The family grieved over their tragic loss, but work was good therapy. In 1947, Margaret married Kjartan Olafson, a fisheries officer of Icelandic descent, and Audrey married Gilbert "Gib" Hobbs in 1951. Gib was freighting supplies by tractor train into Grand Rapids from Gypsumville and Mafeking, when he met Audrey. They farmed for a short time at Deloraine, before returning to Grand Rapids in 1955. As Audrey explains it, "I didn't make him come up here. He made his own decision to move north." However, life on an isolated farm with a newborn baby was very different from that of the close-knit village life at Grand Rapids. Sometimes Gib and his brother would be away for an entire day with farm work. It simply wasn't her lifestyle.

> I didn't like it. I didn't like being alone so much of the time. I missed the water. I used to go and sit by the dugout on the farm and watch a mink swimming.

Regardless of whose decision it was, the move north opened the door to a partnership with Florence Campbell and the Olafsons in a company called Saskatchewan River Supply Limited. This joint venture took advantage of the strategic location of Grand Rapids. In fact, there had been three stores at one time and then other businesses. Margaret explains.

> Johnnie Simpson from Winnipegosis opened a store here, but Lawrence McKay was still in business as well. When Simpson moved out in the late forties, a company was formed by Jimmy Page of Canadian Fish Producers and Thor Thordarson and Norman Greenberg of Gimli, called the Grand Rapids Trading Company. Later, when Greenberg wanted to get out of the fish buying business, he sold his share to the Freeman brothers. The Freemans operated a box mill as well, making boxes to pack the fish in. In 1955, Page and Thordarson bought out the Freemans, who then moved to Thicket Portage.
>
> The Grand Rapids Trading Company had built a fish station and also made fish boxes, after they purchased Freeman's mill. They then approached us and asked if we would be interested in buying out their business. So Audrey's husband, Gib, and my husband and I, along with our mother, formed Saskatchewan River Supply Ltd., went into partnership, and bought out Grand Rapids Trading Company.

The Campbell Family was already operating a fish station by this time, located at the mouth of the Saskatchewan River. This fish shed had been owned previously by the Sigurdsons, who had run it in the summers. When the Sigurdsons decided to leave, the Campbells bought the business out. So, with the purchase of the Grand Rapids Trading Company, the family now operated two fish stations and two general stores. Audrey operated one of these stores, and Margaret operated the other.

Audrey's husband Gib managed the box mill which produced wooden boxes for packing fresh fish. These boxes were sold to Booth Fisheries and Canadian Fish Producers and picked up at Grand Rapids for distribution to the stations they operated. The boxes were loaded onto their respective boats, *The Red Diamond* and *The Lady Canadian*. Margaret recalls, "I was always sorry that the picture I took of *The Lady Canadian*, loaded with thousands of wooden boxes turned out so poorly. It was just packed full with boxes."

The mill supplied boxes for the majority of the fish stations located around Lake Winnipeg, but it wasn't the first mill that the family had operated. Margaret explains.

> We also had a small sawmill in the '40s. Most of the lumber for our house was sawed at that mill from logs cut at Cross Lake. We logged the islands on Cross Lake.

Audrey remembers the garage her husband Gib operated.

> When Manitoba Hydro first came to Grand Rapids in the early '60s, Saskatchewan River Supply built a large garage. My husband had the Imperial Esso dealership, and he supplied the different companies involved in the construction of the Hydro dam with gas, diesel, oil, anti-freeze, etc.. He set a number of provincial sales records for volume of Esso products sold during the building of the dam.

The garage was later sold to the town, and today it is the town office and equipment garage.

In the early days of dam construction, Audrey and Gib got into the tourist business as well. They built rental cabins and also rented boats. "In 1960 we built the first of the cabins," Audrey recalls. However, this was not the first time the family had been involved with tourists, who had first started coming to Grand Rapids in the 1920s. As Audrey remembers it,

> They would come up on the boats from Winnipeg, spending the day in Grand Rapids. There were always lots of tourists on the boats. In the mid-30s, Americans started coming on the *Keenora*, and my uncles would take them out to the north end of Cross Lake to fish and camp for a while.

For the more adventurous of the tourists who stopped briefly at Grand Rapids, shooting the rapids was a great thrill, and one the Campbells encouraged. Margaret recalls that they used their horses to get the canoes and the tourists up to the head of the rapids.

> By then, the old Hudson's Bay tramway was in disrepair, and my mother used to maintain it, putting in new ties and rebuilding a couple of the cars. She used to hire local men to take the canoes over the portage the day before the boat came in. When the boat arrived, the tourists would then travel by the tram cars to the rapids, where local canoemen would charge them for the ride downriver through the rapids. There was also a fee of fifty cents per tourist to travel on the portage.

Not only was this a paying proposition for the Campbells, but it also enabled local canoemen to earn money from the tourists, too. Maintaining and operating the tramway provided work for local people, as did the other Campbell enterprises. Margaret recalls,

> There was Jonas Chartier, Norbert Dorion, Albert Dorion, George Mercredi, Pat McNab, and Henry Chartier, Roderick Turner, Hardisty Ballantyne. And then at the box mill, we had - I couldn't come close to remembering who all worked there over the years - Munroes, Ballantynes. Some from Chemawawin came and worked for us as well. At least ten to twelve worked at the box mill.

Audrey adds, "We were also running both fish sheds as well and had a crew at each station."

There were also women who were hired to do the cooking, help with the canning, and keep the house. Margaret lists them.

> Mildred Sinclair and Angelique Chartier - she was later Mrs. Dan Cook. And Clara Dorion - she was Clara Chartier then. Also Joe Buck's sister, Matilda Turner, and Eva Turner. Mary Jane Turner a few times. Gladys and Nora McKay. Agnes Mercredi.

Even with all that hired help, Margaret recalls how hard the family worked as well.

> I remember when we used to have to weigh out the fish and pack them in boxes. We used to store the fish in a warehouse, and just before the tractor trains came in to load them, we'd have to go out and weigh the fish, marking the weight on each box. We did a lot of the lifting ourselves. I got to the stage where I could lift a hundred and seventy pound box of fish!

Sometimes they loaded their fish onto a plane, and that required even greater effort. Margaret continues.

> There was a fellow named Connie Johanson from some place up south of Winnipeg, who used to fly out fresh fish for us. When we first got into the fish business, he'd fly the fish to Booth Fisheries at Winnipegosis. He would arrive around 10:00 in the morning and put a siren on when he arrived. As soon as we heard the siren, we'd get busy repacking the fish into paper boxes. We would take the fish down to the plane when he landed and quickly load them. He was alway in a big hurry to get loaded as he was trying to make as many trips in a day as he could.

In those days, everyone in the community worked. There wasn't a great deal of cash, but people could get what they needed through barter. Margaret explains how it worked.

> Usually we ran charge accounts, and people worked to pay us back. We employed them, and then give credit on Seneca Root, and on their furs from trapping. The older people were always very good on paying their bills. When we went into the fish business, we used to supply them with equipment - nets, cork, and leads. We built cabins from the lumber we sawed and moved them out on the lake for them to fish out of, instead of tents. We had three bombardiers that hauled on the lake, hauling supplies and firewood. We would more or less carry the local people for their supplies and groceries from one fishing season to the other, and then they'd repay us when they got the fish.

Most people kept their accounts up-to-date and paid their bills on time. As Margaret recalls, "There was an odd one who didn't, but in those days there were more honest people than there were bad." In her view, the situation has changed over the years, making business "very risky" today.

Risk is an ever present factor in the success or failure of an enterprise over which the owners often have little control. The Hydro power development at Grand Rapids illustrates this point. Not only did it increase risk for the local economy in some instances, but local people also had no say regarding its construction. It did

provide temporary jobs locally and was a boon to the garage Gib Hobbs opened up during dam construction, but it had a detrimental effect on the family business in the long run. Margaret's views are definite.

> I don't think it brought us anything. We had our own electricity from diesel generators before Hydro came. It did nothing for us, as far as I'm concerned.

Audrey also feels the project was destructive.

> This river was just full of pickerel before the dam was built. That's why we built our cabins along the river; there was such great pickerel fishing there. One day I remember counting a hundred and ten boats fishing on the river.

Margaret, too, recalls counting eighty boats one Sunday morning, all of them sport fishermen. Seemingly, the dam destroyed the fish, and as the fish went, so did the tourist. With the loss of the tourist, Gib and Audrey's business suffered accordingly.

> Our cabins were always full from spring till fall with tourists who came to fish in the river. Before the dam was built, the fish would go upriver to the rapids to spawn. After the dam was built, there were no more rapids. They were completely dried up, and there wasn't the fast current in the river like before. The first few years after the dam was put in, you couldn't really notice the decline in fish. But as the spawning fish soon had to go elsewhere to spawn, the fishing began to decline rapidly. As the fish disappeared, so did the tourists. The last few years, there's been just no fish, so our cabin business has died as well.
>
> When Hydro moved into the community, people didn't know what was going to happen. They were never consulted and had no perception of the destruction that would occur from dam construction. The resulting devastation of fishing and trapping has had a profound effect on the economic and social well-being of the citizens of Grand Rapids. Since commerical and sport fishing were primary sources of income for local people, perhaps more should have been done by Hydro to protect and enhance this economic mainstay.

Audrey wonders.

> Perhaps if a fish ladder had been constructed, it may have helped the fish to spawn, maybe not too much, but surely it would have helped some. Even though the fish hatchery puts spawn into the rivers and lakes, the fishing has never been as good as it was when the rapids was in its natural state.

Even though the hatchery hasn't solved the problem, Audrey adds hopefully, "It takes a while, I guess." Everything takes a while, including the efforts of the local trappers to get compensation for the loss of the muskrat habitat when Cedar Lake was flooded. As Audrey says, "There is a group that meets with Hydro trying to get compensation for that trapping, but so far they haven't been able to get a settlement." Then she adds,

> I was saying the other day to my daughter-in-law, Eileen, if Hydro hadn't come in, we'd still have the rapids. Maybe people would come to Grand Rapids for white-water rafting. I said, maybe...

"We could have created another business?" adds Margaret, wryly. [laughter]

They certainly had created enough of them in the past, each generating income, not only for the Campbells, but also for the many local people who worked for them. It was an economy somewhat removed from the market forces which operated elsewhere. However, the construction of the Grand Rapids Generating Station changed all that. Government decisions made elsewhere, with little or no consideration of the local economy, was behind it. It was government policy, too, in not-far-away Winnipeg that eventually brought an end to Saskatchewan River Supply. As Margaret tells it,

> We closed it in the fall of '68, when they formed this fish marketing board, and the government forced, you may as well say, they forced all the buyers to sell their stations and everything went. The marketing board took over.
>
> We closed the general store and the fish shed operated by Saskatchewan River Supply in the fall of '68, when the government formed a fish marketing board, and, you may as well say, forced all the independent buyers to sell to them. Instead of a lot of individual companies buying fish, the Freshwater Marketing Board took over.

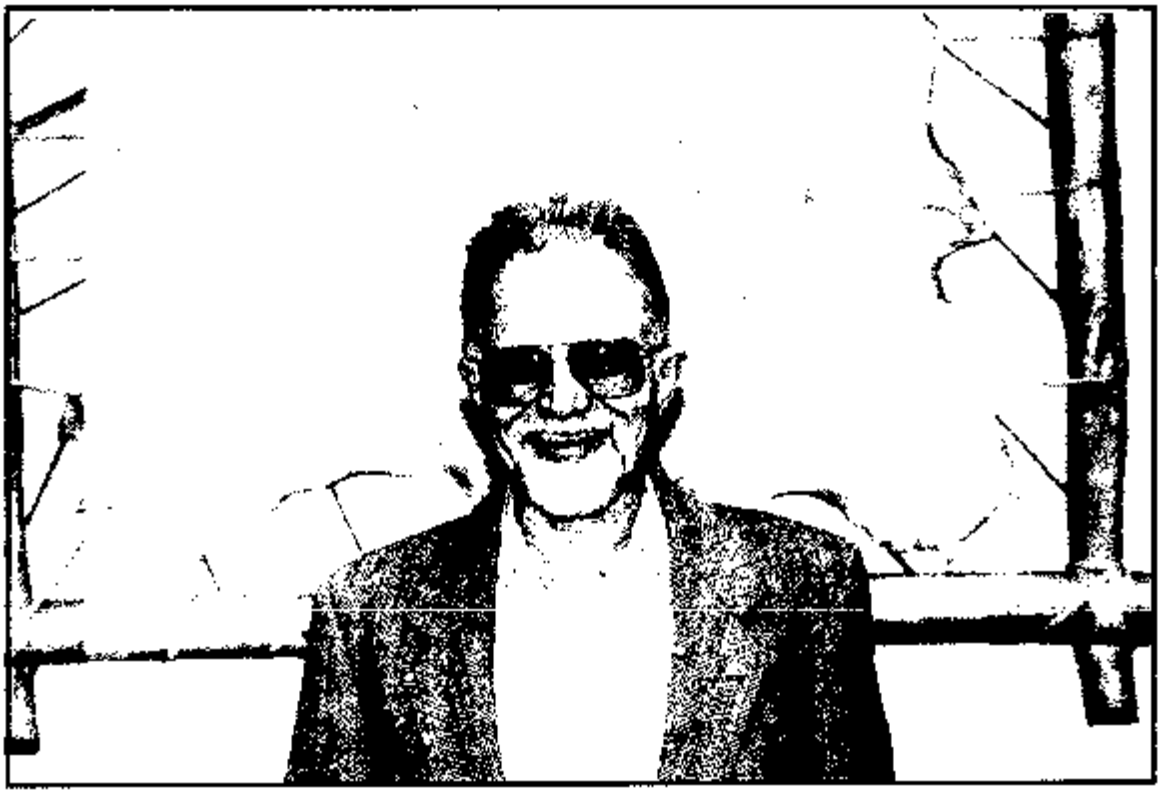
Campbells' Store still overlooks the river, but its location is no longer as advantageous as it was when everyone travelled by boat. With a paved road intersecting the community and a highway connecting it to the rest of the province, business has shifted elsewhere. In 1996 Margaret still opened the store on occasion, mainly to sell off the remaining stock, but if a buyer were to come along, she would probably let it go. She still lives in her spacious and comfortable home. She says, "My son is always telling me, you should go into the bed and breakfast. I said, 'I'm too old to take on any more jobs.'" Her son Kristjan is not there to take them on either, as he left the community many years ago to attend

high school, then university. He is established in business with his wife Kristine at Gimli, and they have two daughters, Kristjana and Elena.

Audrey's three sons also left the community for schooling, but all of them returned to reside in Grand Rapids. Fred, who attended the University of Manitoba, manages the family lodge at Cross Bay on Cedar Lake. His son Cory and daughter Chrissy spend the summers at the lake with him. Garry, who completed his high school at Eriksdale, is supervisor at the fish hatchery and manages Pine Grove Cabins, established nearly forty years ago by his parents. His wife Eileen teaches at Grand Rapids School, and their two children, Sherri Lynn and Gary Timothy, or "T.J," attend classes there. Greg, the youngest of Audrey and Gib's sons, attended Red River Community College after completing high school at Arborg. He took a carpentry course and is currently working as a carpenter, primarily doing building renovations.

This brings us to the end of the Campbell story, at least for now. In the 1700s, a man named John Favell sold "slops" on Tosley Street in Southwark, London. His entrepreneurial spirit passed on via his son John, a trader in the Hudson's Bay Company, through five generations of McKays to Margaret and Audrey Campbell. Today that tradition continues at Grand Rapids among members of the Hobbs family, nine generations removed. We will have to see where that enterprising spirit will take them in the future. As far as the past is concerned, its mark has been made, and the place of the Campbells is assured in Grand Rapids' history.

Grave of Ellen Arabella McKay, St. John's Cemetery
(Courtesy Lee Heroux)



Bill Sallows (Courtesy Lee Heroux)

Grand Rapids Bridge Construction, 1961

Construction, Bridge 1 (Courtesy Manitoba Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Bill Sallows

Bill was born at Endeavour, Saskatchewan, 7 December 1937, the son of Ralph and Thora (*née* Ellicott) Sallows .

> My grandfather [Bill Ellicott] was a station agent on the Hudson Bay line in that area, and my dad and mother were living with him at that time. And the only hospital was in Endeavour, so I was born there.

Like many others in the prairie provinces then, Bill's people came from elsewhere.

> On my grandmother's [Mary Ellicott's] side...her grandmother was a Ferguson...They came from Scotland through Ontario, through Lanark County, and they emigrated from Ontario into Manitoba. This was generations ago. And on my Grandfather Ellicott's side, he had just come over from England.
>
> Shortly after I was born, my grandfather got posted in Cranberry Portage. I lived there for sixteen or seventeen years. My father had the machine shop. He did all kinds of welding and machine work.

Bill obtained most of his education at Cranberry Portage, but went to Flin Flon for his last year of high school. Then he went to work.

> I started in the construction business, the electrical construction business, and I worked on the Mid-Canada Radar Line, working with one of the contractors, Canadian Comstock. They were the electrical contractor. From there, I went to the generating stations, working as an electrician for Canadian Comstock, [in the north] as well as south in Brandon and Selkirk. After Selkirk was finished, I went to Kelsey, the generating station, still with Canadian Comstock. After we finished Kelsey, I was between jobs and I got tied in with the fellow I used to live with in Selkirk, Herman Kutzner. We came to Grand Rapids and started the Northern Divers Company doing electrical work, refrigeration work, and some diving as well. We came up here in '61.
>
> Actually I met Herman at the Mid-Canada Line. He came from Flin Flon, so we knew each other when we were working for Canadian Comstock in Cranberry Portage. We just moved from job to job, but it was in the Brandon area where we got involved in the diving.
>
> Both of us took our official diving course at the "Y" in Winnipeg. They put on a course. At that time, we had just started the Northern Divers Company, and we were

importing diving equipment, probably one of the first, I guess, to import diving equipment from the United States. There wasn't too much of it around at that time. This was in '59.

Everything that Herman saw was a business opportunity. He was quite a character. He was the driving force behind that venture. It certainly was an opportunity for us to get into the business. We did a lot of diving work in Brandon for different departments. We also were involved a lot with the RCMP. We recovered vehicles and bodies - drownings, that kind of thing.

Their training came in handy after they set up business in Grand Rapids.

We looked for a couple of vehicles that went through the ice before the bridge was built. We pulled those out. We did some work for the contractors in the area in the spillway, retrieving some equipment and stuff that was lost....We cut the pilings on the bridge, and we did exploring work for different outfits, retrieved some equipment on the work that was going on the transmission lines in the area, and a number of other things.

The business went well at Grand Rapids.

We had a pool room operation and we sold confectionery and that kind of stuff. We also operated the electrical and refrigeration business. When we first got up here, there wasn't that much construction. They were just mainly clearing the areas. Then when they actually started building the station, there was a requirement for electrical [work]. Both Herman and I worked for Grand Rapids Constructors.

Bill's first impressions of Grand Rapids were somewhat coloured by the hustle and bustle of dam construction and the activities associated with it.

The community was overshadowed an awful lot by the amount of work that was going on in the construction, and, I guess, by the people that were setting up businesses...There was three restaurants, two or three clothing stores, mainly set up to cater to the hundreds of men that were working on the station....There was something like a thousand men at one time that were working on the project.

The Campbells and Hobbs were the main local business people, and it was not too long before they called upon Bill and Herman for their services.

Because Herman was involved and I was involved doing electrical and refrigeration work. In fact, we wired Gib Hobb's garage that he set up to operate his business out

of. He had the Esso bulk dealership, and he was selling gas, as well as oil and whatever else was being sold for cars. It was like a service station, a gas station.

Gib was still making boxes for his fish station. I think Margaret's had closed down. Just the one was left open. So they were still buying fish and packing them and shipping them, and I think quite a bit of that was done by boat. It was only, I think, after the Fishermen's Co-op, after Gib quit the fish packing business (or I think the Fishermen's Co-op started while Gib was still in business), they were shipping the fish out by truck....When I came up in '61 the road had just been finished. It was maintained, [but] there were lots of holes 'cause there was lots of traffic.

As they came to know them, Bill and Herman were impressed with the local business people.

We had a really good working and social impression with all of them. In fact, very soon after we got here, the businesses organized a Chamber of Commerce. We were looking at trying to improve a number of things in the community to attract the tourist. Gib was also in the tourist business. There was quite a thriving tourist business going.

From Bill's perspective, local business people were not initially opposed to the hydro-electric power dam.

They were also in it for the dollar; they could see the potential. And they were doing whatever they thought they could, you know, to make the most of the opportunity, just like any businessman would

The entire community seemingly welcomed the project. Disillusionment only came later.

The five years that the construction was on, there was so much going on. There was so much to do, so much work for anybody. There wasn't really much thought gone into what we should be doing, or what should be done for the community. It was only after that, when the jobs started to taper down, that these questions started coming out. Well, what should we do? And that's when we had this Chamber of Commerce, and it sort of kicked into high gear because we knew that we had to bring something into the community, because there just wasn't enough work. The main industry in Grand Rapids at that time for everybody in the community was fishing. We needed something else besides the fishing industry. So we tried to bring some tourism, to get something going for tourism, because Gib was into that full swing, and you could see that there was good potential. A lot of customers come here, so we wanted to gear the

businesses and gas stations and the restaurants around this tourism. And it worked for a number of years. Being the end of the road, so to speak, was quite an attraction for the fishermen and hunters to come up. But as the road went further north in '69, that attraction went further north. We lost a lot of the repeat customers and a lot of the fishermen that came in looking for the big fish in the virgin country.

