

Moccasin Trails

Video Clip 1: Interviewee Introduction

Q: Let's start with a background of you, maybe, and then go into the business. So, I read some on the website. I have an idea. Please share with everybody where you come from.

A: Yeah. So, I'm Indigenous. I come from the Yellowknife's Dene First Nation, which is up in the Northwest Territories of Canada. Yeah. Right up where Santa Claus lives, up on the North Pole. So, I was born in the capital city of the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife, and I grew up there with my parents. My mom was really, sort of-- She's got her own issues, right? She's a classic-- She's a residential school survivor and really, really-- It really has affected her. And I always say that they really succeeded what they wanted to do, and my mom is an example of that. And one of their main missions is to assimilate, and the other one is to take the Indian out of the child. And they succeeded with her. And she deals with that today with alcohol, and she's been battling it for 60-plus years. So, my childhood wasn't the greatest. And when I got to my early teenage years, I was kind of on a path of either ending up in jail or ending up in a ditch. So, my mom's sister recognized this, and she basically came and took me. And she said, "You know what? I'm going to-- Your son's going to live with us, and we're going to take him." My mom's like, "Okay." So, then I moved to a very small community, in our language is Liidii Kue, where two rivers meet, where two powerful rivers come together. And that translates into Fort Simpson, and it's a small community, about maybe 900 people. And my aunt and my uncle, when I went to live with them, they're very, very spiritual. They're very, very cultural. They live a very culture-rich life. And so, I was exposed to this pretty much for the first time in my life. And I always say that's what changed my life. It gave me identity. It gave me something to cling on, and for the first time in my life, I was really comfortable in my own skin. And they could see that. Along with that comes pride, confidence, you know, your moral compass gets set right--

Your values, your principles. And that's what my aunt and my uncle really gave me. And I was a young, really young, teenager just starting to become a man. So, I owe everything to them. And so, you know, I was hunting for the first time in my life. I was chopping wood. I was a very living a very cultural lifestyle. And my aunt would tell me stories about my grandparents and my ancestors and all the people that I come from. And it really made me feel proud. So, I grew up in that small community, and as I was learning my culture and really accepting it and thriving with it, I was a very fortunate kid who was pretty talented at the sport of hockey. And so, it got me to travel all over the world. And so, I left my small community, and I went and played junior hockey, and then I went and played university hockey. And throughout all of that, you know, the thing that gave me confidence was sports and my culture. Sometimes they clashed. Other times they were accepted. So, once I was done, you know, kind of trying to make the NHL and trying to make a full-time career out of hockey, and then quickly realizing how not so good I really was, I went back up to the Northwest Territories. When I went back up to Northwest Territories, I was in my early 20's by then, and I was thrust into a leadership role. Our national chief at the time, his name's Bill Erasmus, who is-- I consider like an uncle. Very well known internationally amongst our Indigenous leadership across the world. Really, really thrust me into this leadership role to really be a role model for kids, for youth. That kind of maybe where I was 10, 15 years before that. And so, I would work with communities. I would work with youth groups. I would speak to schools. I would speak to kids. I would speak to young hockey players. And really just try to be that motivating type of inspirational type of figure for them. And the best way to describe that was him and I would talk and he'd say, "You know, there's a lot of our youth that are kind of sitting right on the middle of a fence right now. And some of them are going to fall this way, but Greg, what you're going to do is you're going to push them this way, on this side of the fence. Some might fall on the side, and you can't-- They're going to fall, but what we really want you to do is give them that push on this side of the fence." And it's something that I really, really am proud of and accepted working with kids. And then my background of

obviously being in sports, I had a great job opportunity to work building up our Aboriginal sports circle of the Northwest Territories. And so, again, probably maybe late 20's, early 30's now, really took on that role and I really loved it because sports was a passion for me. And it's what gave-- I owe a lot to this game of hockey and really just sports in general. It teaches you all these values, life lessons. And so, I built this organization up. Took me about 12 years, but I built it up to a point where it's a really great respectable organization now. Kids have-- Thousands of kids have benefited from the programs that we implemented in every single community in the Northwest Territories. And it's got some great funding now. It's got some great-- Staff are great. The board of directors is great. So, it's something that I'm really proud of to leave that behind. And as I was doing that I was living in the capital city of Yellowknife, and that's kind of where I made my career. My kids-- started my family and, of course, they obviously take precedence. And so, my son was 13 at the time, and my daughter was 10. And it was time. It was time for them to be exposed to different cultures, to different cities, to different parts of Canada. And we always talk to them about taking risks. We always talk to them about, you know, don't get comfortable in your comfortable zone. Take risks. And don't be afraid of failure. And so, we always would talk that to them, but then, you know, we had said that, instead of just talking to them, we got to show them. And so, we had made a plan to move out of Yellowknife, and myself and my wife, we kind of outgrew our city. I was as high as I could go in the sport field. The only job higher was maybe government, and I'm not interested in working for government. My wife was as high as she could go with her job. She was the CEO of our largest Indigenous political organization in the Territories. So, once we recognized that, we'd said, "Okay. It's time to move. It's time to really show our kids that, okay, we're going to start over. And we're going to show you. And we did that. And so, we moved to Kelowna, and I took a job with the Thompson-Okanagan Tourism Association in 2016 as an Indigenous tourism specialist. And it was a perfect fit for me because that job really was to do the exact same thing I was doing in the Territories. Work with every one of our Indigenous communities, but instead of building sport

structures for their community, it was building tourism structure, building tourism initiatives in their community.

Please note that this transcript has been slightly modified; it is not a verbatim copy of the original audio clip.