Stacey Carkhuff interviewing Charles Eikland
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CHARLES EIKLAND: I was born at Pan Creek, it was about three miles from Tazamona Lake, and it was only our family living there, and Bill Boyer's family living there. Annie Enoch acted as a midwife for four of us children who were born there at Pan Creek. We were born in a cabin, so we had log cabins there. It was before the highway, 1940. We travelled with dog teams in the winter time, and in the summer we travelled with pack dogs If we went some where. We walked all the time. We...Dad and mom trapped in the winter time and then dad would placer mine in the summer by hand for gold. 1947 I think, or '45 we moved to Snag, which was about 50 miles from where we lived. We moved to snag around 45 or 47, somewhere around there, and I remember them building the highway. The Americans were building the highway. WE lived off the land those years, we ate a lot of the animals we got to live, and we made fish traps out of poles.

STACEY CARKHUFF: What kind of fish were you catching?

CHARLES EIKLAND: We were catching some trout, Jackfish, Grayling and also they had a fish called a [tulipee] it was in there. We caught some of those. Then we of course picked berries in the summer, and then dried them, the berries in the winter. Of course there was no store, the closest place was Dawson City, so we went- dad went down about twice a year to Dawson to get dry goods for us. We'd get all dry stuff, like dried milk, dried eggs, tea, flour, sugar, because those years there was nowhere to keep the stuff, so we had to buy dry goods mostly. Same as the meat and stuff, we dried most of that. We dried fish, that's the only way to keep it. Sometime in the summer, we'd take the moss up and put it on the ice on the permafrost, we'd put the moss over it to keep it cold that way.

STACEY CARKHUFF: So when your dad went to the store twice a year, did he use dog team? Or walk?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Well, we had to go with dog team to Snag that's 50 miles first, and then in the summer we packed too. Generally in the spring there's a trip, and then he made a trip in the fall before the river froze up and then they put it in the high cache. They built a high cache and put everything up in the cache so nothing would get at it like wolverines or whatever animal would get at the food. So we put it in a high cache. After we got enough snow and everything froze in the fall, we'd haul it another 50 miles to where we lived by dog team.

STACEY CARKHUFF: What kind of...How many dogs did you have? Was it a big dog team?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Well, when dad hauled freight he used a toboggan, but he also used a big sleigh with a gee pole they call it. You run your dogs tandem, side by side, and he had about 10 or 12 dogs then and the gee pole and the [wigee] board is what you stood

on and you stood right behind the wheel dog, and you leaned on the gee pole to turn the sleigh because you could not steer the sleigh from behind with a big load on it.

STACEY CARKHUFF: Oh, and you said that you had big dogs? They were the big guys?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Yea, we had big dogs; they were about 90 to 100 pounds, some of them.

STACEY CARKHUFF: That is a big dog. So you said that you were born in 1940, and up until you went to '47 to Snag, where did you move after you were in Snag?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Well, we lived in Snag until about '49. Somewhere in that time span was when most of our Native friend's kids were all shipped off to schools in Lower Post and so on. Catholic Schools and my dad said he was going to send us to public school, so he- in '49 we moved out of Snag and to Haines Junction. We went to school in Haines Junction until about '53 I guess or '54 then we moved back to Beaver Creek.

STACEY CARKHUFF: Did you have any friends that you suddenly...they were taken away by the Lower Post Catholic Mission?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Well, there was quite a few of them, Native people from Snag that were shipped off. I can remember their parents really down and bawling or crying about their kids leaving. I'm just lucky that my dad stood up and said we weren't going. It was a lucky thing, because we would have been in the same situation.

POLLY HYSLOP: Were there other families who moved to Haines Junction besides your family, or just your family?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Nope, it was just our family.

STACEY CARKHUFF: Do you think, maybe your dad had more influence because he was white, and he could pull harder to have his kids stay home?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Yea, because where he came from, that's one of the reasons why he left was he didn't like the religion. His family was really religious and he didn't care for that, so he left. So when he got over here, he was never really religious.

STACEY CARKHUFF: I can see why he wouldn't want his kids going to a Catholic mission.

CHARLES EIKLAND: And of course, I was raised with my mother's way of thinking about religion; it's different than like today. You know, when we killed animals or something in a trap, we always said in our language, you know, we need your fur, we need...Or if we shoot an animal, we say "we need you" to survive. We'd say that in our language and we'd shoot it and skin it or whatever. That's the way we were raised,

because we believed that everything has a spirit. The Churches and everything never really came in here until after the highway was built, there was no churches here before that, in this area anyway.

STACEY CARKHUFF: So after the highway you were kind of introduced to money in mass quantity.

CHARLES EIKLAND: More money and more...You know all these what do you call them - holidays nowadays we never knew of any of them before that.

STACEY CARKHUFF: So Western culture kind of made its way through to your community.