It made an opportunity, too, for the tourist in the area to go up that road, up through The Pas, Flin Flon and into [the] Thompson area, then come back through Grand Rapids. We tried to tie that in as a circle route, or whatever you want to call it, for the tourist. We had a number of discussions with different communities, through the tourist association, and through Nor-Man Regional Development, and those kinds of organizations, to try and get this working for the community.

We had good business, but...the lakes that we have in the area can only sustain so much fishing. With all of that amount of fishing, you know, eventually the big fish are gone. The pickerel are gone from the rapids and from the areas upstream of the station. So the attraction wasn't there anymore. We still have a small tourist business in Grand Rapids, but it's nowhere near what it was.

The decline of fish not only affected the tourist trade, it also affected commercial fishing. Bill and Herman were indirectly connected with that industry for a number of years.

As well as having the pool hall and the electrical and refrigeration business, we were also selling and servicing Mercury outboard motors. We provided a number of motors for the fishermen of the community...I serviced their motors for probably four or five years from '61 onwards, until I got too busy to continue. I started [with] Hydro in '64, so I let that part of the work go, because I couldn't do it on a regular daily basis. The fishermen required that, so they had somebody else look after their needs. We were involved with a lot of the local fisherman and people in the community.

The number of licenses hasn't changed too much from those early days until now. I think there was probably upwards of sixty some fisherman, and there probably still is that many active fisherman...It was just on Lake Winnipeg that they had their licenses. They had limits....Grand Rapids has its commercial fishing area, and they have to fish within those limits.

The river was used for subsistence, rather than commercial fishing, and seems to have been an important spawning ground for pickerel, whitefish, and sturgeon. Its

decline over the past few years has been blamed on the dam, but Bill is not sure about the real cause.

> When the dam was built, there was a tremendous amount of [sport] fishing on the river, as it was being built. And even after the dam was here for a number of years, any time that we closed the spillway down, you could go out there and you could pick fish up by the hundreds that were trapped in the channel. They're just not there anymore. Now whether the closing of the spillway blocked their access to spawning grounds that were beyond the spillway, some of the biologists can't even tell us. But, just surmising, if that was the attraction, we could say 'OK, if the fish aren't spawning here now, then they must have been spawning further up.' By blocking off their access to the spawning grounds further up, eventually they quit spawning here, and there's no more fish being produced in the area. Nobody really has a definite answer, but one can surmise that, by just looking at what happened.
>
> No doubt there's a lot of factors involved. The other factor that Hydro has put into the equation is the two mile channel that it put in to divert the water for the generating station at Jenpeg. That had a big impact on the fishing area as well, because it certainly had an impact on the flow of the current at the North end of the lake. So, who knows what that did to the way the pickerel react?
>
> In the '70s, you could still catch a lot of pickerel. In '65, we shut off the spillway, the flow of the water, but we had spills after that, a number of spills. [Nevertheless], you could still catch your limit of pickerel. And even ten years ago, another little business started up. Archie Cinq-Mars bought a few boats and put them on the river, and he had a little business renting his boats, and they were catching pickerel then. But they were in a lot less number then they were in the early '60s, or [even] the late '60s. So it's maybe twenty years now since there's been many fish.
>
> The sturgeon used to, I would imagine, travel the Saskatchewan River from [Lake] Winnipeg as far up as they wanted to. By putting in that dam, we blocked that migration of sturgeon, if they do migrate. I would imagine they were traveling freely back and forth.

Although at first it might seem odd that Hydro did not incorporate fish ladders into the dam construction, there was some question at the time about the wisdom of such action. Bill explains.

> They thought about that when they built the station, when they did the studies. Their answer at that time - and these were the experts, the government biologists and

consultants that Hydro had - was to put in the fish hatchery to offset any problems with the spawning area or fish migrating. They weren't really concerned about the fish not being able to migrate, because they didn't want...to have the fish, particularly the whitefish from Cedar Lake, getting into Lake Winnipeg. Lake Winnipeg had a name. They had the Lake Winnipeg jumbo whitefish, and it was probably the biggest freshwater lake that produced this type of whitefish that was free of any cysts. A lot of whitefish have these worms in them, cysts they call them. The fish in Cedar Lake are, or they were, a lesser quality fish then the fish in Lake Winnipeg, because they are affected by these cysts. So there wasn't really an advantage to have the fish change from one body of water to the other because they knew that if this was going to happen, then the Lake Winnipeg whitefish could be affected by the poorer quality whitefish. They're still separate.

As far as Bill knows, the Lake Winnipeg whitefish are still free of cysts, but there are hardly enough of them to tell.

There's not that many big white fish anymore, the big ones, the jumbos. They're just not there; they're gone.

Another factor in the decline of all types of fish on Lake Winnipeg may be the smaller net size.

If you can't get your [fish] production, the only way you can increase or maintain [it] is [to] go to a smaller net size. They kept doing that until they're down to the minimum net size that they can [have] now, before they completely wipe out all the spawners. The fish has to get to a certain size before they spawn, and if you keep wiping that size of fish out, then you're not going to have any spawners. So you have to maintain a certain size of fish in the lake.

Bill doubts whether the hatchery can make up the difference.

I don't know if it could sustain the commercial fishery, because the biologists say that a good spawning ground would produce a thousand times more fish then a hatchery will.

Even allowing more water through the dam during the spawning period has not helped the process.

We tried over the last four or five years to attract the pickerel back into the channel to spawn, and it hasn't worked. Last year we spilled as much water as we spilled in previous years where there was an attraction. When we had the damage to the station,

to Unit One in '92, we had a fairly successful spawn in the spillway channel, and the commercial fishermen and First Nations insisted that we duplicate that spill process that we did in '92. And we did that last year, and we didn't attract anything. And this is after a number of attempts to try and attract them...They figured that in '96 the fish that spawned in '92 should have been ready to come back up to spawn, so that's why they wanted to have this attraction. But now the biologists realize that the spillway channel probably never was a spawning area, from the spillway down, in previous years. What we're gonna try and do this summer is create or enhance the spillway channel and introduce eggs into the channel and have a certain amount of spill coming through. We're gonna try and artificially make a spawning ground...then do that over a number of years. We're probably looking at a six-year program right now. But this will never bring back the commercial fishing the way it used to be. This is only to put enough pickerel into the area, so that people will be able to catch a pickerel again...for their own use. It certainly won't make the commercial fishing in the north basin what it used to be.

The whitefish population has been wiped out as well, and they don't really hatch in the channel here as much as the pickerel did. But this Saskatchewan River isn't the only place where the pickerel spawned. They spawned up in Limestone Bay, and they used to at one time take their eggs from there for the fish hatchery, but they can't even get them up there anymore.

If the pickerel spawn has declined in Limestone Bay, in an area which hasn't been disturbed, is it possible that they are being fished beyond their capacity to regenerate? According to Bill,

It would almost seem that way, but I've never seen any study, although there are studies out there. I've never read anything in the last few years to determine whether that's the case or not, but it does certainly appear that that's what's happening.

Certainly, during the past thirty years, people waved the red flag concerning the Newfoundland fishery on the Grand Banks. They argued that the fishery could not sustain itself in the face of heavy domestic and foreign fishing. Both government and local fishermen turned a blind eye to these protests. They claimed there was nothing to worry about. In the end, everyone was pointing the finger at someone else when the fish on the Grand Banks went the way of those on the North Sea. Now that the cod have almost disappeared, and the fishery has been closed, people are looking for answers. Could we be facing the same future in the Lake

Winnipeg fishery? Is it dam construction or overfishing which is the real culprit in the decline of local fish stocks? How do we achieve a sustainable freshwater fishing industry? Bill does not claim to have the answers, but he has some observations.

> Where is the limit to put on the fishery at Grand Rapids? I'm not sure what their limit is - eight hundred thousand or a million pounds. There's other areas around the lake that have these same limits, and then there's the big boats that go out. At one time they used to have those big trawlers out there, too, and they cleaned everything off the bottom. You know that the lake was only going to take so much.
>
> The co-op president, Robbie Buck, and I were talking about this last summer, and we said pretty soon we're going to be like our neighbors in the States. They don't have a freshwater [commerical] fishery anymore. There isn't any lake in the United States where they fish commercially. And he said that's what's going to happen in Canada as well. We're going to deplete them to a point where the only way that they can be used is for sports fishing. And we're going to introduce whatever measures are required, whether it means stocking or whether it means enhancing spawning areas. Like what we're going to try to do with the channel here for spawning, to bring the lake level back up, so that we can use it as a sports fishing lake and start another industry or build on the tourist industry in Manitoba rather than the commercial industry. But what does that do for the fishermen that has been here for twenty years and for his kids that are growing up and expect to go out onto Lake Winnipeg to fish?

If commercial fishing ends on the lake, is there a possibility that fish farms could be introduced? Bill thinks so.

> There's no doubt that they're feasible, and it's being done in other areas. In fact, they're farming fish in some of the areas in Saskatchewan, and they're selling it to the East Coast. When they had that big problem in the East Coast, where they couldn't get any fish, Saskatchewan was selling them from the fish farms. So it's possible. The only thing that has to be done is they have to find a way of doing it economically. They have to compete in the market, and so far, from what I can gather in our area, we just haven't come up with the right formula to be able to put that in place. I'm not sure whether government money has gone into the Saskatchewan fish farming area. Probably some has. Whether there's not that interest here in Manitoba to do that, from our government officials, I'm not sure. But we can't expect our government officials to do that forever either.

There has been a number of studies done right here in Grand Rapids. People have come in, taking a look at some of the bays and areas around Lake Winnipeg, to see if it could be done, and they said it's possible. They did a cost study. The economical factors are there to determine whether it can go or not, and nobody has picked up on the opportunity to do it.

Perhaps that's because people haven't accepted the possibility that commercial fishing, as practised in the past, is no longer possible. They are still trying to find out who is to blame for this situation, not ready for alternatives.

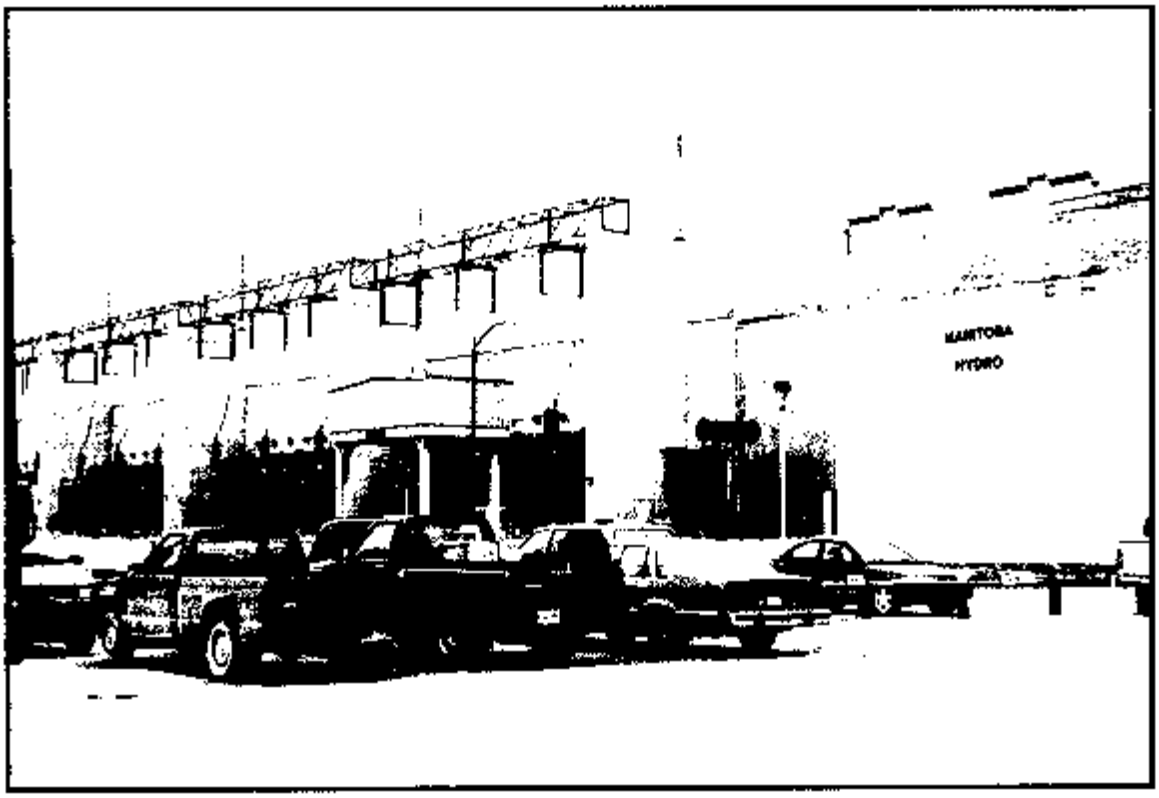
Here everybody is blaming Hydro, and maybe in a way we are to blame. I don't really know. But I know that we certainly affected this immediate area. But there's also a lot of other things to blame. One of the problems also is the number of licenses for the area. You just can't continue to have that many licenses, but who is going to say who should have a license and who shouldn't? That's pretty hard to say to a community. From generations, that was their custom, or their way of life, to be fishermen.

Change is inevitable in our modern world, and Bill has certainly seen a great deal of it in Grand Rapids over the years, but he loves this place. That is one of the reasons he took a permanent job with Hydro.

Just the opportunity to work, to get a steady job to maintain the livelihood, so I could stay here...The first summer I was here, I knew I was going to [stay]...Herman and I both worked for Grand Rapids Constructors and [were] doing general building of the station. We also did other work. Like when Easterville was built, the houses were moved from Chemawawin to Easterville, and they had a fellow from The Pas come over and wire up the houses. But when they went to hook them up, none of them passed inspection. Mines and Resources were involved in the move, so they wanted somebody to go and wire the houses. I was over there for about five months, and I rewired all the houses in Easterville. Another fellow from Easterville, Sidney Lachose, was my helper. We rewired all the houses in Easterville, so we could hook them up. I got to know all the people in Easterville while I was over there working in their homes. Then when we flooded Cedar Lake, there was debris. Hydro was paying for compensation for damage to motors and nets caused by floating debris, so I was over there on a regular basis. I was a Hydro employee looking after the compensation programs. I got involved with their fisheries over there as well.

As soon as I finished the rewiring of Easterville, some jobs came open here. What happens when production division takes over a station after construction, they bring in

their own workforce. So they started hiring for the station for their full-time, long-term complement of employees. Both Herman and I were known quite well in the community by then, so all of the Hydro people knew us....In fact, we did a lot of diving on the spillway and on the intake while the dam was being constructed. So they knew us, and they knew these jobs were coming open. Sure enough, Herman got the first one, and I got the second one. Herman started in '63, and I started in '64. We were both electricians right in the station....Well, I started out as the electrician and worked up to the senior electrical technician and then got into supervising, and from supervising into the maintenance superintendent, and from maintenance superintendent to plant manager.



Hydro Station where Bill Sallows was Manager (Courtesy Lee Heroux)

Prior to and after obtaining permanent work with Hydro, Bill spent quite a bit of time on Cedar Lake. He has a number of observations to make about the effects of Hydro power development there.

It's interesting, when we talk about the fishing industry. Before Cedar Lake was flooded, they had a small fishing industry over at Chemawawin. They didn't go very

far because the fish had to be shipped back to The Pas by boat. Although they had boats that could travel the river, it wasn't much of a fishery....They had somewhere around two hundred to two hundred and fifty thousand pounds of fish yearly. When they flooded the lake, of course, they moved over there to Easterville. Within three or four years, they were up to a million pounds. Because of the flooding on the lake, and the expanding of the lake, the fish [population] just exploded.

But now they are having problems meeting that quota. The fish just aren't there any more. The same body of water is still there, and this is what the biologists tell us is normal. When you change the size or expand the size of the lake, you get an explosion of fish and within so many years it'll start to decline to a sustainable limit. And also the fishing pressure was on there as well. It will keep them down. They had trouble last year finding fish because of the size of the lake. There were days that they never caught anything, so I don't know how many times they shut the shed down last year, the fish packing plant, because there was no fish coming in. So they'd shut it down, and then somebody all of a sudden would start catching fish. And so then everybody would run over to that area. They'd pull in so many thousand pounds of fish and then they'd move somewhere else. And it would be a few days before they could find it again, maybe a week or two. They'd shut the shed down again, until, 'Oh yeah, there they are,' and away they'd go again.

In spite of the difficulties, Bill does not feel the flooding of Cedar Lake had much effect on the spawning grounds there.

It might have affected some specific grounds that were maybe in an area where the drift wood could affect it. But the way the lake exploded, the first few years after it was flooded, would make one assume that the flooding didn't affect it.

Debris, however, is a direct cause of the flooding.

I was over there last year. I was to work on a pilot project to clean up Cedar Lake, and it must be about ten years since I was over there, or maybe fifteen years now, looking after the compensation package that we had in place. We gave them a million or so dollars to look after their own compensation package, and they were going to put that in the bank and use the interest to look after it. That was the agreement we reached.

So when I went over there last year to look at this pilot project, there was just as many trees floating out in the lake as there was when I was over there fifteen, twenty years ago....They're still out there and just as many. They're still good and solid, stuff

that's coming off the bottom....I had photographs, two great, big binders full of photographs....As big as houses, some of these piles of wood that we collected off the beach last year. Something like one hundred and fifty cords of wood just around Easterville. They're burning it. They don't use it anywhere anymore for heat. Everybody's got electric heat, so it's all just being burnt to get rid of it.

Another problem on Cedar Lake is alteration of lake levels by Hydro and how that affects muskrat populations. According to Frank Tough of the University of Saskatchewan, the Summerberry Project on Cedar Lake was one of the most successful government-sponsored work projects of the 1930s. It employed considerable numbers of people, who supplemented their incomes by trapping muskrat, a little animal which had sustained trappers for generations. The muskrat burrows into the sides of banks and establishes his home just above water level. If those levels rise, his home is flooded, and he is forced out. The result is ruin for the trapper.

There's no doubt that in the areas that are fluctuating, the muskrat population is not there anymore. They are gone. The only muskrats there are on the other side of the dams. There are restrictions that have been put in place, so that the Summerberry is still intact. We didn't flood the Summerberry; we flooded the Saskatchewan. They're trying to keep the level at Summerberry constant, so anything back from the Water Resources Branch, they're trying to maintain that level. But there definitely was a large area where they used to trap [which] is now useless as far as muskrat habitat.

My dad used to trap at Summerberry...From Cranberry Portage he came down and trapped, and he's a cripple. He had polio when he was young...when he was fourteen [1924]...so he doesn't have use of his legs, but he was out there. He had snowshoes on his crutches...around at the end of his crutches so they wouldn't go down in the snow.

Bill's father was remarkably unencumbered by his handicap.

For quite a while we had a great big log house down close to Lake Athapapuskow, a great big rambling log house. Dad had the shop, [but] it was too difficult...to get back and forth, so we moved closer to the shop in Cranberry Portage. He worked all over the north. Because of his welding experience, they pulled him in all over on the highways that they were building, and the roads that they were building, to do welding. Lots of times, they'll collapse a piece of equipment, or the cranes they're working on, they fold the boom over. He would go in there and cut it off and weld it up time and time again...He's in Kamloops right now, probably enjoying the sun.

Bill's father and mother met during the thirties.

> They were from the same area, but he actually met her when he was riding the rails. In the dirty thirties, during the depression, the men were riding the rails back and forth, and I guess he had no problems getting on those box cars. He probably did a lot better then anybody else, because of the strength in his arms. He could ride the rods which were underneath the rail cars. You could either ride on top, or the side, and he rode underneath. He didn't have any problems.
>
> And he went on. After he raised most of us from Cranberry Portage, work dried up there because there was nothing else to do. So through government training programs, he took electronics. This was probably in his late thirties, in his forties. He took courses and became a telecontrol tech[nician] for Manitoba Hydro. He was all over. He was in Thompson. He was in Great Falls and other areas.

Such determination and fortitude is to be expected from a man who went trapping at Summerberry with snowshoes on his crutches! He was not alone. His trapping companion was his wife's brother, and Bill recalls that the family went down from Cranberry Portage to visit them once to see how they were doing.

The Summerberry Project involved a number of Grand Rapids trappers, too, none of whom received any compensation when the levels of Cedar Lake were increased by the construction of the Grand Rapids Dam. The case is still being argued.

> This is my own personal view of it. When they [Hydro consultants] did the initial study or survey to determine how much Grand Rapid should get, and how much or how affected they were by the whole project, by the station, and the flooding, and all the rest of it, they didn't take a lot of things into consideration. They didn't take any of the fishing concerns into consideration, because when they did the study, that wasn't really viewed to be a problem at that time.
>
> The trapping wasn't really viewed to be a big problem because [of] the number of people involved....And the figures they looked at, the consultants that did the study for Manitoba Hydro, as far as I can see, they just didn't get the proper information....They looked at some of the losses, which wasn't anywhere near what was the actual loss, when you start extrapolating into production figures.
>
> The biggest problem right now is that they've settled with everybody else except for Grand Rapids. So if Hydro settles with Grand Rapids for anything more then what

they settled for these other people, then they are going to have to go back and open up the agreements that they made with all of these other people. So Hydro will not settle with Grand Rapids for anything more then what they've settled with [others]. And a lot of the fishing compensation that should have been looked at, and a lot of the trapping compensation that should have been looked at, is not in the Grand Rapids package. It's not in the dollars that they are going to give the community of Grand Rapids.

