Transcript of an Interview with Michael Joe, Senior, August 11, 2005

Interviewer: Kim Gillcrist
Location: Conne River, Newfoundland and Labrador

Joe: I am Michael Joe Senior. Conne River.

Gillcrist: So how has self-governance touched your life?

Joe: Well I don’t know too much about it. I suppose they’re doing all right.

Gillcrist: What do you think are the best parts of self-government for your community?

Joe: I don’t know, what do you mean?

Gillcrist: The things that make you happy to see in your community – the positive parts of having self-governance here in Conne River.

Joe: I don’t know much about self-government. It makes me happy in one way. I suppose it’s up to them if they think they can do it. Not much I could do about it now, I’ve got one leg in the grave! So I mean I suppose they know what they’re doing. That’s the only thing I know – I don’t know too much. I don’t go to the meetings or anything, but like I said, I suppose it’s all right.

Gillcrist: Have there been challenges do you find?

Joe: What?

Gillcrist: With self-government in your community? Do you think there are any obstacles or any problems that you have encountered?

Joe: In self-government in this community?

Gillcrist: Yes.

Joe: Yeah, I suppose. But if they think they can do it, that’s it. They know what they’re doing, I suppose. It’s too early to tell.

Gillcrist: So what does self-government in Conne River mean to you?

Joe: What it means to me?

Gillcrist: Yes.

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* Interview conducted for the Aboriginal Community Development Centre at Mount Allison University, and transcribed in Sackville, New Brunswick.
Joe: I suppose it means... I don’t know what it means. Like I said, I don’t know too much about it. I’ve got nothing against it. Self-government is just what they want, not much I could do.

Gillcrist: But that means that you make all of your own laws and most of your decisions without having to depend on the government?

Joe: I don’t know.

Gillcrist: So what do you think that self-government will do for your children and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren?

Joe: That’s something that I can’t answer. I suppose... Like I said, if that’s what they want. I’ve got no children in here now. Gerard I suppose is no youngster anymore.

Gillcrist: I met Gerard yesterday! He had an interview too.

Joe: He’s a man now he can look after himself. He’s in on this somewhere, but I never asked any questions. He never told me anything about it. But I know he’s on the council somewhere, I know that much.

Gillcrist: What kind of advice would you offer to other First Nations communities who are looking at exploring self-governance for themselves - other communities who want to be self-governing?

Joe: I don’t know. I can’t answer that one.

Gillcrist: If your community was to begin again from the start to finish for self-governance, do you think you would make any changes in the process?

Joe: I don’t know. Like I said though, if we’ve got self-government, everyone’s going along with it I suppose. Most everybody. Like I said, I’ve got nothing against it. If that’s what they want, then that’s it.

Gillcrist: Like I said before, we’re, in Sackville, New Brunswick, we are in the process of documenting self-governance for Conne River. We’re collecting all of the documents that your community has: correspondence between Mi’sel Joe and the Department of Indian Affairs, and things, and we’re creating an information repository so other communities and other people – teachers, researchers, youth – can come and look at what we’ve been doing to map your progress. So we’re just wondering, what do you think about that?

Joe: I suppose it’s all right. They’re probably going to get it.
Gillcrist: So do you have any fears about self-government coming to your community?

Joe: No, I don’t.

Gillcrist: Now is there anything that you want to talk to me about with self-government, or anything else that you think I should know about while we’re doing this?

Joe: No, I don’t. I don’t know too much about it. But self-government, they don’t get too much help from the other government. I suppose they’ve got to help themselves then. Then I think there might be some changes… in wages and stuff like that. They’re going to need every dollar they can get. That’s the only way they’re going to do it. Probably cut back on their wages. There’s lots of communities around now where people are only working for about six dollars an hour labour and others with nine. So that might have to be cut back some. There are lots of other things to think about. I suppose they know what they’re doing, but they have to cut back on something. People have got to be satisfied and people have to go along with it. The money has to come from somewhere, and it’s got to come from the people. That’s the only thing I could think about. Work, I suppose, and stuff like that. I don’t need to work now.

Gillcrist: You’ve earned the right to relax!

Joe: Oh yeah.

Gillcrist: Well, I don’t think that I have any more questions, unless you have anything that you’d like to tell me: stories or anything…

Joe: Nope, I don’t have any stories. But they’ve got to cut back on some things people are getting for free. The money has to come from somewhere.

Gillcrist: All right. Well I think that that wraps up my questions, if that’s all right with you?