CHARLES EIKLAND: Its coming more all the time; more rules and regulations all the time, from the south. Most of them come from the south, they bring people up from the south. They bring their things from the south up here. Some of that, we were born in this country, and some of those people come up here and push their knowledge- they call it knowledge they learn in where ever they went to school where some white person trying to push that onto us, but we know different. We were born here, we know different. But they would never consult, they would never talk to us, what do you think- how would you preserve this, how would you preserve that. They never do that. We learn in school, we know it all. That's not the case.

STACEY CARKHUFF: Do you remember anyone in the communities that you lived in being consulted previous to the highway?

CHARLES EIKLAND: I don't think so. I just think they put the highway through.

POLLY HYSLOP: What did the people say- I mean you were two years old when it was built, but do remember any stories about anybody saying, or talking about the highway like your mom and dad?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Well, when they built the highway, they had a lot of colored people building the highway. I Remember way back then, mom used to tell us, "don't go near those people, they're bad." She'd never seen these people before, she told us don't go near them, stay away from those people she said, she told us kids. She never seen those colored people before, but they were soldiers for the highway, building the highway.

STACEY CARKHUFF: Did she have any experiences with them, like talking to them or...

CHARLES EIKLAND: not really, not until later years.

STACEY CARKHUFF: What about your dad?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Not until I started working in the saw mill in the '50's and '60's...'50's. Well, dad probably had some experience working with them because he came through the southern states and all the way up- New York and through there.

STACEY CARKHUFF: So you thought that a lot of Western culture and knowledge came up from the south. Do you think that kind of damaged the traditional ways of hunting and beliefs?
CHARLES EIKLAND: Well, you know the values are different. Native values are different than white values in a lot of different areas. For instance; you know when you see a nice big moose walking across the road with a set of big antlers or something, the government looks at that as, "oh, that's worth $20,000 to some big game hunter" when I look at that animal, I'm looking at, "gee this thing would be good for us to eat for the winter." Now the values between myself and the government which is in control of wildlife is completely different. Completely different. So there are a lot of different things that are happening that shouldn't be happening.

POLLY HYSLOP: Did your mom, you said she was a trapper, right? Did she ever talk about what you're saying, like when the road came through. I don't know when it started happening but the government started coming in and imposing regulations. Did they do that when she was still trapping? Did she feel...

CHARLES EIKLAND: No, no those years people knew were everybody's traplines were more or less...it was not like today when the government has made- this is your trapline with a border and maps and stuff. IN those years, there was no such thing. People knew, and respected each other's trapline areas. The government comes in and they divided this stuff up somewhere in the '50's and 60's they divided these traplines up, and they started making some kinds of regulations on these traplines and stuff. Which, you know...Its still not done right. They make such things as you got to go and trap your trapline so many animals every year. Well, they don't think "why would you want to do that when fur prices are worth nothing." Just because the government regulation says you can hold your trapline, they want you to do that. Which is not right, there's no sense to that.

STACEY CARKHUFF: Do you think in a sense the highway helped many of the communities by connecting them and allowing them to have access to each other, travel up and down, go to Whitehorse, go to Dawson in a days time. Do you think that was beneficial?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Well, in some ways, and some ways not. I see nowadays that it's too easy for people to make a living. For young people, it's too easy nowadays. When I grew up, to survive you had to go and do something. You had to go and cut wood, you had to check your traps, or go check your snare lines if you got anything, otherwise there was nothing else. You had to do something. Nowadays, it seems like people don't have to do anything much to survive, and I think that's not very good. I think I wouldn't be proud of myself sitting around doing nothing, and I think that's a big problem nowadays. I think that computers, and I think that all these games are ruining people, are ruining young

people. They have no more, no more thoughts about life or values and stuff. They don't respect anybody. They have no respect for anything. Teachers- they don't even respect them. All those things have changes. I tell them, you respect people. Say hello and all those things. You come into somebody's house you take your hat off at the door, most the guys nowadays they walk in just like hats on they don't care, walk around in their boots all over, because they're never trained. They're never trained. Nobody trains them nowadays. You have to have some kind of respect. I think when Canada is at peace time, I think one of the best things would be to have compulsory, if you don't want to go to school, you don't want to go to high school or you're 15 or 16 years old, then they should say, "ok, you have to go into the military for 2 years." Canada is at peace time anyways. And when they come out of that place, they'll learn a little bit about rules and regulation and respect. They don't have any of that now. I seen them in town- I go into Whitehorse, sometimes late at night, here I see standing on the street corner, 5, 6 a dozen kids. You know what they're doing- they're getting into mischief. They're only about 12 or 13 years old, and nobody stops and says "hey get home. Get home, you're supposed to be home, you're not supposed to be out here." Everything is OK nowadays.

POLLY HYSLOP: When you were young, I was reading that Robert McKennan book and he was around in 1928, he never talked to Indians about alcohol. When you were young, did...Was there alcohol, or did it come in after the road or could you kind of tell me about how that happened?