In Bill's view the matter is

very close to going to the courts. I've got to hand it to them, the community. They're trying to come up with ways that Hydro can put money into the community on a regular basis and not be seen as making the agreement by putting a lot of dollars on the table, so that they don't have to open up negotiations...with the other communities. The community needs a lot of things. They put an arena in. That's good, but it's not what it should be. They should have artificial ice; they can't put artificial ice in the arena they got. They had a lot of bad advice when they built, and a lot of mistakes were made. It was built on an area where there's a seam of muskeg, and if you tried to put artificial ice in there, the whole ice surface is going to heave. In order to do it properly, to put artificial ice in, they'd have to put a floating slab in. They'd have to put down the piles through the seam of muskeg, down into solid rock, and then float the slab above that, which is gonna cost more to do that, than it would be to build another arena.

The town council and some of the people that are involved are trying to get this settlement, trying to get Hydro to do something with the tax structure, so that they can pay more through taxes to the town rather than pay it through an agreement that they reach and put the dollars on the table. If they can get some kind of an agreement worked out...they can put [in] this arena, and maybe a town hall, and then have the tax structure designed, so that Hydro can contribute for years and years.

Because there's no way that the town, even if they had the money could build an arena and a town hall with a rec[reation] hall and all the rest of it that they should have here. There's no way that the population can support that on a yearly basis. They couldn't even pay the hydro bill on those facilities. So this is what they're trying to get in place.

Right now Hydro provides a grant each year. As Bill explains,

It's a grant in lieu of taxes. It's almost identical to anybody else that's paying tax in the area, and it's assessed on all the property that they own....Our station here is assessed as a warehouse, and there's nothing below ground that's assessed for taxes because it's all below ground. Anything that you can assess is above ground so that's what we're paying taxes on. It's just a great big building, just like a warehouse, because there's nothing in it....Everything that we have is below ground, so we're not paying taxes on anything in the station. The only thing we're paying taxes on is this wing here and the big warehouse.

That's the one option that they have. That's the option they're trying to put forth in their discussions/negotiations. Change. Do something with the assessment for this area for hydro. Then they can afford to maintain the facilities...out of the taxes that Hydro will pay each year. Otherwise, they can't accept it.

In view of the fact that the Grand Rapids Dam is generating an enormous amount of electricity, which is sold in Southern Manitoba and elsewhere, and taking into account the negative impact of the dam on the traditional economy locally, Grand Rapids people could argue that they are entitled to an annual portion of that revenue as compensation for the loss of a sustainable resource like fish and fur-bearing animals.

I don't know if they're arguing along that line, but the ideal way to go about this would be for this area to receive royalties, if that's what you want to call it, from the water that is being used through the dam. If the community and the First Nations were given these royalties for the water that's being used, water rights royalties, whatever you call it, then they would have a base that they could work from.

It should be no different than some of the reserves where they're getting their mineral royalties for the mining taking place in their areas and their reserves, or the forests where they're getting royalties for the trees, and stuff like this. In areas where they have power dams, we should be providing them with royalties. That's my thought anyway.

You let them, the local people, govern, look after the community...instead of giving them grants where they gotta crawl on their hands and knees to get it and justify it...That's the worst thing, the most degrading thing, you can do to anybody.

Bill's point is well made. The principle of royalty is understood in our economic system. It might be argued that the dam is on crown land, that it no longer belongs to the local people, that rights to areas outside the specific reserve and community

lands were extinguished by Treaty No. Five. However, traditional use of the land was guaranteed by that same treaty. Since these activities are no longer viable, due in part to the effects of the dam, the people are entitled to compensation. However, since fishing and trapping were based on renewable resources, it could be argued that compensation be tied to the idea that water is a renewable resource. In this way, compensation could be ongoing, rather than a one-time payment.

In spite of the debate over the type of compensation to the community, the Grand Rapids power station does provide economic opportunities for local residents. It employs fifty-three people, some of them on a seasonal basis, and more than a quarter of them are from Grand Rapids. There are clauses in the union agreements, which are designed to encourage people originally from Grand Rapids to get the jobs there as they become available. Company employees are given the first chance on the basis of seniority to bid on these jobs. If no one is interested, Hydro goes outside. That's when local people not already working for Hydro can apply.

> Because of our downsizing in Hydro, I can't remember one position that was bid externally in the last twenty years. So in order for a young fellow to get working here in the station, he has to get into the system first. And then he has to spend his time through the apprenticeship program, which takes about four years. Then he gets taken through the stations, so that he gets a broad view of what's going on. Then when a job comes open in Grand Rapids, he can bid on it. He has to compete with the other people that are bidding on it, and because of the union [rules]...the most senior applicant, if he's qualified, will be given the position, regardless of where he comes from.
>
> But we have a few clauses built in now that...the successful applicant also would be required to live in Grand Rapids, although we do have an external workforce, so we're contradicting our agreement. We just adopted an eight-six shift operation, and we have people working continuously every day of the week. They work for eight days and they get six days off, and another crew comes in and works eight days and get six days off....They don't live here; they live somewhere else, mainly because we couldn't get a stable workforce here. The other thing was a lot of the families nowadays have to have two incomes. Both husband and wife work in order to buy all the things that they want to buy. There's just no work up here for their wives.

This procedure could discourage Grand Rapids people from joining Hydro with the idea of eventually coming back to the community. Having the eight-six day work cycle makes Grand Rapids attractive for those living elsewhere. This increases the competition for Hydro people who might want to return to their home community. Bill agrees.

> That's what I meant when I said we're contradicting our agreement. On the one hand, we're trying to hire as many local people as possible. On the other hand, we had to go with this operation in order to get the qualified people. But I could see some time down the road, especially if our Native people got involved in partnership or in some kind of a working relationship with Manitoba Hydro in these communities, that could change.
>
> We could segregate or separate Grand Rapids, for example, from the rest of the system and say we are going to now go back to our regular workforce at Grand Rapids. We're going to be expecting people to live at Grand Rapids, and we're going to be training the people from Grand Rapids, so that they can work in Grand Rapids. That could be done, but it would take a commitment, and it would take some dollars to do that. But that could be part of the agreement in the settlement that's not put on the table in cash. There could be all kinds of things like that worked out, if that desire, and if that interest, and if that long-term vision was there by both parties, by the community and Hydro.
>
> I really think that's going to happen because they're talking about self-government for the communities and in order to get self-government, they're going to have to look at what's happening in the community, what's involved, what other agencies, what other crown corporations, what other activities, what economic base is in the community. They're going to have to take that all into consideration, and I don't think they could say 'OK, Grand Rapids community, you're going to be looking after all of these activities,' and isolate Hydro completely out of it. So that's going to have to be involved. I can see this happening. It may take five or ten years but I can see a partnership developing with Manitoba Hydro in these communities where we have generating stations and good facilities.

Although hydro-electric power development has the potential of creating some long-term jobs for local people, the area surrounding Grand Rapids may have other valuable resources that could provide employment. There is an old limestone

quarry, for instance, along the highway north of Grand Rapids that hints at possibilities. Bill comments.

> I'm not all that familiar with the makeup of the rock.....I think they just used that for building the highway. They used that rock to fill a lot of gullies in that area. Also they had some permafrost, some bogs in there. The way they laid the road is they kept putting the rock on, and it settled in the bog until it hit the permafrost. [They] kept putting it down, until they had a firm base.

If local limestone is equal to the better known Tyndall Stone as a building material, it could be the basis for a quarry or two in the vicinity of Grand Rapids. That could create jobs for local people. As Bill points out, there is a local market for another type of rock, too.

> We line the inside of the dike with what we call 'rip-rap'...to create an armor barrier...to stop wave action from eroding the gravel and the smaller rock...It's just large rock that we quarry, and we're having a heck of a time getting solid rock and large enough rock to use....Not only hard, but you want it big enough, so that the wave action and the size of wave is not going to pick the rock up and move it or wash it away.

Hydro tenders the job of providing this rock to the lowest bidder, who sometimes does not know what is required to do the job. Consequently, he sometimes provides rock of the wrong size, or rock which has been fractured badly when it was blasted out of the bedrock. In any case, the rock is obtained from a local quarry.

> There's a quarry just between here and the spillway along the river channel where there was some good rock. There's also another area north of here that looks pretty good from some of the drilling that took place. We haven't tried that yet.

Evidently, there are opportunities for local entrepreneurs, and they are not just limited to building stone. Bill has another idea.

> My buddy Herman, before he passed away, he had all kinds of ideas. In Cedar Lake there's amber....You can gather it in wash tubs....One time there was a mine before they flooded Cedar Lake....Right now it's washing up on the shore, the southeast shore of Cedar Lake. There's a big long bay there. They call it Amber Bay....The amber isn't very big. You get pieces the size of a nickel or the size of a dime, but you could make earrings or jewelry. It's not totally clear....Most amber, or the best amber,

comes from the Baltic Sea....This is like a yellow amber....It's probably twenty miles by water from the nearest road, so its not that [accessible], unless they pushed a road in. The cost to push a road in is expensive....There was an article in the paper this summer. A couple of journalists went up there and did a story. That could have developed into a cottage industry for the Chemawawin people. They were looking at that. But it takes money, and it takes people that have the energy, or the idea, or the drive to get into that.

There's a lot of other things going on. I was just talking to my neighbor [Rhonda Nemez] last night. I ripped my parka, and she's got a sewing industry going on here in town. She does a lot of sewing. She got the idea she was going to buy this big sewing machine, because she always wanted to make her own clothes. She didn't know how she was going to come up with the money, so she started sewing for other people, and pretty soon she had this big sewing machine. Within a few months, she paid for it. And she's sewing everything now.

She's sewing all kinds of things for all of the Native people. They're bringing all the crafts over for her to sew. They're bringing all the hats they used to make. They're bringing the beadwork stuff for her to sew onto the jackets. She's making shirts for all these Native people for when they go to their powwows, and all kinds of stuff like that.

If somebody had the initiative, or the idea, in a lot of these communities, people could get into little businesses like that. So there's all kinds of opportunities there.

Opportunities may lie in a new look at the fishing industry. The local fish hatchery could perhaps be expanded.

The Rainbow Trout and the Speckled Trout have a good market for selling in Manitoba. We had a few people that planted fish in a few lakes north of here, and they sold everything that they could catch. So they could certainly spawn and sell the fingerlings to anybody that was interested in the area. But again that takes a lot of work.....It's going to take somebody with proper management skills and drive to make something like that work.

I think Brian Snydal (He works in Ashern now for Manitoba Hydro), when he was working up here, he stocked a couple of lakes. And Ralph Kutzner, Herman's son, he stocked a couple of lakes a couple of times, but it's a lot of work. Kenny McKay, he took over from Brian Snydal and stocked his lake, but that sort of petered out because you have good years, you have bad years.

> They had their own market, but they used the Native people here to do the fishing and processing. You want to leave them in the lake long enough to allow them to grow as big as they can; then you have a short period of time to catch and process them. The big problem is processing. You have to have enough people to process them and pack them and keep them fresh and get them off.
>
> It works, and they had good markets. People would come from all over to buy them. And the fish hatchery, if it was run locally, they could supply the area. They could stock these lakes for the industry.

Although no one has been stocking any of the lakes for the past couple of years, fish farming is found in many places in the world, and perhaps it does provide an alternative for fishermen who have to deal with declining stocks on Lake Winnipeg. The local hatchery is managed by the fisheries department.

> They had a number of fish in there. It was shut down a while back because of cost, and Manitoba Hydro was providing funding to keep it going because of the spillway channel...mainly for the pickerel and the whitefish spawns....They [hatchery personnel] still stock or grow Rainbows and those kind of fishes. They do supply some areas.

It would appear that there are quite a number of useful avenues that could be explored to generate more employment. Certainly the area offers open spaces, clear air, beautiful lakes, and quiet beaches, assets for which people in other parts of the continent pay thousands of dollars to experience. The development of its resources could also bring new people to Grand Rapids, although Bill feels there are local problems which discourage such settlement.

> The availability of doctors is not that great, and a lot of the woman are very concerned when they have their children. They don't have medical attention. They run into problems. Sometimes in the middle of winter, when there's a snowstorm or something happens, you don't get the best of care or you don't get any care. There are lot of concerns. The school is another problem. For a number of years, it didn't have high standards. It still isn't the same standard as the schools in Winnipeg and probably never will be.

Bill expands on the educational issue.

> Partially it's the problem of...trying to maintain the qualified teachers in order to get top-notch students. You have to have top-notch teachers available or willing to come to the area. I guess the majority of the students...don't get the proper attention at home they should have. And the emphasis isn't there to get the education. They don't have

the drive and the competitive[ness] as you would in southern schools. And the other thing that we try to do in the north is to keep the kids in school as long as possible. We try to bring them back also if they drop out. We have mature students coming back. That is going to have an effect on the standard, because a lot of these students are just on the borderline. You have only so many teachers, and they can only deal with so many students. They have to deal with the masses. They have to deal with the people that require their attention. The majority are in that area. They're not in the top twenty percent of the students in Canada, for example.

It's also a community problem. It's not just an education problem. The community has to realize that the importance of having a family structure, so that the students, the kids, can get support they need at home as well as school. The school can't do everything. It can only do its portion, whatever they can contribute to the students' education.

In the more than thirty years that Bill has lived in the community, he has seen both positive and negative developments in education.

When we first came here, when the dam was built, there was a very good positive progression in education for the students. The first students that graduated from Grand Rapids, it almost looked like they could go and do almost anything. But maybe ten years later, the students that were coming out, they were realizing that there's no jobs. The job market, I guess, at that time was...dried up, and they had the sense of what's the use? Also they had the sense that society owed them, and this is the problem that we had at that period of time. When I first came here, everybody, especially the Natives, they were going after things. They realized they still had to earn a living; they still had to go for it. And then in the mid 70s and 80s, people felt the government owes me, society owes me. And now it's starting to turn around, where the students that are coming out of schools now, they're realizing that if they want to get somewhere, they have to do it on their own. So I can see the group coming up now are a lot different than they were ten years ago coming out of school.

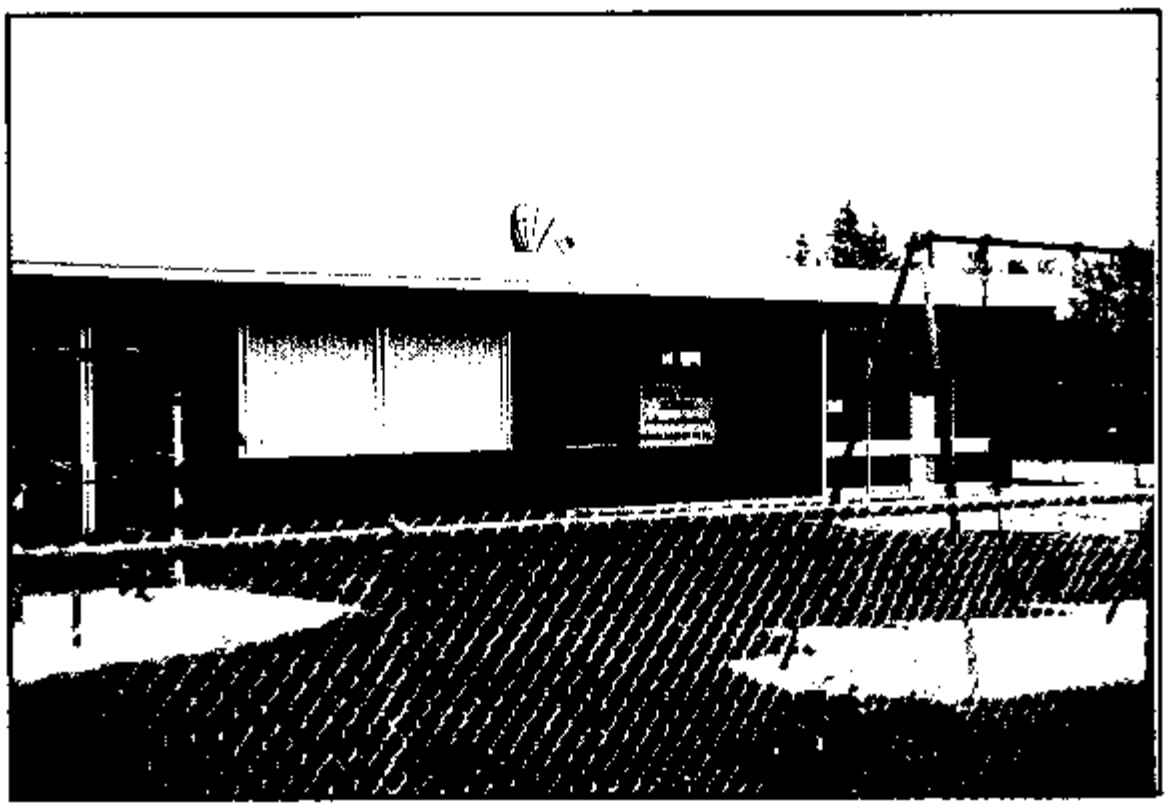
I think its starting to turn around, because there's role models out there for them to see. There's the Ovide Mecredis, there's the Judge Sinclairs, there's those people that are in the limelight. And they can see them. If these guys can make it, why can't I?

Bill has been a local magistrate for over thirty years, and he has seen many changes, similar to those in other places. Things that were tolerated in the past are

no longer ignored. Local concern over the issue of law and order is quite evident. As Bill explains,

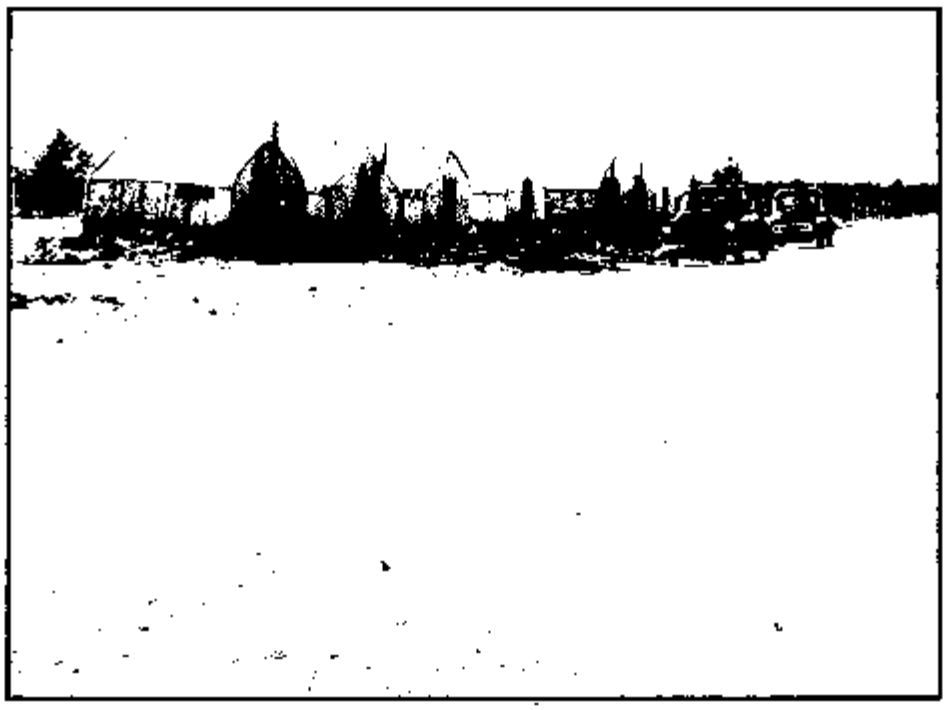
> They're certainly talking about it. I don't see any signs of improvement yet, but they're certainly more aware of it. They're not afraid to bring it out in the open and talk about it. They're not afraid to come into court now, and, I guess, be witnesses, or to press charges. That sort of thing.

Bill had only seven more days with Hydro, when he gave this interview. He has no immediate plans to leave a community where he has made his home for more than half his life. His wife Marg is still working at Hydro at Grand Rapids, and his daughter Tricia is at a private high school in Gretna. Perhaps at some time in the future, he may relocate, but for the moment, he is quite content to be living in the north.



Grand Rapids School (Courtesy Lee Heroux)

Gladys Scott (Courtesy Lee Heroux)



Tent Homes of Indians on Hydro Clearing Project, 1961
Grand Rapids - Hydro Project 3 (Courtesy Manitoba Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Gladys Scott

Gladys Ballantyne was born at Grand Rapids, 22 February 1928, the daughter of Alfred Ballantyne and Harriet Greenleaf.[16] She was delivered by a local midwife, Barbara Sinclair, who also delivered her firstborn, Roland. Gladys had three brothers, Howard, Solomon, and Percy, who died of pneumonia when he was eleven years of age.

