

VALLEY HISTORY

AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A 1K0 250-342-9769 November 2012



**LOUIS
JOSEPH**

Louis Joseph was 90 years old when he passed away in 1958. He was the oldest male in the Windermere district and a former chief of the Columbia Lake Band. He lived all his life in the Cranbrook - Windermere area and was born at the St. Eugene Mission. He came with his parents to Brisco as a youth and lived in the valley about 70 years. He has lived in the same house on the Columbia Lake reserve since he went there as a young man.

Louis Joseph was chief for some years between 1935-1940 following Chief Louis Arbell. He was succeeded by his nephew Camille Joseph.

Louis Joseph knew the Indian sign language which had been used in the early days when visits were made from one distant band to

another speaking a different dialect. He was interviewed on this some years ago by an official from the Indian Affairs Department from Ottawa. He also was an expert at Chinook shorthand as taught to early day Indians by Father Le Jeune. He could recall shooting buffalo in Alberta with bows and arrows as a young man. At one time, he owned a large number of cattle and horses.

Some years ago Louis commissioned the late Charles D. Ellis, Windermere pioneer, to make a mosaic tomb tile to be laid over his grave when the time came. The mosaic tile was made with his name and a suitable design and was kept at his home until used. The news of his uncle's death was flashed to Camille Joseph by radio from the Canal Flat Ranger station to the Gibraltar Forest look-out. Joseph was out with a hunting party and happened to be at the lookout when the message was received.

Reminiscences by Rose Michel

This valley was a nice place to live and grow up, although it was hard. I have lived here since 1944. I guess when you are working for a person, if he couldn't get any money he couldn't afford to pay you. He'd just give us so much money and then pay the rest in groceries like flour and sugar and rolled oats. It was hard for everybody, not only the Indians. I tell people that and they say it was harder for the white man. They had to pay rent and taxes and these things that the Indians did not have to. The income for us was from guiding and horses and growing our own oats and wheat to get us through the

wintertime. We used to plant our own potatoes and gather our own fruit and saskatoon berries. Grandmother used to have a big canvas spread out in the sun for drying things in the winter. Sometimes we'd go out in the mountains and pick these berries. We used to put them in jars for winter use. We used to go out and pick roots called Bitter Root that grew in the forest near Wasa and Skookumchuck.

The Bitter Root grows out in the open, on the prairies. They have rosy pink flowers. In the fall time we used to go out there with pack horses to camp in the mountains. We used to go hunting in the fall from a month to six weeks. The men did the hunting and the woman dried up the meat and hides.

We did a lot of fishing. We lived close to the Kootenay River and would go fishing and horseback riding. We'd look for caves with sandstone forms.

I never did much trapping. I'd tan hides and make gloves and jackets and stuff like that. These things never amounted to anything. A pair of gloves was only fifty cents. Today I sell them for \$20.00 a pair. Ladies' jackets are now \$150.00 apiece and men's are \$200.00.

I never went to school early. I always wanted to go but mother always kept me back. When I was ten, I went to school. First thing I did was get sick. My neck swelled up and I stayed in the hospital for six weeks. I never knew a word of English and my head just opened up. I quickly learned the new language but I grew up with my people's language. School started in January so I went to school until we had vacations in the summer. That was 1920-1928. At this time the depression started and we fell upon hard times. War broke out and there was a shortage of money. We had all the money we wanted. We had chickens, and we used to eat the eggs and sell them in town.

Girls went to school more than boys. When a boy was 14 or 15 years old, he hardly went to

St. Eugene's Residential School. They were sent out to work. It was hard for a boy.

I have a brother older than me. Alliche Birdstone. He lives on the St. Mary's Reserve. I have a sister living in Mayook. She is a Birdstone and I was a Birdstone too.

One thing I know about growing up, our parents were more strict with girls than boys. When I was young, they would never let me go out to parties. I was made to stay home. I didn't think it was right then, but I think it was the right thing to do now.

We had one religion. It was Catholic. The Catholic priests and nuns were the ones operating a school in this area—that one on the St. Mary's Reserve. We had a hard time. The nuns were so strict. There were two classrooms with the boys' residence on one side and the girls on the other.

When I was married, my husband used to work if there was work to do. He'd do farming. In the wintertime he'd feed the cattle and in the summer and spring he'd plant the crops. He'd do the hunting also. The women stayed home and did the cooking and the tanning of hides. I would make jackets and look after the children. I had a few good girlfriends. We'd stay home and do the housework. Sometimes we could earn extra money from selling leather clothing. My husband would go out and cut fence posts and sometimes we would go into Cranbrook and work in the Chinese gardens.

Things were simple. We didn't have much. We had home-made furniture. We had just enough dishes to eat off. We ate a lot of soups and stews and we made syrups and jams. I loved the way the jams were in those days. So pure. We used to get peaches and prunes and raisins in 20 lb. boxes.

I would not like to go back to the old ways but I do have fond memories. Mostly I like the way we are living now. We have deep roots in this valley.

(Rose Michel - Columbia Lake Band)

Valley News— September 1943

Pte. Carl Jones, Overseas, has continued the excellent record he made last year in the sports arena. This year 'somewhere in Scotland' he won a collection of trophies that won't all go in one duffle bag. These include a gold medal, a silver medal and a silver cup.

Roy Clement is now acting-sergeant.