CHARLES EIKLAND: It came into Snag after they built the airport in about '43 or '45. Of course, you know the airport had canteens and stuff like that So that's when the alcohol started in that area. And of course, as the road came through there was more alcohol coming in. And after the alcohol came in and of course in the last, I don't know since the 1970's or '80's drugs started coming in. Drugs are coming in more all the time. I think that, I think some of our leaders have got to get tough on it. Some of our Chief and Councils have to get tough on that and try to straighten it out. I tried to get our kids more education, whether it's like I said...They should not come back anymore to the villages and just roam around the village and do nothing. They should have a choice- you either have to go back to school, or like I said, compulsory two years in the armed forces. But you cannot come here and do nothing. I Mean, our fathers and our ancestors all worked. They all trapped, they all cut wood, they all fished. You don't see that no more. You have to blame the government and some of those programs for that, because I believe that there's only two people that you really have to worry about today. Is we have to worry 100% about the children- I believe there should be funding for any kid to go right through university. The funding should be there. Not everybody's working, so of course the governments going to have to, they have to change the program to do that. And I think that should be done, every kid that wants to go straight through university, pay their way. And the other one is the elders. I think they should be looking after the elders 100%. Whatever- fuel, water, whatever they need, that should be 100% they should look after those elders. The other group that's in the middle there, they have to put in another program for them to straighten out there some way or another because we need to do something because there's a group there that's not going ahead nowhere. That's too bad, but that's the way it is.

POLLY HYSLOP: Did your mom and dad ever feel that, the way you feel about the imposition of government- did your mom and dad, when the road came through, how did it change the way of life? I mean besides schools coming in and the preacher. I mean the government must have been right there. A new government? I mean, what...Did your mom and dad ever talk about how life changed or...

CHARLES EIKLAND: Well, it got way easier than when they were. Because when they, to survive, they lived off the land. They had to eat most of the animals they got. Muskrat, beaver, lynx, porcupine, muskrat all those things to survive those years. And after the highway went through, some stores went in and it was easier to get food and groceries. Of course there wasn't too much work anywhere, dad worked for the Army, Canadian Army working on the bridges after the highway came in.

STACEY CARKHUFF:I was wondering, do you remember your parents, as Polly mentioned previously, you talked a little about the changes they experienced- did they remember the influx of traffic, like cars all the sudden just coming from...When they kind of turned the highway over and made it drivable. Do you remember having cars everywhere and seeing cars?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Well, there was more pickups and stuff coming in, more vehicles. Some of the neighbors started getting vehicles in Snag. They had Chevs, '42 pickups and stuff like that.

STACEY CARKHUFF: Do you remember the person that had the first car?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Oh, I forget- I think it was Jimmy or Joe Jack. Jimmy I think.

STACEY CARKHUFF: That's often the story I hear from people who have the first car, like
George Johnston, Oscar Albert. It's just funny that its the 1940's and someone gets a car.

CHARLES EIKLAND: Well they had a trading post in Snag, and old guy used to run it named Jack Dole, he had a trading post in Snag. But when he died I think in 1945 or somewhere in there, dad and Bill Blair, this is old Bill Blair bought the trading post from the state and they were going [?] and they were running the trading post for a while there in Snag I think it was about 3 years or so. And they brought groceries from Dawson up with the boats in the summer.

STACEY CARKHUFF: Did they do well with that?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Well, they did alright. WE had, like a said a team of horses, and we had a big garden there. We grew a lot of turnips, and potatoes, and cabbage, carrots.

STACEY CARKHUFF: So they used those for commercial selling?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Well, not really. It was more or less we gave quite a bit of it to the village there, people...We had a root house, and we'd keep some in the root house in the winter and stuff like that.

STACEY CARKHUFF: Well, that's good. Cool. So do you have any memories of the highway, as a kid? Driving on it, or just any particular story?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Well, I remember when we were coming home from Pan Creek, it was in the summer and we were coming down and we had a bunch of pack dogs, and me and my sister were walking and two of them, I think mom was carrying one, and dad was carrying one, and then we looked over the bench there by Dry Creek and we could see all these trees falling over. And dad said to us, "oh, they're building a highway here." He knew what it was, and he said they were building a highway. I Remember that.

STACEY CARKHUFF: How old were you?

CHARLES EIKLAND: I think I was about three then, something like that.

STACEY CARKHUFF: So the trees were just...Was it a cat coming through plowing the trees? Did you see the people or did you just see the machines in the trees?

CHARLES EIKLAND: We seen the machines from quite a way away.

STACEY CARKHUFF: Oh, that would be so scary. I'm sure that your dad being a Western, Norwegian, That he had seen this type of equipment. Did he try to explain it to the Natives, what are all these huge vehicles?

CHARLES EIKLAND: Not too much, just said that they were building a road that's all.