> They [her family] lived in the bush, and my dad was a fisherman and a trapper. That's the only thing they had to raise us up, you know, the fishing and trapping. And where they used to raise us up, there were lots of moose, fish, sturgeon, real long ones. You have to make a big hole [in the ice] to fit those kind, just like logs, you know.
>
> You know, I used to dress like a man over there. I used to help my dad fish...setting nets...me and Solomon. When we grown up we used to help my dad setting nets. And tractor used to come down there to buy fish. Haulingers they used to call them...from here[Grand Rapids and] Gypsumville. They used to come and buy the fish. Whitefish, down at forty miles out, Long Point. We used to tent over there in the winter.

Occasionally they went to Grand Rapids by boat down the Saskatchewan River, and her father sometimes went right through the rapids.

> My dad used to shoot the rapids in the night. Just a little highway the way you are travelling. Oh, that's ever scary. Big waves and just white. Just once I went through. I used to walk. There's a portage there, three and a half miles portage.

Gladys was only about fourteen when she made that frightening journey, but she remembers it well. They were just returning from a summer trip to hunt moose. Her mom went along to make pemmican from the meat, because there were no fridges then to keep the meat cold.

Their trapline was forty miles out from Grand Rapids at a place called the Narrows, or See-Pah-Nuk-O-Sig in Cree. Their cabin had a fireplace made of stone and clay built by Gladys's grandfather, Donald Ballantyne.

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[16] Harriet Greenleaf was originally from Cumberland House, but when her parents died, she was sent to McKay School in The Pas. She had at least one brother William and a sister Lucy (Mrs. Peter Ballentyne of Moose Lake).

Where we were staying we used to snare rabbits, and early in the morning you have to go check. And we had traps. We trapped squirrels, weasels, foxes, all kinds of things.

There was lots of people there one winter. They were building houses. It was warm. They built a fireplace right through up a big chimney. They made the thing to hang up cooking kettles. And you made a fire under it. It was good. And we didn't need no lamps or anything in the night when my dad put up that fire. We don't need lamp. It was good. And all night it was burning. It was good.

Sometimes Gladys and her brother would come down by dog team for food.

My dad sent us right after it freezes, and we used to come down and get food and bring the sturgeon and moose meat here. And Mrs. Campbell used to keep stores. I used to bring relatives some sturgeon, moose meat - my grandmother and my grandfather [Donald and Mary Ann Ballantyne].

One time there already was freezing, and my dad was just nine miles portage out. [That's] as far as they came with us, so we came right through the portage. Oh, did we have a hard time! There was no snow. We had to run the nine miles portage, me and my brother. So the next day it was snowing. Oh, it was good! We had to do shopping in the morning, so we left back. We were so glad. 'One more week,' they told us, 'to stay over there.' We were so excited to go back to go finish that one week. They were waiting for us.

Travel was quite different at the time.

There used to be a trail here, just like it says in the Lover's Point. Tamarack Way. That's what they used to call it...Tramway...That's the kind they had, but they were using horses. The horses pull canoes...just up to Three Miles Portage. That's where they used to be loading stuff....There was a big building....That's the time they had those things and they made that rail to [be] pulled with horses....They raised those horses up....They use that kind to haul the logs. And they had a sawmill here.

The mail was brought by dog team from The Pas during the winter, and by motor boat during the summer. For many years Ishmael Pranteau was the mailman, and Gladys especially remembers the motor for his boat "sounded nice...just like bees." On his summer trips to The Pas, he sometimes made camp where her family was staying, or at Chemawawin, depending on the time of day he started

out. The trip usually took two days. In the winter, he used two dog teams, and Joe Flett [Jack Noli's father] would help him.

Other people also made the trip.

> And even that Mrs. Campbell, they used to travel by dog team to The Pas, and sometimes they camped out at our place there. And [s]he wanted my mom to cook moose meat or sturgeon....[S]he likes that....They used to go back and forth each month, two or three months. And these old men used to take [them] by dog teams.

One of these men was her own father.

> He used to work, going to The Pas in the summer, taking them on trip. And make a trip for them to go and get stuff because that's only the store they had....Supplies, and things like that, eh...It's easier in the summer, before the bombardier, or anything like that, the machines. In 1960...they started up the machines. Everything that comes in by boat, they bring in by barge...trucks and everything...when they started up this construction here in Grand Rapids.

Gladys also worked on and off for the Campbells before her marriage.

> I'd clean up....When I finished cleaning up in their house, I went to the store and help them pile the stuff. And they used to have warehouses. [I'd] go back and forth, running to go get the stuff the people wanted....And my dad used to say to me, 'Don't ever, ever touch anything, to try and steal.'...I used to see many things...money...the men was working there and [I'd] clean up, eh...I never used to touch anything. I keep on thinking about what my dad told me. And even these...Margaret [Campbell] was a girl just like me...and they used to have lots of things there to use...like make-ups and everything. And I used to see them...and I never used to touch.

Gladys remembers many things about Grand Rapids long ago, but little about its schools. Most of her formal education was obtained elsewhere.

> You know, I didn't have much school here. I didn't raise up here in Grand Rapids, mostly in the wild place. That's where my dad was raising us, raise us up. And I didn't go to school very much, till I was around about fourteen years old, and I went to Elkhorn. That's where I went to school....It was between Swan River and Dauphin....me and Mary [Beardy] and Flora [Packo]...we went there. So when I was fifteen years old, the first time when we came back from there....I went to school here in Grand Rapids.

Schooling at Elkhorn was limited.

> I didn't have much school when I was learning. When I went to school [I learned] how to clean up. We didn't have no teacher. We first go to school for four months, and then our teacher was very old and he left the school. And so, then we didn't have...no teacher, so they train us how to work. I was a big girl already.
>
> I was a kitchen girl...the first three months....I used to like it the best where I used to work in the kitchen....And then...I would waitress and set the tables for the staff that lived in the school....We dressed white, too, when we went there, you know...We take turns two of us at the time being a waitress because there were lots of staff there, around twelve or fourteen of them....There was a nurse there...for the kids...and we had to iron these uniforms. That's the thing I didn't like. We have to do them perfect. We have to starch them. The uniforms, white uniforms. If you don't do it right, you have to do it over and over. The first time I used to do it two times, you know, but we come to know how to do it. You have to use a hot iron, and we didn't know that time....Sometimes they send us the men clothes, because of these boys. They were rough and they're tearing their clothes and everything, and we have to mend them. There was a sewing room in the place. And our socks, we had to mend them. And pants.
>
> They [the boys] were threshing...working....and they using those machines at the time, eh. Not like today....But these ones you have to use horses...with those wheat. That's where they were working, those big boys, eh, gathering those...they stook those wheat...in the big field....And those vegetables, enough to have in the winter, eh, potatoes and carrots and turnips....We had a big farm to learn how to farm. The boys, too, same as us big girls. So we have to get up, kitchen girls, five o'clock in the morning, every morning, and we had everything ready by...eight-thirty. And then to school at nine o'clock....It was rough....If we do wrong, we get the strap.

The strap was often administered by "big, strong women," who trained Gladys and the other girls who went there.

> They pick up big ones. Big ladies...Like when we fight, eh, they have to come and broke us up, eh. And they used to get strap...I had a strap three times...Girls were fighting...in the night, especially in the night. Oh, they used to fight a lot.

One of the big girls, a young woman nearly eighteen years old, even got into a fight with one of the staff women. As a result, all the senior girls were brought to the dining room to witness the girl's punishment.

> So we went there, all the senior girls. We didn't know this, they were going to strap that girl, those senior women, eh? They beat her up with a strap...oh, bruises around her [arms]....So we all walked out. We didn't listen to them. We just about ganged up with them women [staff], cause of them big girls, they slap her. So they let her go...And we told them not to ever, ever do that to us again. We're going to gang up...if they ever do that to us....And they told us not to ever do that to the staff. So that [one] staff left.

Flora and Mary, the other Grand Rapids girls attending the school at that time, were younger and in classes all day long, so they were unaware of this and many other things.

> They could tell you stories, too, but they didn't know this....I was always in that group...working and...I was involved fighting and everything like that, because we were senior girls, eh. And them [Flora and Mary], they small. They didn't know these things I was doing there, you know.

Gladys recalls that students came from all over the north.

> You know, I went to school with South Indian Lake people and some Oxford House, Garden Hill...Nelson House...and Norway House, Cross Lake. All over, and The Pas. There were one hundred and fifty north[ern] children at the time.

The boys and girls lived in separate parts of the building. "Boys on that side, and girls on this side....But they lock the doors like, you know, they can't come this way, and we can't go that way." The senior girls slept on the third floor in a big dormitory with twenty four or twenty five beds. The small boys were across the hall from them, and the senior boys slept on the main floor. Staff also slept in the building, with "intermediates" on hall duty each night on every floor to make sure things were quiet and there was no mischief.

> All day we never used to get together with boys or girls...just on the field when we have baseball. They used to play with us and that's the only time we see those boys, eh.

That wasn't quite true, of course, at least for some of the senior girls. They saw the boys every morning.

> They had a bakery, too, a bakery down [stairs]. That's where the boys used to give us a hard time. They brought the milk, and we were making dough for bread, homemade bread....We made flour...everything. And brown bread. I used to like

> brown bread....And then while we were baking that bread, eh, making dough...and those boys...they used to tease us. They used to running around and chase us because there was hardly no staff in there. [laughs]. That's where they throw us that bread...flour all over the [our] heads, eh. And us, too, we used to throw those dough to them. [laughs] You had to defend yourself, whatever they do to us, you know. And after that, when we went for breakfast, we all had...ah...messy...our hairs and so we had our hair [messy] all day. We had to go and re-wash it.

They also saw the boys at church. The school was about a quarter of a mile outside of town, and they all walked in for services.

> The boys went with two men and three ladies with us senior girls. And the small ones, too, in front. And one time when we came home, eh, oh, those boys were after us, eh. They were chasing us. Oh, those staff were behind them. We were running. We were running away from those staff...and boys [laughs]. Did they ever get mad after that.

These times of fun made up in part for the restrictions, so that, all in all, Gladys appreciated her time there.

> I was so glad, you know, after all...I learned so much, how to clean up, how to clean everything, how to make beds, and how to iron some uniforms...everything like that I know.

Students stayed there from September to June, then travelled home for the holidays. After the second year at Elkhorn, Gladys was looking forward to returning, but it was not to be.

> We came by bus to The Pas, and they came to meet us there by boat. I went to school there for two years. My dad didn't want me to go back, and I really wanted to go back. I was sixteen, you know....He lives in the bush, and I didn't like it. I used to get lonesome when I go....so I started to run away from my parents. I didn't want to go in the bush. So that's when I met my old man.

Her "old man" was young Archie Scott, just twenty-two years of age at the time. His grandfather Abraham Scott came originally from St. Peter's near Winnipeg, but moved north to Grand Rapids in the nineteenth century and settled for a time at Scott's Point.[17] Then he moved his family to a site near the graveyard on the

[17] Abraham may have spent some time at St. Peter's, but he was born at Norway House in 1843, the son of John Scott, or Wi-sah-kay-chay, and Julia Neekanee.

reserve and built a big two-story log house. He had a big garden, and grew "potatoes, and things, and carrots...corn...they used to have big corn." He also kept cattle, and would kill a calf each winter, storing the meat in an old shack outdoors. According to Gladys,

> When they kill that calf and these people here in Grand Rapids, they thought they would give this meat away for nothing, and vegetables to give them for nothing. And all this time, this old man was working for his family, to support them...That's where that jealousness came from. And still today...the Scotts didn't [aren't] liked, to generation to generation. That's where that came from, because this old man....These people were angry at him.

Perhaps this is one reason why Gladys faced considerable opposition when she decided to marry Archie.

> When I come to sixteen years old, I met him. That winter we got married. 'No matter what kind of a guy I met, I will marry,' I said. 'As long as he supports me,' I said....My dad didn't like it. He didn't even take me in the front [to the altar of the church] to get married.
>
> So he [Archie] used his uncle, Norman Chief, to go ask my dad to marry me. Norman Chief went to ask him....But after when we got up that day, he said no. We used to get up early in the morning [to check snares and traps]. So in the morning we got up here in Grand Rapids, and he asked my brothers and my mom. And my mom said, 'You should let her to get married.' 'She can't live with us forever, ' she said. 'You have to let her go,' she said. And then my dad didn't say anything. So in a little while, while we were eating, we were talking about it....'What do you think?' he said to my brothers, 'Should we let her to get married, or no?' So my brothers said, 'Yes, let her get married.' So they say yes. "But I'm not going to go take you in front to get married, because you are the only girl I got, and I love you. I'll never give you away,' he said....The chief had to take me to the front. He [her dad] was there, but he was happy when we got married.

Gladys and Archie were married at Grand Rapids by Rev. Donaghy fifty years ago, 12 February 1945. Annie McKay was her bridesmaid.

> I was wearing a wedding dress....Adelaine [Turner] made it for me. There was no white thing to wear...so they used blue....They were dancing...when we got married. And then the next day Absalom and Eva got married....We were supposed to marry

> double wedding...but the minister didn't want us....'One of yous will get bad luck if you married both like that'; that's what he told us. So they got married the next day.

Food left over from Gladys and Archie's wedding feast was supposed to be used for Absolom and Eva's, but Lent started the same day Absalom and Eva were married, so they were not allowed to have a dance or anything like that. Consequently, there was a great deal of food left over.

That winter they lived with Archie's parents, and in the spring they built their own log house on the reserve down by the river where the bridge is now. Archie was fishing at the time, so he hired Dan Turner to get the logs. After Dan cut and squared them, Archie's dad helped him get started. He showed him how to stack the logs, and built four layers of logs with him. Then having shown his son how to build, he walked away and left Archie to complete the job himself. After it was up and roofed, Archie applied mud and lime painted it. It was a nice house.

Gladys notes,

> He made three houses after that, even [one with an] upstairs. We made it when I had the six boys in a row. We didn't have no girl...until Barbara, Gladys, Grace, and then Harriet. ..Then from there I had Wayne, Doreen, Annie, and my baby David.

Altogether Gladys and Archie had fourteen children. That is a great number of children now. Back then, it was common for families to be large. Gladys would have had an even larger family, but she had three miscarriages, the first one after three months. Her story illustrates the very real fact that mother's in those days literally risked their lives to have their children.

> We went to MacBeth Point for fall fishing....I only had two kids there....So, I had a seasick ride....Oh, I was so sick. After three days we were there, I started to get sick. Boy, it was ever, ever hard. I had a miscarriage. I was losing lots of blood, and the men were standing around outside. They were scared...and it was blowing hard. [Then, it calmed a little, and] the lake was just right. One man said, 'Me, I'll take her.' There was across the lake a hospital in Berens River. I said, 'No.' I would have died that time, if I had said yes for him to take me in the big waves.

Fortunately, Archie's aunt, Lydia Sutherland, was present, to assist her, but it was a very sad thing for Gladys to lose that little baby. She almost lost another one, Wayne, when he was born prematurely.

He was only...not even four pounds...and the nurses [said] when he was born 'he's going to die; he's not going to make it.' Oh, he was ever a small baby, and no doctors or anything. 'We have to wait for him to die,' she said. 'No,' I said to my mom, 'Bring him.' So I put him here [under her shirt over her heart], to warm him up....I had a basket here and a flannelette....I kept him warm...and we put that cloth around him....I had to feed him with a spoon - three times a day, just three spoons. That's how much he drank the first time. When he was one month old, he still didn't fit the bottle. I have to feed him with the spoon, even at night. He didn't even sound like a baby when he was crying, but we heard him....At three months, he could fit the [bottle] nipple now. I started to feed him pablum. One teaspoon. So, he was growing so fast. When he was eight months old, he was just like a first [new] born baby.

Looking after her children was a big responsibility, and more stressful when any of them were sick.

We only had medicine here by [Rev.] Donaghy. They sent the medicine out. This minister was just like a doctor. As soon as the kids are very sick and we had to send for him to come and check the temperature....We had a hard time when the kids were sick. We just used pills mostly. There was hardly any medicine, not like it is today. No needles or anything like that. And we had...measles and chicken pox. We had to keep the house warm at night. We had to get up and put the wood in the fire. The kids were crying. Oh, we had a hard time when they were sick.

Her job as a parent was even more difficult when Archie was away working.

I didn't like it when he used to leave me going to work. And so he says, 'I'm going to tell you something,' he says, 'I love you; that's why I marry you,' he says. 'And you're a young girl,' he says, 'And I have to support you and the kids, and I can't stay here...but I still love you, everywhere I go. You don't have to worry about me,' he says, 'If I stay here, we'll starve.' He had to support us....So he went to work all the time. He had an eight horse [motor] and a big boat canoe, and lots of nets he got because he was fishing, and he went to work down somewhere...and far up north...brushing the bush...for the highway. He went in the bush for four months to go and work, and I had a cheque every month. He sent it to me. He was hardly ever home. As long as he left food for me, I did all myself. Mostly I raise up by myself my kids. And I used to work all the time....And 1965, that's the first time welfare came here, 1965....So we had assistance [welfare] that time [when Wayne was born.]

> He [Archie] went to work at that time with his two sons, Mike and Roland. They went picking potatoes down south....I don't know how they got there, but somehow they went to pick potatoes, maybe by boat.

Gladys remembers when the Indian agent, Mr. Bell, came, and she received assistance.

> So the plane landed here. We had a new house....but they hadn't finished it yet. They didn't paint it. I had paint and everything. It was September. I said I might as well paint it. I had a ladder, so I started to paint the outside. It was nice.

> So the plane landed. They came this way. That guy was wicked, that Indian agent. 'What are you doing up there?' he says. 'You're not supposed to be up there,' he says. 'Where's your man?' he says to me. 'My man is not home,' I said, 'He went to work. 'He went potato picking down south,' I said. 'I need something to help me,' I told him, 'Enough to support my kids.'

The Indian agent told her to stop painting and come down from there. He needed a place where people could come to get their assistance, so he used Gladys and Archie's house until four o'clock in the evening. The people knew he was coming because they had radio transmitters for messages from the south.

> The road was already here then, not the highway, just like a winter road, but you could use cars already....We had electric lights already because I was making coffee for them in there. That's where they were doing assistance all day....He gave me ninety dollars for all of us, 'for two weeks,' he said.

That was the first time Gladys had ever received assistance, and it was sufficient to meet her family's needs at the time. It eased her burdens, although raising her family was not a struggle *all* the time. There were high points, like taking her children to church.

> The people used to go to church every Sunday. Nobody was working on Sunday. On Saturdays, you had to get everything ready for the Sunday. Even my kids, I used to get them ready....I used to get ready for my little girls. I used to like little girls when I had them. Little dresses they were wearing, little coats. I liked to dress them up.

Christmas and other holidays were special times for their family, too.

> We managed to make Christmas really good, too,...and New Year's...and on weddings, they had new clothes....warm clothes. Even warm underwear. They cost lots of money. They used to have two sets each. I used to get them. That's how we support[ed] them.

Although preoccupied with family concerns, Gladys was very much aware of the changes that occurred during the 1960s.

> I remember when they started to build the bridge. They had the big cement [piers]. They built three or four of those to go across. And there was lumber....It was scary. When we went across, they used to use barges. The first time we went across [the bridge], they didn't even fix it yet. It was scary when we went across. They wanted us to go and see it, so we did while they were building that bridge. After they fixed it, they started this highway, and everything. And the dam. Oh, there was lots of things going on.
>
> There were Metis on that side [of the river] and this side Band, but we used to help each other....When somebody killed a moose, they shared it. Everybody got it. There was lots of fish. They just had to fish down here by the mouth of the river. Nice, nice white fish. Not like these dark fish now. They were white, white. It was nice....It doesn't taste right now when we eat [fish], just like moss. It tastes like that.

During those years, Archie was often away on construction, and she was home with the family.

> They built a road going toward Thompson. That's where he was working, way up that way somewhere. And he had this dog team. He had six dogs, and he had a boat, an eight horse for a motor. And he left me that and the dogs to look after. I had to fish in this bay here. And these boys were already big, and they helped me. And we set the net here. There was lots of fish still here at that time, because the dam wasn't finished yet. And then, I used to do lots of work when we were at home. After work we used to set the nets and before they go to school [the boys] had to haul water...for washing...for me. And before and after school, they have to haul water, to get ready for everything. They...gave the dogs water to drink....We used to live down by the band hall....It was all thick bush....That's where we keep the dogs tied up like in the shade, so they'd be nice and cold, eh?

Dogs were a real asset to the people of Grand Rapids in the past. They could travel, even in the bad weather. "They know the road when they...coming down...to come home. They just know where to go." After the dam was built,

dogs began to be replaced by vehicles. That was in 1964. "They sell them away, all over the places, eh. They don't bother [with] the dogs anymore."

Gladys remembers her own experiences with the car.

> My old man used to buy a car, eh. And there was nobody to watch us driving around...They used to drive anywhere without a license. I used to drive a car, too, my old man's car. And my kids, too. We used to go around when he was working, eh. I used to steal the car [laughs], and after when we were driving, I used to fill the gas, so he won't know....Me. I didn't get no license, and three times I passed that thing [written test]...And one time, I went try it [road test] here. And I only had three wrong. 'The next time you come,' he says, 'I'll give you that Beginner's [license].' I didn't go; I was scared....Three times I passed it. 'You should get a license,' they told me. So I didn't get one.

Gladys herself went to work for wages, too, the first time, when Harriet was a baby.