Leigh Nixon has been promoted to Corporal. Jim Ashworth won his commission in the field as Pilot-Officer. He is serving in India.

When the old high-level flume on the Benches was dismantled recently for the building of a new one, the names of several local boys were found carved on the old structure. Among them were Jack and Dave Nixon, Sandy Dobbie, Bud Coy, Bud Cleland and Alex Johnston.

Work is progressing on the new bridge over Toby Creek. The new erection is up stream of the old bridge. Construction is under the direction of Ed Tunnacliffe.

At the Fall Fair the Indians took part in a costume parade and tribal dances. Gabriel Paul won first prize and Louis Joseph second prize for costumes.

A Memorial Service was held at St. Eugene Mission for Pte. Toby Nicholas, killed in action in Sicily.

Miss Audrey Cleland will be married to Mr. Charles Osterloh of Kimberley this month. She has been on the staff of the Imperial Bank. Miss Dorothy Blake has joined the staff in her place.

Work at the Paradise Mine is progressing favorably. The mine is now owned by Sheep Creek Gold Mines Ltd., Nelson.

Dr. A.E. Kydd, who has served the district as medical practitioner for two years has left.

Invermere-1932

No name stands higher than that good old English one of Taynton and in no place does it stand higher than in the records of the Windermere mining Division of British Columbia, a part where representatives of the family had kept the flag unfurled and waving for these many years.

Jack, after attaining fame as a plasterer both in Winnipeg and other parts, settled down in the Windermere Mining Division, and in the course of time became the father of William Sinclair Taynton, the first known white child to be born within the district's borders. John Hopkins Griffiths Taynton. For short, we call him Jack, was accompanied into this portion of the mountainous province some time in the early 1880's by his brother, William Walter Taynton.

Though a mere stripling, he left his mark by assisting McVittie Bros., surveyors, in laying out the present Indian reserve. To the credit of the family one of the largest bays, and certainly the most popular with old and young for bathing, which characterize the Windermere Lake was called Taynton's Bay, after the family name. Here each built his modest dwelling to have it later followed up by a hollow-tile dwelling built by his son, William Sinclair Taynton, late of Victoria, B.C. Still later the nephew, Gilbert Griffiths Taynton, late of Calgary, built himself a hollow-tiled home next to his cousin. Still later William Walter Taynton, late of the Dominion Experimental Station, acquired an adjoining lot and is busily engaged in erecting thereon a commodious frame bungalow. All four dwellings will look serenely across the strip of hard yellow sand which forms the beach on to the sheltered smooth waters of Taynton's Bay.

(Museum Files)

Invermere Guide Mauled in Brush with Grizzlies September 12, 1945

A heavy pack on his back saved Gordon McKay, registered guide, Invermere, from what probably would have been a fatal mauling by a full-grown grizzly bear. As it was he sustained severe leg gashes and a badly bitten back.

McKay encountered two grizzlies while scouting in the Brisco Range near Luxor with his hunter, W. Arbaster of Los Angeles and W.J. Fortier of Fresno, California. Having no rifle himself, he was at the mercy of the animal until Arbaster, two hundred yards behind noticed his plight. Arbaster shot and wounded one bear but the other attacked McKay, who threw himself face down on the ground feigning death. The bear clawed frantically at the back-pack tearing McKay's back and legs.

Squeals from the wounded bear drew the other animal's attention and it left McKay. Arbaster, believing his guide to be dead, fired on the bear and killed him.

It was about 11 a.m. Sunday when Gordon McKay first noticed the bears. He was looking for mountain sheep at the time and seeing a movement beyond some bushes, sat down to watch. When he realized they were grizzlies, he glanced back to locate his hunters Arbaster and Fortier, and when he looked back at the bears, they were only twenty-five feet away.

He tried moving quietly away. As a guide he could not carry a rifle and he hoped to increase the distance between himself and the animals without attracting their attention. As he moved, the bears came for him.

Arbaster shot and wounded one bear but McKay was in the line of fire for the other. McKay tried running up hill. As they were above timber level there were no trees to climb and he realized the bear was gaining

on him and he had no choice but to throw himself on the ground and protect his face with his arms.

"I knew I was in for it," McKay said recounting the story. "But I had a feeling I'd come out all right. I never have been afraid of bears."

The bear stood right over him, clawing and biting at the pack and tearing McKay's clothes to shreds.

"I didn't dare breath," McKay said describing his fearful experience. "I just lay there feeling his two big paws on my head. Then I felt him tear my back with his teeth and he clawed my legs."

After the wounded bear squealed, the other bear moved off me but I didn't know whether he had moved away so I didn't dare stir. I just lay there motionless for perhaps five minutes though it seemed hours. Then I heard another shot and the thud as the bear fell and I knew it was all right to look up."

Arbaster thought McKay must be dead, but guides are made of sturdy stuff. McKay walked three miles back to camp through four inches of snow and the next morning drove himself back to Invermere.

His injuries were treated at the Lady Elizabeth Bruce Memorial Hospital by Dr. G.E.L. MacKinnon.

"I'm still not afraid of a bear," McKay asserts, "but I'll be pretty wary any time I see a grizzly after this. That's an experience I wouldn't wish on any man."

(McKay Files)

Needed at the Museum :

A volunteer with electronics and sound systems skills to create a tape system inside an old telephone and an old radio.

(Compiled by Sandy McKay)