> Mike was working already. And I had my mom for baby-sitting....I worked for three months. It was the same place as Mike was working....We moved to Buffalo Lake. That's where I worked up to, but I [would have worked longer, except I] had so many kids. I would have worked right through. I was a kitchen girl there. I got paid eight dollars an hour. We were paid well. My boss said, 'It's too bad that you can't come with us any more. You would have been with us, to work right through.' My boss, he said, 'When you go to look for work, you will be the first on the list. I'll send it out. Wherever you go, look for construction work, a job, you'll get it.'
>
> It was nice for a while...I used to work...in the hotel, [too].

Not all the changes were welcome. There was the beer parlour, for instance, which encouraged people to drink to excess. It had a very serious effect on her own life.

> David was...around three years old, and I started to drink, eh?...When I take a sip, I never used to like that beer. In my life, I never used to like it, and after I drink three bottles, that's where I started up...Oh, it was awful life that time...And then fighting. We used to fight together, and we'd scare the kids. Oh, it was awful, awful life. And they sent us to Rosaire House [treatment centre in The Pas] for three weeks.

It was while she was at The Pas that Gladys experienced a profound change which turned her life around. After she returned home, she wrote down her feelings about that change.

> I understand myself more than I did before.
> I learned what was the matter with me.
> And I know a lot of what trick[ed] me.
> I will never be alone again.
> I put my life in the hand of God, October 26, 1979.

Gladys describes the change that took place in her.

> That's the time I got saved. And I never be the same anymore since....I can't get mad like I used to. I just pray....We have to pray, and we can't hate one another. Loving is first. To love one another. That's only way....Like when I get mad, I pray. That thing goes away...It's a wonderful life, when you got saved, eh. It's only for Jesus to trust him. You have to pray, and that thing goes away right away...Like somebody is leading you....You know, the Bible says when you're not born again, you're just like a log....It makes you blind. You don't see those things that's happening today...but through Jesus...you see everything, what's going on....The power goes in you....You can't help it....That's why they call us Shakers, because that thing is powerful. It's in you. That's a spirit goes in you, the Holy Spirit.

For Gladys, there is no doubt that prayer works. When her daughter Gladys was seriously injured in a car accident, she prayed that she would live.

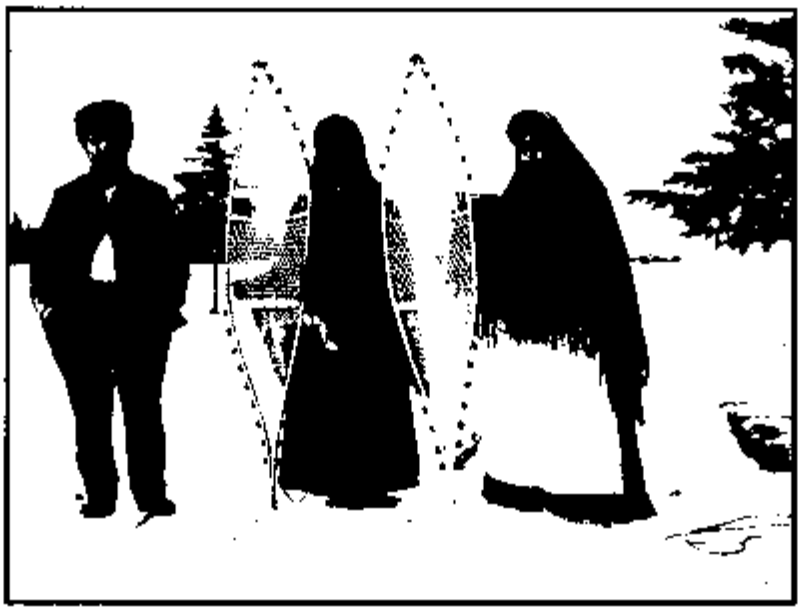
> Her spine was broken. She had a hard time....We went right through as far as Ashern, and then right away they put an intravenous on Gladys....She hardly make it to Ashern...And in three days they send us to go to Winnipeg, a phone call...so we had to go to Winnipeg. 'Maybe she won't make it,' they said...When we got in that hospital, St. Boniface, the doctor came to me and told me, 'Your daughter got fifty-fifty to live or die,' he says. 'Oh,' I said, 'No!' And then there, I call upon Jesus, eh. 'Jesus,' I said, 'I ask you one more time my daughter to live,' I said to him. 'And I'll give you [my] life, too,' I told him. I just called upon the Lord, nobody else, just by myself.
>
> And they used to have tent meetings, Christians at Fairford, eh? When [s]he come home by the wheel chair, eh, that's where I took her. Back and forth I took her. [S]he was in the wheel chair for six months, and [s]he started to walk with the crutches. And the doctor told me, 'You know,' he says, 'Your daughter is to live or

to die fifty-fifty, and if [s]he ever lives, [s]he'll never, never walk again.' '[S]he broke his [her] spine,' he says. And so...I keep on taking her to be healed. So [s]he did [get] healed, when [s]he got prayed for. [S]he only had six months in a wheel chair, and the doctor told me [she would have] to stay in life forever in the wheel chair. '[S]he never, ever be able to walk again,' he says. So, [s]he had started crutches, and I keep on taking her. She didn't even wear the crutches for two months, and she walked from there. She started to walk by herself. From there, that's when we started to be Christians. For that, the Lord hear our prayers.

As a Christian, Gladys sees life far differently now. Knowing how damaging alcohol was in her own life, she discourages drinking whenever she has a chance.

> And these grownups, oh, it's hard...but sometimes when they're sober, they come here, and I told them liquor causes trouble and everything like that. We told them about it, me and my husband.

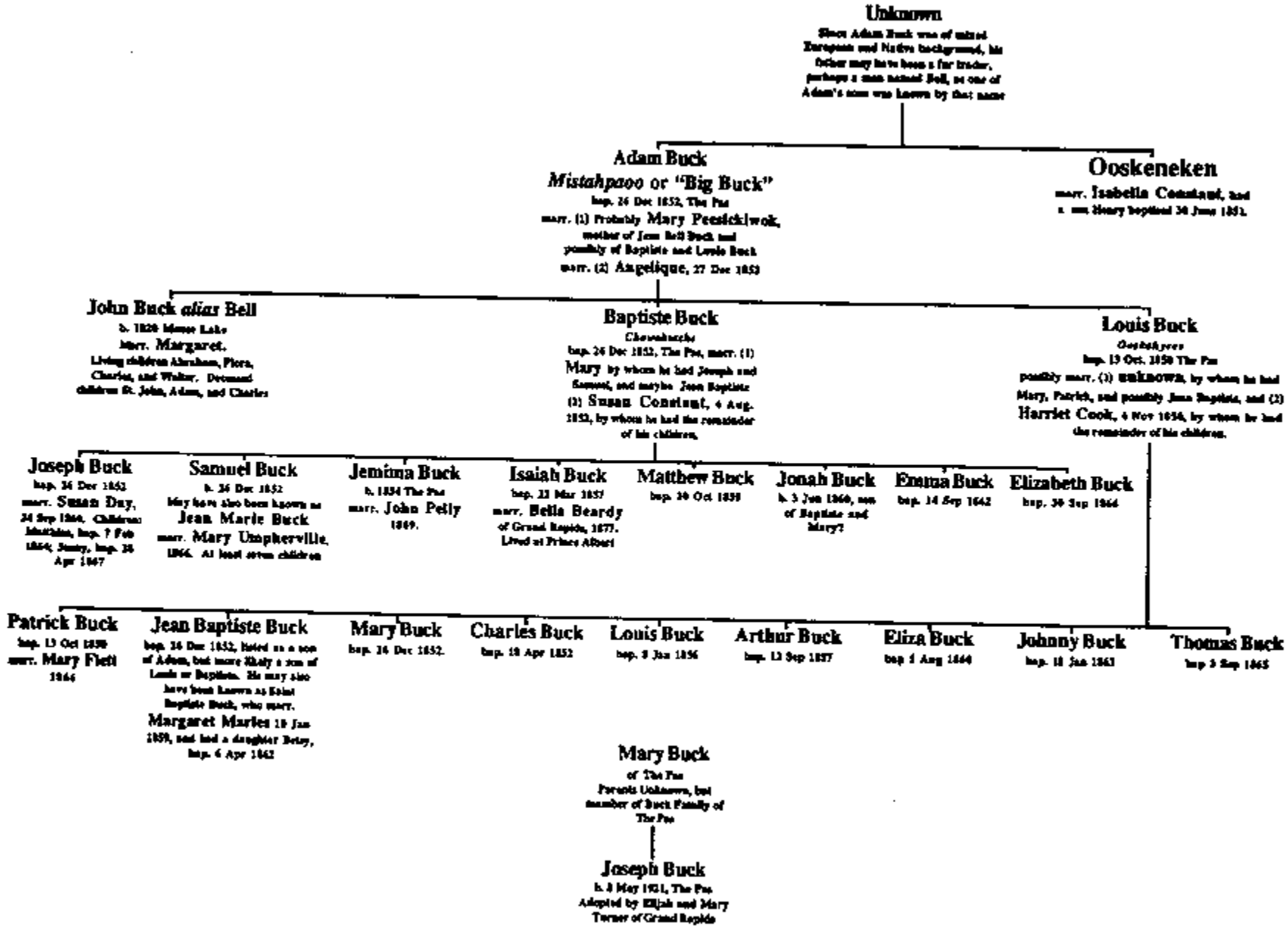
These are wise words from an elder, who has seen many challenges. Gladys is a woman of courage and determination. She has overcome many of life's tests and stands as an example of fortitude to her family. With seventy-seven grandchildren already, and another on the way [1997], she will be remembered for having given them the gift of life, not only physically, but perhaps spiritually as well.



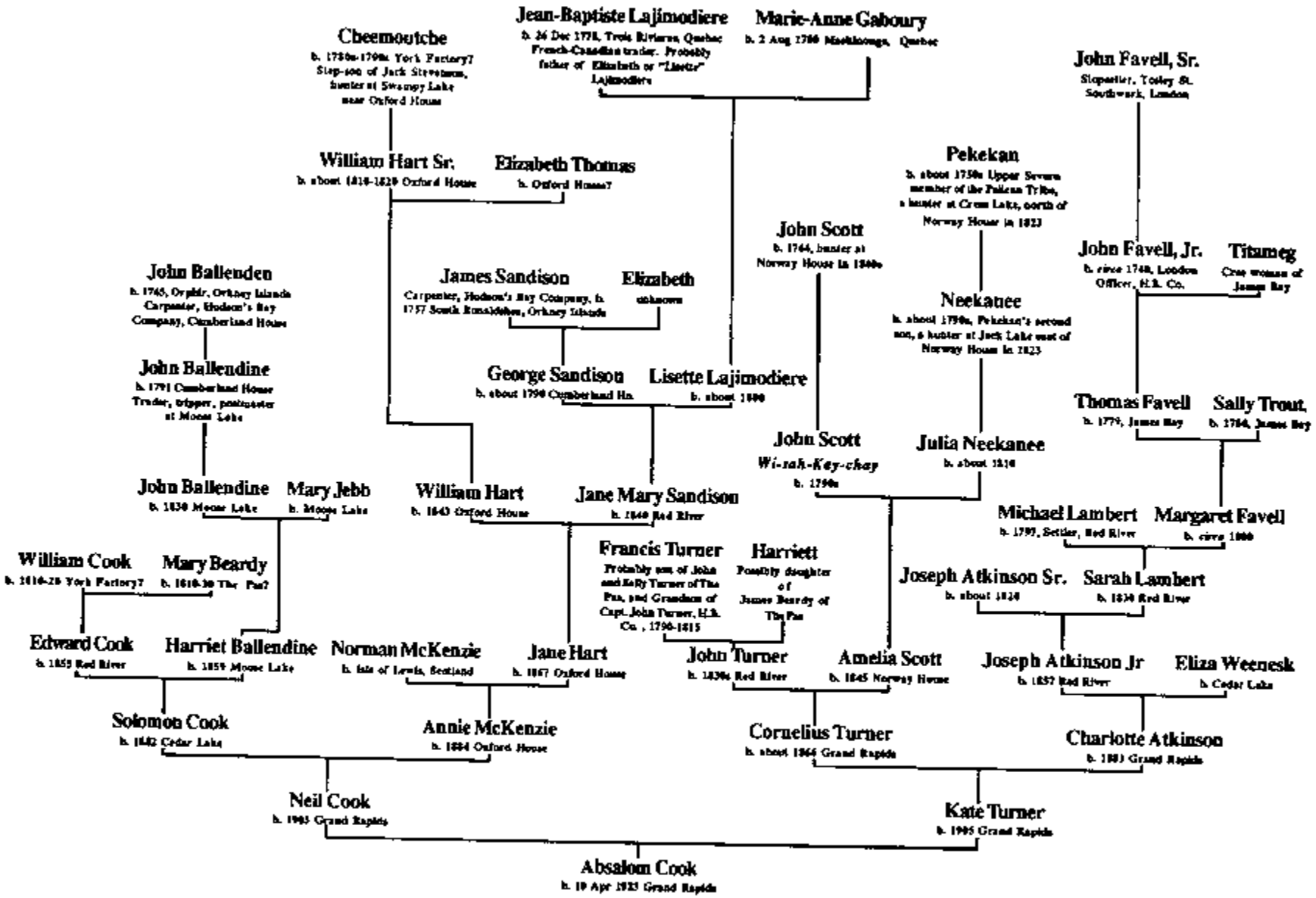
Unidentified Native People with Snowshoes, Grand Rapids, 1907
Charles Hall Family Coll. 90 (Courtesy Manitoba Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Family Trees

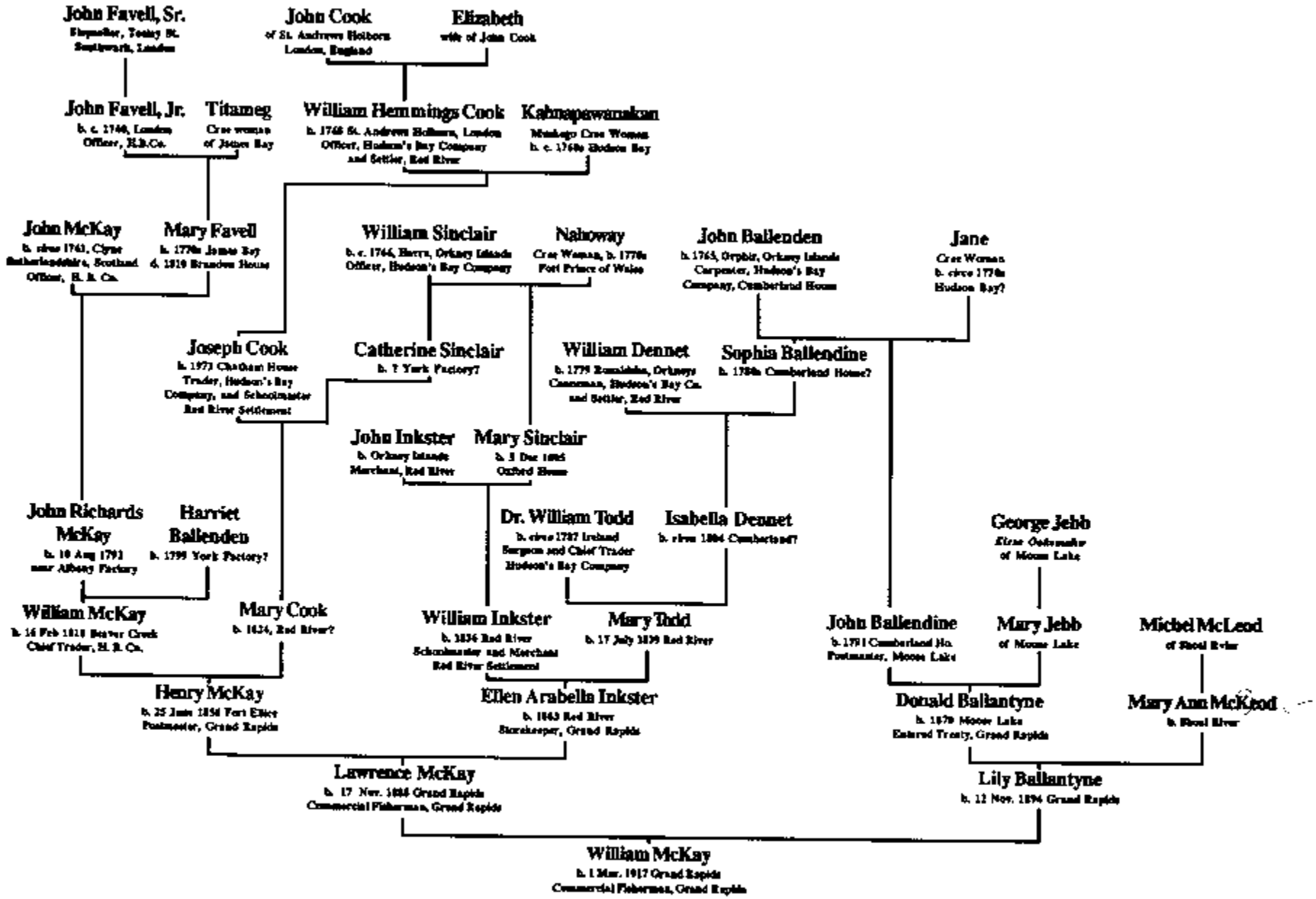
On the following pages are family trees of most of the contributors to *Grand Rapids Stories, Volume 2*, as well as of Archie Scott, whose chart illustrates the Scott-Neekanee, Chief, and Umpherville-Turner lines. The roots of Grand Rapids go back along many interconnected paths to ancestors, who came together from diverse backgrounds to build a new people and a new society. As heirs to that tradition, the people of Grand Rapids may proudly claim as their own, not only the histories of the first peoples of this land, but also those of the British and French and others who settled among them. It is a heritage of which to be proud.



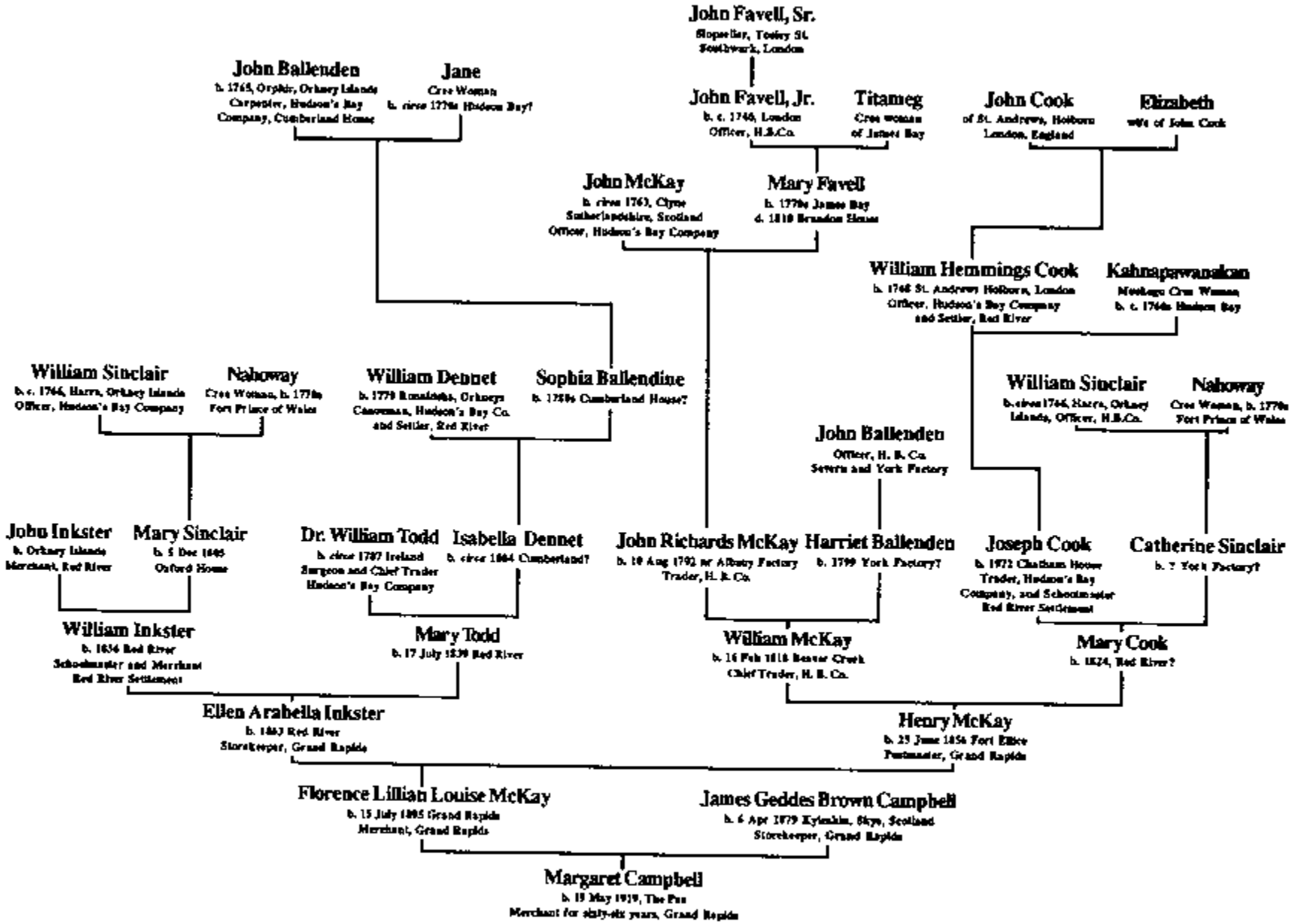
The Maternal Ancestry of Joseph Buck



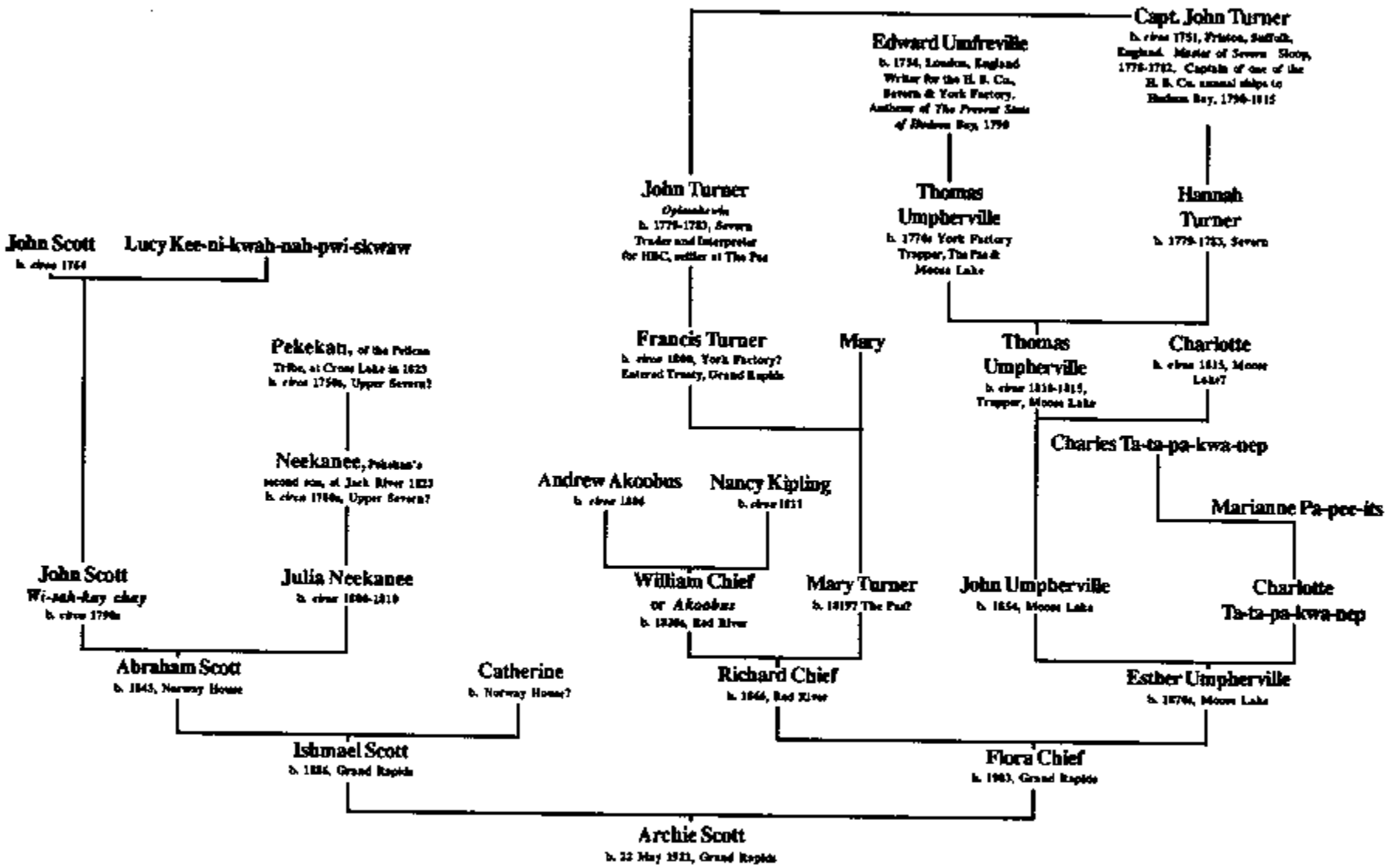
The Family Tree of Absalom Cook



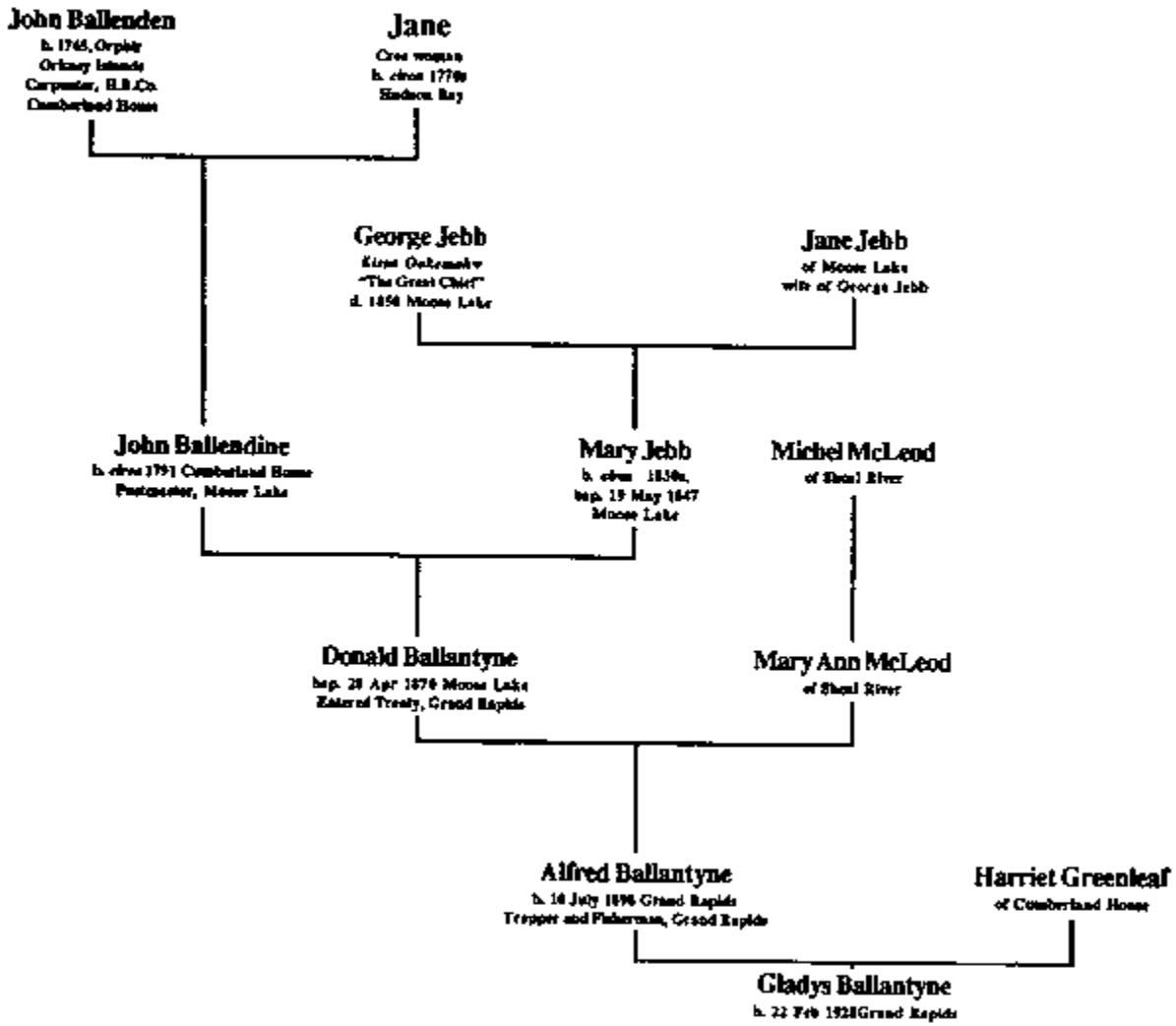
The Family Tree of William McKay



The Family Tree of Margaret Campbell Olafson



Family Tree of Archie Scott



The Family Tree of Gladys Ballantyne Scott

Historical Tidbits

The following are miscellaneous items pertinent to the history of Grand Rapids. They include a brief biography of John Ballendine of Moose Lake and an account of an event in the medical career of Dr. William Todd of Fort Pelly. In their own way, each played a role in preventing the spread of smallpox in Western North America during the nineteenth century. An incident in the life of George Atkinson of Eastmain, which was recorded nearly two hundred years ago, is also included. Like Ballantyne and Todd, he is an ancestor of many people in Grand Rapids. There are notes on particular Grand Rapids families as well, but this section is not entirely confined to past history. A recurring theme in all of the reminiscences has been the effect of hydro-electric power development on the community. Of relevance here is an inquiry concerning the construction of a new Hydro staff house, a building which has been described locally by some as the "Taj Mahal of Grand Rapids." The questions it raises are useful in the continuing debate about Hydro policy relative to the community.

John Ballendine of Moose Lake

Ancestor to the Ballantynes and others at Grand Rapids, John Ballendine of Moose Lake was the son of John Ballenden of Orphir, who arrived in North America from the Orkney Islands via the company ship in 1785 to work for the Hudson's Bay Company.[18] Just twenty years of age when he arrived at York Factory, John Sr. went inland to the fur trading post at Cumberland House, where he remained until he retired to the Orkneys in 1815.

John Sr. married Jane, a woman of mixed European-Native background, and raised a large family. His eldest daughter was probably Sophia, born in 1788 and ancestor to the McKay and Campbell families of Grand Rapids. The eldest son, John Jr., the subject of this biography, was born in 1791. The younger children included three other sons named William, James, and George, and at least two other daughters, Betsy and Jane, all of whom left descendants. The sons worked for the Hudson's Bay Company, and the daughters married men who worked for the company.

John of Orphir began his fur trade career as a labourer, but was soon promoted to steersman, carpenter, and canoe builder. The company records describe him as "a very useful Servant," of "excellent character," and rightly so. He guided the Cumberland Boat downriver each year with the fur returns to York Factory and guided it back in the fall with the trade goods for the next year. While at the post, he plied his skills as a carpenter and received additional wages in the early years for the excellent canoes he made. Such a man was a good example for his children, but he was more than a role model. As his sons became older, he actively promoted their interests with the company officers at York Factory, including the accountant who was responsible for keeping the company books and sending them back to England for the inspection of the London Committee. When this man summarized John's debits and credits in the company book of 1806, he added that John "has a Son 15 years of Age & another 12, wishes to know if your Honors will accept of their Service." When the London Committee reviewed the books, they took note of the remark.

The sons in question were John Jr. and his younger brother William, both of whom were soon in Company service. In fact, John became an apprentice in 1807.

[18] Orphir is a small town not far from Stromness, the port in the Orkneys where the HBC ship stopped to take on fresh water, provisions, and Orkney labourers before heading across the Atlantic to Hudson Bay.

Described as "careful and industrious" in 1811, he was acting as a bowsman "as required" by 1813. In 1815, when he was twenty-four years of age, he was described as "Sober, honest, ready & willing, respectful to his Superiors, active Boatsteerer, Ass^{t}. Trader and Runner to Indians." Evidently, he was assuming more responsibilities in the fur trade. He had increased family duties, too. His father returned to the Orkneys in 1814, leaving behind a wife and children, including a boy just ten years of age. As the eldest son, John seems to have watched over his family, even sending money to his father in the Orkneys in 1815. In 1820, he also witnessed the contract of his youngest brother George, who "by the will and consent of his relations, (being under age)" engaged as an apprentice at Cumberland House.

John worked as a guide for the company at Cumberland House in 1821 and 1822, but in 1823, he became a "freeman." We do not know if he decided to leave on his own, or whether he was among the men laid off because of restructuring in the Hudson's Bay Company. We do know he went to Moose Lake in 1823 when John Lee Lewes became manager of the HBC post there. Lewes's second wife was John's sister Jane. James Ballendine, John's younger brother, was personal servant to Lewes and later married Frances, Lewes's daughter by his first wife. The relationships did not end there. William Rowland, one of the labourers at the post that year, was married to Betsy, another of John's sisters. These complex interrelationships were common in fur trade country, and were insurance against hard times, when a man might have to call on an influential relative for food or employment.

For the next few years John trapped muskrats (with his brother William after 1825), and occasionally worked on the company boats during the summer. He was on one such trip to York Factory in 1826, when news of a smallpox epidemic reached the HBC posts along the Saskatchewan. On his way upriver, John was inoculated at Norway House, and by the time he reached Cumberland, August 27, he had a large quantity of matter on his arm. This was used to inoculate others, including the people of Moose Lake, and helped prevent the disease from spreading any further. After the crisis was over, John and his brother William returned to trapping, no doubt relieved that disease and death had bypassed their families.

It is likely John was married by 1820 to Betsey Gunn, apparently the daughter of an Orkneyman who had worked for the Hudson's Bay Company years earlier in the Cumberland District. However, no evidence has been found that they had any children. This may explain why John took a second wife, probably in 1826 or 1827. Her name was Mary or Polly, and she was the daughter of Tommy Umpherville, who had moved from The Pas to Moose Lake in 1825 and is occasionally recorded in company with John Ballendine in the HBC records. Those records also include a census, which confirms that John had two wives and a child by June 1828.

In those days, it was not uncommon for a Cree man to have more than one wife, a practice some European traders followed as well. Since John was closely related to the Cree through his mother, was fluent in the language, and familiar with Cree culture, it is unlikely he would have found the custom strange. He was also living among the Moose Lake Cree, whose leading hunters often had more than one wife. In a day when children were often the only support parents had in their old age, a barren wife was a liability. John may have felt an urgent need to establish a family of children to take care of him and his wife in their old age. Betsey may also have desired children, and a second wife offered her the chance to have them in her home. Whatever the case, the family expanded to include four healthy sons in the ensuing years.

The Moose Lake post was closed in June 1825 because of a decline in muskrats and not reopened again until the fall of 1829, when John was supplied with goods and put in charge there. In October, his brother-in-law William Rowland was sent to assist him. Another brother-in-law, John Lee Lewes, was in charge of Cumberland House that year. Brother William was a freeman at Moose Lake, but James and George were still employed by the company at Cumberland House. The following year, Lewes had moved on, the Moose Lake post was closed, and John was a freeman once more, although he worked on the company boats during the summers of 1831 and 1832. While passing through Oxford House in July and August 1832, he made small purchases at the company store. He probably saw his sister Jane, as her husband John Lee Lewes was headquartered at Oxford House in his capacity as Chief Factor of the Island Lake District. William Ballendine was also working for the company there, and remained in the district for a number of years.

In the fall of 1832, John was again in charge of Moose Lake assisted by his brother-in-law, William Rowland, and he remained in charge the following year. However, in 1834, he was replaced by a Mr. Nolin, who remained for two years. The following is recorded in a letter written by Roderick McKenzie to George Gladman, and dated 28 August 1835 at Cumberland House.

> John Ballendine will leave this in four or five days or as soon as the Hay is finished - he is to send back the Boat about the 25th Sept. to bring down Mr. Nolin as soon as you arrive - It is customary to give them some Potatoes for Moose Lake; you will give Mr. Nolin his allowances the same as last year, to which you will add a Bag of Pemican for this Winter's Stock - he is going to retire from the Service ensuing Spring, he finds the place too hard for living and John Ballendine will answer our purpose as well at Moose Lake for which purpose you will engage him ensuing Spring for 3 years at £30 P Annum - obliged to Steer the Cumberland Boat with the Returns to and Outfit from York Factory/ not obliged to work in the Journey/ with Interpreter's allowances etc.[19]

John was indeed hired according to McKenzie's instructions, as postmaster, steersman, and guide for a three year term commencing the fall of 1836. Stationed at Moose Lake during the next three years, he was assisted by Baptiste Babue, fisherman, and Joseph McLellan, a young apprentice. His brother-in-law, Chief Factor John Lee Lewes, took charge of Cumberland House in 1837 where he remained until 1840.

It was during this time that smallpox again spread across the prairies. News that disease had struck an American fort to the south was brought to Dr. William Todd at Fort Pelly by three Cree men September 20, 1837. Suspecting smallpox, Todd vaccinated sixty men, women, and children the following day, and continued to vaccinate people as they arrived. News travelled slowly at the time, and it was not until February 1838 that the Cumberland people were vaccinated, including John Ballendine, who was up on a visit from Moose Lake with one of his men. The journal entry for 27 February 1838 reads,

> This morning John Ballendine and those who arrived with him started on their return. John takes with him a supply of Provisions to trade with his Indians during the season

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[19] Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B.49/b/3, p. 3, Cumberland House Corr, 1835-1836, a letter from Roderick McKenzie to George Gladman, dated Cumberland House, 28 Aug. 1835, mf. 1M179.

> of Rat hunting this Spring. The vaccine matter having taken with good effect both on the Arms of John & his Man, they take with them the mean's of giving the same to all attached to Moose Lake and to which I have desired John to be carefull in doing immediately on his arrival at his Post.[20]

According to Paul Hackett, a Manitoba historian specializing in the study of disease, John Ballendine is the only recorded individual he has ever discovered who reacted twice when vaccinated for smallpox. Consequently, the "vaccine matter" produced by his body was used with good effect to vaccinate the people of Moose Lake not only in 1826, but also in 1838.

New diseases like smallpox were just one of many changes which affected people in fur trade country during the nineteenth century. By the 1820s, Native people from the Cumberland District were beginning to emigrate to the fledgling agricultural settlements along the Red River, attracted there in the hope of educational, religious, and economic opportunities for their children. Even company servants left, including John's own brother James, who took his family and became a settler at St. Andrews in the early 1830s. This alarmed the Hudson's Bay Company, which was concerned that all its hunters and servants would leave the north and become farmers. Consequently, they encouraged missionaries to settle near their fur trade outposts, not only to teach religious principles, but also to provide the local children with an opportunity for learning. In 1840 James Evans established a Methodist mission at Norway House, and in the same year a Native catechist named Henry Budd was sent by the Church Missionary Society to establish an Anglican mission at The Pas.

The coming of the missionaries was to have a profound effect on places like Moose Lake and Cumberland House, and more particularly on families like that of John Ballendine, because the Church disapproved of a man having more than one wife. Although we do not know all the details, it is evident that James Evans passed through Moose Lake in December of 1840 and baptised John, Peter, Robert, and George Ballendine. He identified them as the children of John and Betsey Ballendine, but this was inaccurate. We know from other sources that Peter, Robert, and George were the children of Polly Umpherville, and it is likely

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[20] PAM, HBCA, B.49/a/49, fo. 25d, Cumberland House Post Journal, 1837-1838, kept by Charles Ross & John L. Lewes.

that John, the eldest son, was hers, too. Evans did not at that time baptise or marry John and Betsey. Instead, he went on to Cumberland House and baptised the children of that post on January 3, 1841. On the same day, he married all the company servants there to their wives, including Joseph McLellan and Polly Umpherville. On his return to Norway House, he passed through Moose Lake, baptised John and Betsey, then performed the marriage ceremony between them.

Although we cannot be sure of what happened, it is likely that Evans told John he could not be baptised unless he gave up one of his wives. Later information indicates he was devoted to Betsey, a fact which may explain why he chose her in preference to his younger wife. Concerning his responsibility to Polly, he would have relied on an old fur trade custom dating back to the days when Hudson's Bay Company servants were required to return overseas after they retired. Because they were not allowed to take their wives and families with them, they often arranged with a friend to look after them. It is quite possible John took his cue from this practice. Young Joseph McLellan had worked for him at Moose Lake and was well acquainted with his family. He was about the same age as Polly, and more to the point, he was unmarried. At a time when servants rarely disobeyed their masters, it is unlikely he would have objected. Thus, the marriage was arranged, and Polly joined Joseph at Cumberland House. Betsey kept the children, but since the family often went to Cumberland House, especially during the summer months, they had many opportunities to visit their mother.

Whatever the arrangements, John and Betsey became Christians. Moose Lake came under the direction of the Church Missionary Society, and the Rev. James Hunter of The Pas reported favourably on John's work to take the Christian message to the Native people there. In February 1847, he reported "Mr. Ballendine being a sincere Christian is doing his utmost for the spiritual good of the Indians, and endeavours to communicate to them the simple truth of Christianity." On 18 May 1847, he travelled to Moose Lake and "Reached the house about noon, found Mr. John Ballendine[,] the person in charge[,] his family and servants all in health, and John as zealous as ever for the conversion of his countrymen." In 1848, he reported that "John Ballendine holds family prayers regularly, and he reports that the Christian Indians are very constant in their attendance when in the neighbourhood."

On 22 October 1850, on another trip to Moose Lake, Hunter reported

> I met with a warm reception from my Kind friend Mr. John Ballendine and his family. He is very anxious for the spiritual good of the Indians; and, as he speaks Cree fluently, he has given the Indians many a faithful lecture when visiting his house for the purpose of trade: at all opportunities he has a word for them. Formerly they heard him with impatience but he finds them now more disposed to listen to the truth of the Gospel. From his co-operation with John Humphible, who is his brother-in-law, we may hope with the divine blessing to make some impression eventually upon the Moose Lake Indians. ...As John Humphible has the House completed, I made arrangements to commence a school this winter, beginning with 11 scholars, who will be taught by John and his sister-in-law, a young woman who has recently come on a visit from Mr. Cowley's school. I also engaged a fisherman, George Jebb, for 3 months, to assist John with the fishery....Commencing the work at Moose Lake in prayer to Almighty God, and bidding farewell to my Kind friend, Mr. John Ballendine, & also John Humphible and his family, I took my departure, accompanied by my four Indians.[21]

Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, John Ballendine continued to manage the post at Moose Lake. By 1851, he only had his younger sons Robert and George with him, and they were already teenagers. He was sixty years of age, but still a vigorous man. His wife Betsey, however, was going into decline. We have a hint of this in the journal of Henry Budd, who reported 5 May 1852.

> I went to the Fort to see Mrs. John Ballendine, who has I believe been very sick the whole of the winter. She is one of the Communicants of Christ Church, and has since we have known her been a consistant charactor. She is, I believe, endeavouring to prepare her mind for whatever may be the will of God with regard to her illness. Her only hope for Eternity is fixed on Christ.[22]

In September, Rev. James Hunter recorded that Betsey had accompanied John Umpherville and his wife sixty miles to The Pas in order to receive the Lord's Supper, an indication that her health had improved somewhat. However, it was not to last, and by June of the following year, she had died. While on a visit to Moose Lake, 10 May 1853, Hunter

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[21] Public Archives of Canada, Church Missionary Society, Class "C", C.1 Northwest America Mission (Rupertsland) (John West) C.1/0 Orig. Letters, Journals & Papers (Incoming) 1822-1880, Journal, Cumberland Mission, 3 Aug. 1850, James Hunter, mf. A91.

[22] PAC, CMS, Class "C", C.1, C.1/0, Journal, Cumberland Mission, April 1852, Henry Budd, mf. A83.

went over to call upon Mr. John Ballendine, who has been recently bereaved of his wife; found him in a very low state of mind, and swallowed up with grief. I endeavoured to impress upon him the duty of being resigned to the Divine will.[23]

John seems to have taken Rev. Hunter's advice. Before long he resumed his efforts to convert the Native people at Moose Lake, and carry out his responsibilities as the master of the company post. In December 1853, at the age of sixty-two, he married Mary Jebb and over the next dozen years or so fathered at least nine children, including William, Richard, Mary, Harriet, Henry, Adam, James, Hardisty, and Donald. He died in 1879 at Moose Lake at the ripe old age of eighty-eight years.

Mary remained at Moose Lake for a few years, then she transferred to the Chemawawin Band in 1885, but moved to Grand Rapids and became a member of that band in 1903 along with her youngest son Donald. The records tell us she lived on until 1920 and was reputed to be one hundred years of age at the time of her death.

Of her family, James and Adam left treaty, and apparently moved west to Saskatchewan. Hardisty, who lived at Grand Rapids, also left treaty in 1886. Nothing as yet is known about William, Mary, and Henry. Richard married Marie Natoowaw or Chartrand in 1879 and transferred to the Grand Rapids Band that year. In 1885, he decided to leave treaty. However, he remained in Grand Rapids among the non-treaty people. His daughter Harriet married Alexander J. Sinclair, and her sister Mary Jane married Frank Sinclair. Descendants still live in Grand Rapids.

Harriet married Edward Cook, a member of the Grand Rapids Band in 1880, and their son Solomon became the ancestor of a large Cook family which still resides there.

Donald also remained in Grand Rapids among the treaty people. He married Mary Ann McLeod of Shoal River, and they raised a large family, descendants of which are still members of the Grand Rapids Band.

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[23] PAC. CMS, Class "C", C.1, C.1/0, Journal, Cumberland Mission, 6 Aug. 1852, James Hunter, mf. A91.

The Jebbs of Moose Lake

Mary Jebb, the third wife of John Ballendine, came from a leading Cree family at Moose Lake, and her father was one of the earliest converts to Christianity there. After James Hunter, the missionary at The Pas, arrived at Moose Lake, 18 May 1847, he described

> A tent of Indians here consisting of two families who are Candidates for Baptism, conversed with them and found them intelligent, especially **"KesáhooKanow"** or the Great Chief, he is to be called George and I appointed to morrow for Baptizing and marrying them.[24]

Hunter hired George, whom he surnamed Jebb, to act as the fisherman for the Anglican Mission at Moose Lake, which was under the direction of John Umpherville, younger son of Thomas and Hannah. Jebb acted as fisherman for a short time, then he died suddenly. We are fortunate indeed that James Hunter recorded his last encounter with this good man.

> 29 Nov. 1849, John Humphible arrived from Moose Lake...brought the melancholy news that the fisherman I engaged, **"George Jebb"** had since died, & left a widow and 4 children behind. He was one of the first Indians, whom I baptized at Moose Lake in May 1847, when I visited that place, and I believe he had been a consistent Christian ever since. He came up with me in the Autumn on my return from Moose Lake for some little Articles I promised to give him, and I had several conversations with him. I remember asking him, Do you still love your Saviour? He replied with great earnestness, Truly I love him. Do you still love religion? Truly I love it, never will I give it up. These were almost his last words when he parted with me; and little did I expect to hear so soon, of his removal to a happier and better work. Thus at the commencement of our labours at Moose Lake, we are permitted to see one of our converts dying in the faith, & professing with his last breath his love and attachment to the Saviour.[25]

George's great-great-granddaughter, Gladys Ballantyne Scott, would echo the words of this notable ancestor, who had made a religious commitment similar to her own. George is also a great-great-grandfather of William McKay, and great-

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[24] PAC, CMS, Class "C", C.1, C.1/0, Journal, Cumberland Mission, 18 May 1847, James Hunter, mf. A91.

[25] PAC, CMS, Class "C", C.1 C.1/0, Journal, Cumberland Mission, 3 Aug. 1850, James Hunter, mf. A91.

great-great-grand-grandfather to Absalom Cook, two other contributors to this book.

Incident at Fort George

In the early years of the nineteenth century, the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies battled one another for control of the fur trade.[26] Their traders built posts within sight of each other, so as to better observe and counteract the strategies of their rivals. They both offered trade goods, such as traps, shot, fishing line, and other supplies, to the local trappers, in exchange for their furs. The trappers would compare what each company had to offer, then make an agreement with one or the other, and receive the goods they needed to go out trapping. This was called their *debt*, which they paid off in furs at the end of the trapping season. The traders watched "their" Indians, and would sometimes send out men to trap with them to make sure they did not trade their furs with the rival company. At other times, they sent out men to collect the furs rather than risk losing them. However, many things could go awry in this arrangement. The Hudson's Bay Company trapper might be out on his trapline alone when a North West Company trader came along. If the trader had a little brandy to tempt the trapper, he might get him drunk and take his furs in exchange, or simply steal them. This was a strategy used from time to time by unscrupulous traders in both companies. Another problem was created when a trapper took debt from both companies, but could only obtain enough furs to pay one of them back. The offended trader might accuse him of dishonesty and complain that the rival company was using shady trading practices. Hard feelings resulted, and revenge would be planned.

In those days, people were quick to use force to get their way. Traders would not think twice about beating up their employees, if they thought it was justified.

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[26] The source for "Incident at Fort George" is HBCA, B.77/a/1, Fort George (Big River) Journal, 1805-1806, fo. 6-15d. This journal was kept by Thomas Alder of Eastmain, and was a record of his stay at Great River. He seems to have been in charge at Eastmain, but went to Great River for the winter to conduct the trade, probably because the North West Company was a threat there.

They would also challenge their trade rivals to physical combat, and occasionally even rough up a local trapper.

Understanding the circumstances of the trade help us to make sense out of an event which occurred at Fort George in the James Bay Region and involved George Atkinson Jr.. George is an ancestor to many people at Grand Rapids and elsewhere.

We have Thomas Alder to thank for an account of this incident, which occurred 27 March 1806. Here is Alder's report in his own words, written to the London Council, governing body of the Hudson's Bay Company. No corrections have been made in his grammar or spelling!

> From 8th Ins[t]. till this date, we have been quite unmolested by our opponents, — Between 7 & 8 OClock this morning, observed a large party of men pass the window, and on going to the door, met 'im coming up the bank, when I in a joiose manner exclaimed, hollo neighbour, what are all those coming to take us? I am come he replied, to do as you have done, and to pull both your noses! but meeting with some resistance in the attempt, he (Duncan McDougall) ordered the others to seize me, which was instantly obey'd, and my arms pinion'd; having secured me, McDougall now approach'd Mr. Geo. Atkinson, and gave him a violent blow in the face, at the same time two other ruffians were holding his arms, any farther resistance, became now impracticable, being both piniond and surrounded by a far superior force. Order were now given (by McDougall) to take both prisoners to the N.W. Companies house, where we were accordingly conducted, in a very triumphant manner, guarded by a gang of fellows, arm'd with Guns, hatchet, etc.—

Thomas Alder and George Atkinson worked for the Hudson's Bay Company, while Duncan McDougall was in charge of the North West Company trading post nearby. Evidently, McDougall was angry about something! Alder was very careful to report exactly what had happened, from his point of view, and he made sure two of his employees signed as witnesses.

> —Thus far, Wee the undersigned are witnesses to, and ready at any time when call'd upon, to attest on both. [signed] William Wood, Craft-master [and] John Spence, Carpenter.

After roughing up both Alder and Atkinson, McDougall took them back to his own house. Alder called it "the Canadian house," because the headquarters of the North West Company were in Montreal and many of their traders were Canadians.

> On our arrival at the Canadian house, and while standing at the door, I enquired which part was intended for our prison, when we were shewn into a room, and the door fasten'd; one of our men (Wm. Wood) who had followed us, gain'd no admittance and therefore return'd to take care of the house, which was left open:— being now close confin'd, I requested of Duncan McDougall (whose prisoners we were) permission to send for my breakfast; this he refused, and with an oath told me! I should have nothing there, but bread and water; Having been taken by supprize, not Knowing any thing of their hostile intentions, nor was any crime imputed to us, I began to enquire into the nature of our offences, who was the accuser, – What punnishment we were to expect etc–? Duncan McDougall replied; that I was a damn'd villianous rascal, and he had given orders for us both (Mr. Atkinson, and myself) to be crop'd, and the one half of our heads shaved, after which, we should be Kick'd out, like rascals as we were, McDougall now left us in our prison, and in a few minutes return'd, with two others, one of which had a pair of sheers in his hand, for the opperation of croping (whether ears, or hair, or both, we were not inform'd, the other man was to hold us, in case of resistance, Duncan McDougall now gave me orders to prepare for my punishment, and take my seat on a Keg, which was placed in the middle of the room for the purpose, On receiving this order, I turn'd to the man (George Grey) who appear'd to be their operator, and thus address'd him; Pray let me ask you; is it of your own free will, that you cut, and mangle my body? he replied no, 'tis the order of my master and I must obey,: I then ask'd him for his impliments which with some reluctance he gave me, or rather suffer'd them to be taken from out of his hands, and I attempted to dash them out at the windows, telling them I would defend myself against any one of them, as long as I was able, and requested to go out of doors, and I would behave like a prisoner fighting in his own defence; On which McDougall and another man seized my arms, and swore he would be damn'd if I should go out of the house, and that I was now his prisoner; One of the fellows (Geo. Stocking) now ask'd me if I would fight him? I answer'd, that in defence of my self, in my present situation, it seem'd I must fight, or submit to very harsh treatment, 'twas therefore, matter of indifference who I contended with, and I would face him as willingly as any one else; here McDougall interfeard, and begining to strip, said he would fight the rascal himself; and had any regard been

> paid to fair treatment, I would have cleard my way through some of those cowardly fellows, but finding the blood gushing out of my ear, my throat severely pinch'd and otherwise much bruised, I was compeld to give myself entirely up, to the fury of this fierce banditi who were (part of them) appearantly somewhat in liquor, finding me now completely overcome, McDougall call'd for hot water etc, and repeated his order for the execution of my sentence, which no man seem'd willing to obey; nor would they have found me willing to submit, (unless overpowerd by superior strength,) while the vital spark remain'd notwithstanding the number of my assailants, and...the many severe bruises I had already received: We were both detain'd 'till about 1.OClock P.M.–when Duncan McDougall, inform'd us we were at liberty to depart; repeating at the same time his threat of taking furrs from us, or out of our store at some future period, and as we can't tell when to expect this long promis'd attack, on the property of our employers, 'twill behove us to be always on our guard, and defend to the utmost of our abilities, the property entrusted to our care, but if a gang of ruffians are suffer'd with impunity to commit such repeated outrages on the person in charge of your honors Settlements, neither your servants lives, nor the property with which they are entrusted can any longer be considered in safety:

"Your honors," of course, referred to members of the London Council, which governed the Hudson's Bay Company. Thomas wanted it to take action to punish McDougall and his "ruffians" in a British court. He also wanted to justify his own actions, so that he would not be blamed for the trouble. That is why he pointed out that he was outnumbered by the North West company men.

> —Our number consists of 6 men only, of which two are away in search of trade; –At the time we were drag'd prisoners for our house, by this very formidable banditi, four only remain'd, viz[t].— Myself, Mr. G. Atkinson Taken prisoners
> Wm. Wood, Jno. Spence.

Not only did Alder know the names of the nine men who had accosted them, he also knew they came from places like "Sandwick," "Orpher," "Bursy," "Caithness," and "Ireland" in Great Britain." Being as close as they were, the men of the two companies had many occasions to get to know one another, and there had been times when they were on friendly terms. Some of the assailants had also been Hudson's Bay Company employees at one time, but had deserted to the other side. Alder made sure he recorded as much as he could about them.

The names of the N W Companies Servants, by whom we were taken, Vizt. Duncan McDougall, George Stocking, Sandwick, James Hay Orpher, George Gray, Bursy, William Bews, Tankerness, John Robertson, Caithness, William Simpson, Caithness, Lisk, Ireland, William Paulson, H. Bay. Signed by Thomas Alder and George Atkinson.

If Alder thought the harassment would end when he signed his journal on March 27, he was sadly mistaken, for it started again the following day.

Monday, 28 April 1806, George Atkinson and his brother [Jacob] were hunting this morning, but perceiving a man following their track, and Keeping himself as much as possible out of their sight; they sat down to wait his coming up, but he sheer'd off, after coming sufficiently close for Mr. Atkinson to know who he was; he proved to be (W. Paulson) a lad who Duncan McDougal had enticed out of the Hudson's Bay Companies Service, when under Mr. Atkinson at this Settlement; etc. Mr. Atkinson had repeatedly alter'd his course and finding himself still followed by this man under arms, and having reason to suspect there were others at a short distance behind; thought it prudent to return, and prevent if possible any disagreeable event; for 'tis more than probable, those people were sent to fulfil their threat of the 25th Inst.[March] by taking (as they term it) revenge, on the Man Mr. Atkinson had with him, and disable him from walking home etc. About 10 o'clock P.M. was just lain down to rest, when Mr. Atkinson and his brother [Jacob], having both arm'd themselves, came to my bed side, very much allarm'd, by two fellows, who (by light of the Moon) they had seen sculking with cautious steps, about our houses; Mr. Atkinson call'd to one of them to ask who he was, but rec^{d}. no answer, but having his Gun in his hand and repeating his words, who is that? the fellow who was wrap'd in a Blanket, hid his face, and answer'd 'tis a fine night; We Know this man by his voice, to be John Clouston, who ran from the HB. Company's Service, to the Canadians.

Evidently McDougall was attempting to frighten the Hudson's Bay Company men by intimidation. After initially using physical force, he continued the harassment to wear down their resistance. This went on in one form or another until May, when Alder again wrote about the struggle in his journal.

10 May 1806, ...Mr. Atkinson has heard among some of his friends, that our opponent Duncan McDougall has possitively declared, that he will either take or cause to be taken, Mr. Atkinson's life, and that he shall never leave great river,: —D. McDougall has acknowledged to our Craft-master William Wood; that his errand to

> us 'twixt eleven and twelve o'Clock last night, was with an intent to use violence, on the persons of Mr. Atkinson, and myself, as a means of pleasing the Indians; The result however had very nearly cost them their lives; the natives who have been long accustomed to mild treatment, having now had their goods forcibly taken from them are much displeased with such usage, as well as McDougall's behaviour to them. Their hearing many virulent expressions from McDougall, and the Canadian's hostile intentions towards us (tho' it was quite unknown to ourselves) had induced many of them to take their Guns into the tent, and they had among themselves, resolved to defend us.

From Alder's report, it appears McDougall was an unscrupulous bully, quite prepared to use threats and bluster to get his way. However, if his journal had survived, we might have acquired a different view of McDougall. Perhaps there were legitimate reasons for his anger. There is no doubt George Atkinson had great influence among the local Cree hunters to whom he was related through his mother Necushin. They may have obtained supplies from both companies, but when it came time to bring in their furs, they gave them to the Hudson's Bay Company with which they were much more familiar. Feeling cheated, the volatile McDougall would have been infuriated with both Atkinson and the Cree hunters. This is a reminder that the old journals record the biases of their writers; therefore, one must always read between the lines and seek independent sources to obtain a fuller picture of what really happened. Even then, one's interpretation, however plausible, is only an approximation of the truth.

The Cooks of Grand Rapids

The name Cook dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century in fur trade country. Williams Hemmings Cook was an Englishman from St. Andrews Holburn in London, England, who came out to work for the Hudson's Bay Company in the 1780s. He was an active trader, who became friends to the Native people along Hudson Bay, and it is possible that a number of the christianized Cree who settled at Red River adopted Cook as their surname because of the esteem they felt for him. On the other hand, they may also have been his direct descendants. According to contemporary reports, he had three country wives by whom he had at least sixteen children and possibly more.

We do know that the McKays of Grand Rapids are direct descendants through William's eldest son, Joseph. The Cooks of Grand Rapids may be descendants of William Jr., the youngest son of William Hemmings Cook. As of this date, research has not uncovered a definitive answer to this puzzle.

The Bucks of The Pas: Last to Abandon the Old Ways

James Hunter, the Church of England missionary at The Pas, found some of the local Native people highly resistant to Christianity. Chief among them was *Mistahpaoo*, or Big Buck, a religious leader who annually organized a goose dance, which was a sacred ceremony long practiced among the Swampy and Woodland Cree. On 4 October 1845, Hunter recorded this event.

> To-day "Mistahpaoo" or "Big buck" held his Annual Goose-dance to ensure a good supply of wild fowl; a large tent was erected for the dancers, who were dressed off in their best attire, with red cloth, feathers & faces painted with vermilion - their only music was the monotonous sound of the drum, which they ever and auth accompanied with hideous yells & ludicrous grimaces. A Large supply of Geese has been stored up for the occasion, as offerings to the Deity & to feast the dancers.[27]

Needless to say, Hunter was hostile to activities he thought were holding the people back from Christianity. Nevertheless, he persisted with the help of his able assistant Henry Budd to challenge the old ways. By 13 October 1850, he was able to report some success.

> Louis Buck, son of Big Buck, and his son Patrick were baptised. Louis's wife had died before baptism, having been prevented by her parents from so being. [28]

By 30 January 1851, there were more cracks in the resistance.

> To-day I heard that **"Big Buck"**, who for so long a time hath withstood our instructions; had given up his heathen practices and had become a Christian. He has sent me word, that he intends to place himself under Instructions for Baptism when he returns in Spring from Hunting. Should he become a Christian, all heathen rites

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[27] PAC, CMS, Class "C", C.1, C.1/0, Journal, Cumberland Mission, 29 July 1845, James Hunter, mf. A91.

[28] PAC, CMS, Class "C", C.1, C.1/0, Journal, Cumberland Mission, 3 Aug 1850, James Hunter, mf. A91.

> will cease at this place, and I hope the sound of the drum will no more be heard in the neighbourhood. His son was baptized last Autumn, and his father joins with him in family prayer.[29]

By June, Mistahpaoo's brother Ooskenéken, whose wife had already become a Christian, allowed his children to be baptised. He had begun attending church on occasion, but had not made up his mind one way or the other. Hunter was quite certain where he was leaning.

> I have no doubt ere long that he will become a Christian; he is one of the 2 or 3 about the Station who are keeping back from embracing Xtianity. I have not heard the sound of the drum this Spring for the first time, which shows that Heathenism is passing away from this place.[30]

It was more than a year later, 26 December 1852, that Hunter was able to report the conversion of Big Buck himself.

> I baptised 4 adults and 6 children...The four adults were Mistahpaoo or Big Buck the great Medicine man of this place, his Son and their two wives. Big Buck took the name of Adam Buck, and his son that of Baptiste Buck. For some time they have been very attentive to the means of grace, and manifested an evident desire to become Christians. Adam Buck has lately associated very much with the Indian Christians, and joined them in their morning and evening devotions; and when about the mission he has been regular in his attendance at Church. I hope therefore and have little doubt, that the change is from conviction of the truth of Christianity, & from a desire to secure the salvation of his soul. He was the last of the Indians who kept up the sound of the Heathen drum about the Mission, and I often despaired of his becoming a Xtian.

The following day, 27 December 1852, Hunter was able to write that the long struggle to win over Mistapaoo had succeeded completely.

> This morning I married Adam Buck to his wife Angelique. He brought me over his conjuring rattles, medicine bags, etc and gave them to me as a proof of his sincerity in embracing Christianity; as these things are highly esteemed by the Indians, and considered a species of property in their heathen ways, I was glad to see him act in this way.[31]

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] PAC, CMS, Class "C", C.1, C.1/0, Journal, Cumberland Mission, 6 Aug. 1852, James Hunter, mf. A91.

Although the drum and rattle had disappeared, men like Adam Buck found it difficult to adapt to the new ways, in spite of Rev. Hunter's great hopes. Perhaps the kindly Henry Budd summed up best the situation in which Adam found himself. In his journal entry for 25 July 1856, Budd wrote,

> I had some conversation with old **Adam Buck**, he is a great admirer of Christianity but generally fails in his attempts to keep its precepts.[32]

Being of the same background as Adam, the Rev. Henry Budd no doubt understood how difficult it was for the old man to change his ways.[33] Old beliefs went into decline, but the Buck family prospered, and descendants of this old fur trade family can be found in Grand Rapids and other parts of Western Canada today.

Dr. William Todd

Anyone familiar with fur trade history knows Dr. William Todd, who is connected by blood or marriage to many of the families in Grand Rapids. An Irishman born *circa* 1787, Todd was first employed as a surgeon by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1816. Although he served as a doctor throughout his years with the company, he also acted as a clerk and trader. By 1831 he was a Chief Trader, and in 1832 he took charge of the Swan River District, where except for three winters he remained until his retirement in 1851. He died 22 December 1851.

Todd became well-known as a doctor in the Hudson's Bay Company territories early in his career. Historian Arthur J. Ray records that "he was probably the most famous surgeon in the western interior of Canada before 1850, and his contemporaries often referred to him simply as 'the Doctor' in spite of the fact that there were other medical men in the region."[34]

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[32] PAC, CMS, Class "C", C.1, C.1/0, Journal, Cumberland Mission, 1 Feb. 1856, Henry Budd, mf. A83.

[33] Henry and Adam were of mixed Cree and European background, and Cree ways had been dominant in both of their lives at one time or another. Henry would have understood that the conversion process was a difficult one.

[34] Arthur J Ray, "William Todd: Doctor and Trader for the Hudson's Bay Company, 1816-51," *Prairie Forum* 9 (1):13.

According to Ray, three episodes stand out in the medical career of this man. The first of these occurred in 1831, when he looked after the wife of Governor George Simpson during a difficult first pregnancy. The second occurred in the winter of 1836/37 when Simpson transferred him to York Factory to investigate a strange malady that had struck both officers and men during the previous three winters. Todd caught the disease ten days after he arrived at the post, but he was the last person to come down with it. Apparently, he recognized and removed the cause, but never explained what he did to bring about this positive result. "Thus," in the words of Arthur J. Ray, "The York Factory complaint remains a riddle for the medical historian to attempt to solve."

The third and most important episode in Todd's medical career began in the fall of 1837. Within a week of his return to Fort Pelly from York Factory, 14 September, he became aware of a strange disease which had broken out in June at Fort Union on the Missouri River. His journal provides details.

> 20 Sep. 1837. Late in the evening three Cree Indians arrived from the Forks of Qu'appelle River for Tobacco to the Chief of a Small Band who is soon Coming in with Provisions as the Cattle [buffalo] are numerous, they report that some bad disease has got into the American Fort in Consequence of which their gates are Kept constantly Shut and no Indian allowed to enter.[35]

Todd immediately suspected smallpox, even though it could have been one of half a dozen other diseases. As a doctor, he recognized the precautions which needed to be taken, and, more to the point, he was equipped to handle the threat. Thanks to the foresight of the Hudson's Bay Company, cowpox vaccine had been supplied for use at each post in the event of a smallpox epidemic. Convinced that this vaccine would work, Todd acted at once.

> Thursday, 21 Sep. 1837. had all the Indians now here called in[.] entered in a full explanation with them respecting the reports brought yesterday of the disease at the American establishment which I painted out to them was likely to be the Small Pox, and the danger thus incurred if it once got among them[.] proposed vaccination as the only preventative. to this they at once agreed and I immediately commenced[.] I vaccinated Sixty Persons including Men Women and Children.

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[35] For the quotations from Todd's journal, see HBCA, B.150/a/17, fo. 2d-21d, Fort Pelly Post Journal, 1837-1838.

Monday, 25 Sep. 1837, fitted out the Indians and sent them off to the Strong Woods with particular instructions for them in case the reported Sickness should turn out to be the Small Pox[.] I like wise gave them a lancet and took great pains in instructing them how to use it in vaccinating others.

Nearly a month after he had begun vaccinating the Indians at his post, Todd heard a conflicting story about the disease from a plains Indian. It did not deter him in the least degree, although some Indians now began to refuse the vaccine.

Wednesday, 18 Oct. 1837, late at night an Indian arrived from the plains for Tobacco for a Band of Crees and Assiniboins that are coming in with provisions. he contradicts the report of any bad disease being at the American Fort but that they shut their Gates against the Assiniboins in consequence of having a Band of Blackfeet in the Fort at the time.

Sunday, 22 Oct. 1837. Vaccinated Several of the Crees a few however absolutely refused.

A few days later, Todd began to have doubts himself about the truthfulness of the rumours. Then, he heard a report which alarmed him greatly, and he increased his efforts to stay the course of the disease.

Friday, 27 Oct. 1827, at 10 A M two men arrived from Beaver Creek...previous to their departure an Assiniboine had arrived from a Camp where a disease Similar to the Small Pox had been introduced and had already Carried off 18 persons, this news is truly alarming and tends to confirm the hitherto contradictory reports we have had of that fatal Malady.

Saturday, 28 Oct. 1827, dispatched the Beaver Creek men at an early hour with instructions to Mr. McKay to lose no time in vaccinating the People of the Fort and Indians as they arrived...the reports having for some time died away at this place and not hearing from Mr. McKay who is much nearer the Source than I am I began to conclude the report unfounded but nevertheless did not relax my exertions with Indians as they came in.[36]

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[36] This was John Richards McKay, whose wife Harriet Ballenden was a daughter of Chief Factor John Ballenden. This John Ballenden was a contemporary of John Ballendine of Orphir. John Richards McKay was the grandfather of Henry McKay, ancestor of the McKay Family of Grand Rapids.

In spite of the fact that he was now getting reports of disease from some of the Indians coming to the post, there were others, like Tian, who had heard nothing.

> Tuesday, 31 Oct. 1837, Tian one of our Principal Sauteaux arrived yesterday late at night[.] he passed the Summer in the plains but heard nothing of the reported Malady[.]

One must remember that the prairies were vast and the people few. Often they did not see one another for months at a time. Like Tian, there were others who knew little, if anything, about the epidemic.

> Friday, 3 Nov. 1837, Towards evening the Soberman, Medicine Man & White head arrived from the Plains accompanied by upwards of 50 men besides women and Children, they are well loaded with Provisions &c[.] they bring no further accounts of the Small Pox.

It was at the beginning of November, that Todd again received a contradictory report. The disease was confirmed, but McKay doubted whether it was actually smallpox.

> Monday, 6 Nov. 1837, towards evening two Men arrived from Beaver Creek....Mr. McKay contradicts the report of the Prevailing Malady among the Assiniboins being the Small Pox, but cannot ascertain what disease it is.

On the other hand, at least one Cree chief was alarmed enough to make a special visit to Fort Pelly. By this time, panic was beginning to spread across the plains.

> Tuesday, 7 Nov. 1837, late at night the famous Cree Chief Le Sonnant (Yorstons Guide) arrived from the Forks of the Qu'Apelle River, his principal object to get vaccinated as he has no doubt the disease now in the Assiniboine Camp is the Small Pox, the greatest consternation among the Plain Indians all of whom are flying to the North.

Reports of deaths were becoming more common, but McKay still had his doubts.

> Friday, 10 Nov. 1837, late at night a man and Boy arrived Express from Beaver Creek Sent by McKay to acquaint me that disease has carried off greatest part of the Band belonging to the Man that holds the Knife, Stone Indian Chief, but still doubtful if the Small Pox as reports are so very contradictory.

Being the officer in charge of the district gave Todd the authority to ensure that vaccination continued. His medical training convinced him that it was absolutely necessary.

> Sunday. 12. Nov. 1837, Sent back the Man & Boy to B[eave]r Creek with Mr. McKay to consider the disease of the Man that holds the Knife Band as the Small Pox. as no other disease was likely to prove so generally fatal and to continue Vaccination with unremitted exertions.

News travelled slowly, but eventually Todd learned that his fears had been justified. The epidemic had spread throughout the Saskatchewan country as far north as Fort Carlton.

> Wednesday. 20 Dec. 1837, late at night two men arrived from Carlton with an Express from Messrs[.] Dease & Simpson[.] these men set the question at rest respecting the Small Pox, it is generally all over the Saskatchewan, where the Mortality among the Plain tribes has been very great[.] in the Fort at Carlton since October when two people have died lately.

Pierre La Rocque, one of the two men from Carlton, began to show symptoms of smallpox on December 23. This prompted further measures to control the spread of the disease.

> Thursday, 28 Dec. 1837. Sent John Cummings to Shoal River to vaccinate the People and any Indians that may be in. also Instructions to Goulais to continue the process with the Indians as they arrive with those who have not already been vaccinated.

Poor La Rocque only lived until January 5, but his illness had enabled Todd to observe the course of the disease. He also noticed that a few at the fort who had been vaccinated also became ill with milder, but similar symptoms to those observed in La Rocque. Toward the end of January, he recorded that no one else had died of the disease at his post and that his efforts had apparently saved a portion of the Assiniboin Nation.

> Thursday. 25 Jan. 1838. late in the evening two men arrived from Beaver Creek[.] by Mr. McKays letter the Mortality among the Plain tribes from the Small Pox has been very great[,] but principally confined to the Assiniboins who keep to the Southw^{d}. and in general Trade with the Americans[.] about 200 Tents have traded this year at Beaver Creek[,] got vaccinated and have so far escaped, and these are nearly all that remain of that once numerous tribe.

From Todd's observation, vaccination, which was still a new and controversial treatment, had worked. In March, Todd was able to record that the vaccination programme he had instituted in the fall had been completely successful among the Cree he had vaccinated.

> Monday, 26 March 1838. it is however pleasing to observe that not a single Cree of this Post caught the Small Pox altho often exposed to it by Indians flying from the South^{d} in hopes of escaping[,] but in every instance that I can learn[,] brought that disease with them.[.] I need hardly observe that they were carefully vaccinated last fall.

The situation was just the opposite south of the border. In May, Todd reported that the American fur trade had collapsed.

> Tuesday, 1 May 1838, I have every reason to conclude the Americans have made little or no return[.] it is also currently reported that they intend to abandon all their Posts this Spring[,] which I think not improbable as three fourths of their Traders have been cut off by the Small Pox.

In the aftermath of the epidemic, humour became one means of dealing with the enormity of the tragedy. This is evident in Todd's own journal, when he described his new position of eminence among the Indians. It seems that he had acquired a halo of sorts for having correctly predicted the epidemic, to such a degree in fact that people believed he could predict the future generally!

> Wednesday, 2 May 1838, I have of course had many complementary Speeches delivered on the occasion, to which I have no doubt I am fully entitled from the great pains I took with them last fall.[.] having then predicted what was likely to take place, the Indians now think I can dive into futurity and have in consequence put questions rather difficult to solve not being an astrologer.

The Indians themselves also used humour to soften their grief.

> Thursday, 3 May 1838, at 10 oclock A M little Rock and another Party of Crees arrived from the Plains.[.] he tells a story now considered rather a Joke but have little doubt was counted the reverse when it happened.[.] it would seem last fall after the Crees returned to their Camp they had got a large Tent arranged[,] a sumptuous feast prepared[,] and were on the point of commencing when Several Indians arrived from

the South[d] with the Small Pox,[.] this entirely spoiled their appetite[.] the tents were immediately struck[.] and off they started leaving the repast untouched.

Once the epidemic was passed, Dr. Todd resumed his work as a trader at Fort Pelly, where he remained until 1843, then went on furlough for a year. After he returned to the service he was stationed at Severn for one winter, then went back to Fort Pelly, where he stayed until his retirement in 1851.

Todd's family ties are most interesting. In 1821, when he was surgeon at Pembina, he established a relationship with a Marianne Treathly and fathered a child who lived but a few short months. We do not know what happened to Marianne, but after Todd was transferred to York Factory in 1822, he established a country marriage with Isabella *alias* Elizabeth Dennett. They had a large family of ten children, six of whom lived to adulthood. Their second youngest daughter Mary married William Inkster and became the ancestor of the McKay, Campbell, Olafson, and Hobbs Families of Grand Rapids.

There is another connection to Grand Rapids, too. William Dennett, Todd's father-in-law, was stationed near Cumberland House when he took Sophia Ballendine as his country wife. She was probably the eldest daughter of John Ballendine of Orphir, who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company at Cumberland all his life.[37] Since Jack Ballendine of Moose Lake was the eldest son of John Ballendine of Orphir, he would have been an uncle to Isabella, William and Sophia Dennett's eldest daughter. Thus, the Ballantyne and McKay clans of Grand Rapids are cousins to each other, proving once again that the family connections in fur trade country are many and varied indeed.

The McKays of Grand Rapids

The first McKay came from Clyne in Sutherlandshire, Scotland. Named John McKay, he worked initially for a Montreal trader at Lake St. Anne in Nipigon. Then in 1790, he joined the Hudson's Bay Company and served as Master at Lac La Pluie, Osnaburgh, and Brandon House, where he died 5 July 1810. His wife, Mary, was a daughter of another officer of the company, John Favell Jr. and his Cree wife, Titameg. He and Mary had eight children, including John Richards,

[37] The other possibility is that Sophia was a daughter of Chief Factor John Ballenden, who seems to be the only other Ballenden in the country, who could have had a daughter old enough to be the mother of Isabella Dennett, who was born *circa* 1804. However, this John Ballenden was located at Severn and York, far away from Cumberland region where the Dennetts and John Ballendine of Orphir lived. Todd may have first became acquainted with Isabella when he was stationed at Cumberland House in 1816.

who was serving at Beaver Creek in the Swan River District in 1837 during the smallpox epidemic. Under the direction of Dr. Todd, he promoted the vaccination effort to save the Cree and Assiniboine, even though he was at first skeptical that the disease was indeed smallpox.

John Richards McKay married Harriet Ballenden, a daughter of John Ballenden, an officer of the Hudson's Bay Company at Severn and York Factory. This man is not to be confused with John Ballenden of Orphir, a contemporary who was stationed at Cumberland House. Whether the two men were themselves related has not been determined.

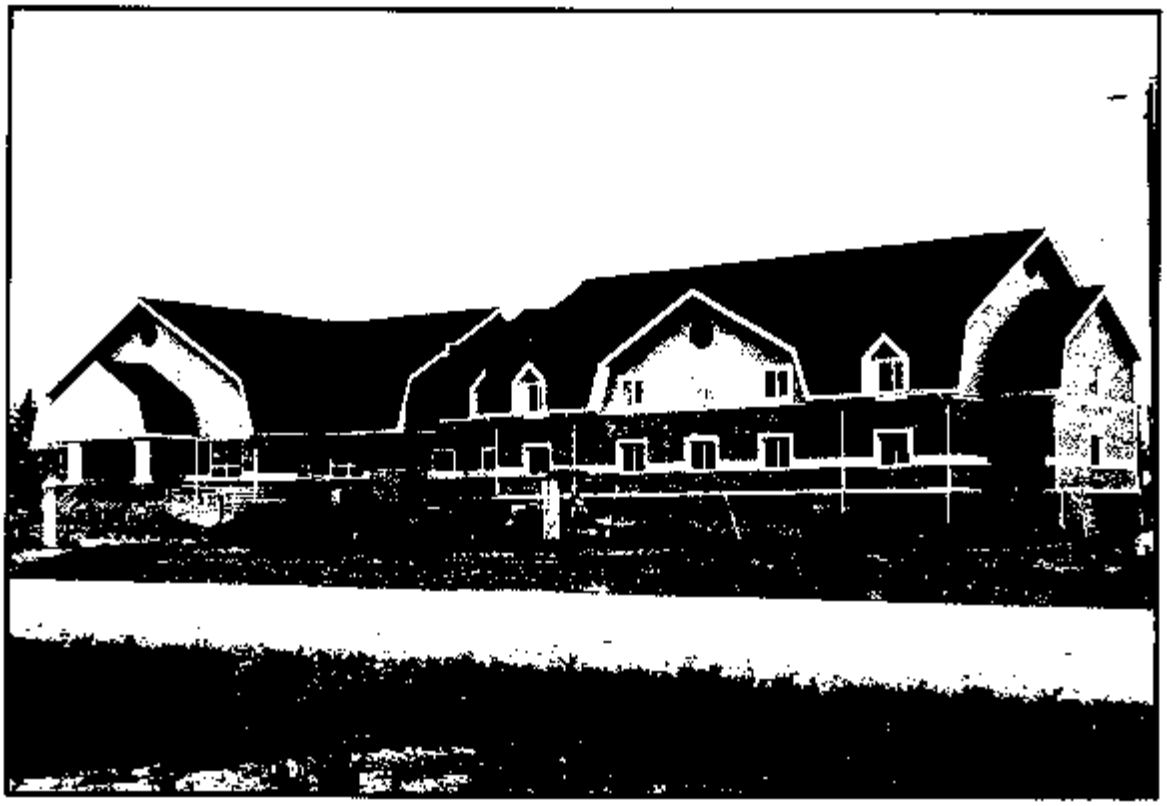
John Richards' son, William, was born at Beaver Creek in 1818. Like his father and grandfather before him, he had a long career with the Hudson's Bay Company, rising from a middleman in 1837 to Chief Trader in 1865. He served in the Swan River District at places like Fort Pelly and Fort Ellice until 1873, then in the Saskatchewan District at Fort Pitt until 1883, and finally in the Edmonton District at Edmonton, where he died 25 December 1883. He and his wife, Mary Cook, had ten children, including Henry, the ancestor of the McKay Family of Grand Rapids. The McKays are one of the oldest fur trade families in Western Canada, whose contribution to the development of this country is something of which their descendants can all be proud.

Update on the Turners of Grand Rapids

Since *Grand Rapids, Vol. I* was published, research has established that **John Turner**, known also as *Opimahewin*, and **Hannah Turner**, wife of Thomas Umpherville, were the children, not of Philip Turnor, the surveyor, but of Captain John Turner, who was the commander of one or the other of the H. B. Co. ships from 1790 to 1815. These were the ships which every year sailed from England to Hudson Bay, carrying the trade goods for the upcoming outfit, and returning to England with the furs that had been collected during the previous year.

Captain Turner had lived at Severn in Hudson Bay from 1778 to 1782, when he was in command of the *Severn* sloop. While there, he established a country

marriage and fathered at least two children, John and Hannah. Although Captain Turner later returned to England and had a second family, he did not forget his children at Hudson Bay. Indeed, the accounts of the Hudson's Bay Company clearly indicate a close relationship between father and son during many years. After he went to work for the Company, John Jr. sent money to Captain Turner, who carefully invested it for his son. Consequently, John Jr. was able to live on his earnings in later years after he left H. B. Co. service.



New Hydro Staff House, Grand Rapids, 1997 (Courtesy Lee Heroux)

The Taj Mahal of Grand Rapids?

According to local reports, Grand Rapids received compensation amounting to 5.2 million dollars for the environmental damage caused by the Grand Rapids Dam. In the spring of 1997, rumours began to circulate within the community that the new staff house, designed to accommodate twenty transient Hydro workers, was costing nearly as much as the whole compensation package for the community. Needless to say, people were outraged.

According to Bill Sallows, the decision to build new staff housing was made five years ago. It was necessary for those Hydro employees who live elsewhere, but come in regularly on the eight-six shift system. Hydro had been having difficulty getting qualified workers to settle in Grand Rapids.

As Bill explains it, the new staff house cost around 3.5 million dollars. Although the old house appears to be in good shape from the outside, it has many problems. Since it was built in a basin, it is prone to flooding. This causes sewer backup into the kitchen area which is located in the basement and means that everything must be cleaned and disinfected. Bill recalls this has happened at least half a dozen times. Moreover, the old staff house can only accommodate eight people.

A new building was required to accommodate twenty employees and provide kitchen facilities for eighty. Because the recreation hall required $750,000 in repairs, it was decided that it could be placed in the basement of the new facility. Besides a large gymnasium, the basement will include a big recreation room, an eighty-person meeting room, and another room that could be finished as a thirty-person classroom. This building is for the use of Hydro employees and not for the community at large. According to Bill, there had been talk of creating a recreation centre for all of Grand Rapids and locating it "down town." However, that idea was stalled during the flood compensation negotiations.

The building of this new staff house raises many questions. Twenty men receive accommodations worth about two-thirds the entire compensation package given to Grand Rapids. Is that fair and reasonable, in view of the fact these men do not even live in the community or contribute to the local economy? Since the people of Grand Rapids saw their economic lives transformed by the construction of the dam, have sufficient efforts been made to recruit and train local people for Hydro employment, so that such staff housing becomes redundant? These are just a couple of questions to generate discussion about the relationship between Hydro and Grand Rapids. Such discussion could lead to a more equitable involvement by local people in Hydro decision making and perhaps steer a course which is more sensitive to community needs.

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