Transcript of an Interview with Priscilla Drew, August 11, 2005*

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

**Gillcrist:** OK Priscilla, whenever you’re ready.

**Drew:** [Introduces herself in Mi'kmaq]  
My name is Priscilla Drew. I live here on the Conne River reserve in Newfoundland. I am a retired Mi'kmaq language teacher and I retired this past June. I was there for about twenty years teaching Mi'kmaq language at St. Anne’s School [she pronounces the school’s name in Mi’kmaq]. I taught grades pre-kindergarten to grade three.

**Gillcrist:** That’s great. So, in what ways has your community’s path to self-governance affected your life?

**Drew:** It has meant a lot of things: that our medication is paid for, or the biggest part of it, and transportation if we need to go to the hospital. We have funding for education and we have had our road paved and water purification. I think we have benefited quite a bit. We have a free lawyer, a lawyer who can offer free benefits to us, and the doctor comes down twice a week. We have a wellness centre/clinic, a band-operated school and we’re hoping to get a police station here and a police officer. That’s the way I find, that much. There could be other things too, but I just can’t remember right now.

**Gillcrist:** OK. Now how and when did you come to be a part of the process?

**Drew:** In what way do you mean?

**Gillcrist:** Well maybe you could tell me more about your role in the process of self-government in your community? Like, what kind of role you have played in self-government, if applicable.

**Drew:** Sometimes I go to meetings and things like that.

**Gillcrist:** OK. Now in your opinion, what have been the best experiences of self-government?

**Drew:** I’m not going to be able to answer that one either, unless you explain to me a little bit more. I don’t want to give you the wrong answer.

**Gillcrist:** It’s really a personal question in terms of your own beliefs of the best experiences. So that could be the best experience for your community…

* Interview conducted for the Aboriginal Community Development Centre at Mount Allison University, and transcribed in Sackville, New Brunswick.
Drew: It means a lot to me anyway because we got extension on our reserve and that was great, and we're still applying for more because we do need it, and other opportunities to bring employment for the community.

Gillcrist: OK. So on the other side I'm wondering what some of the more challenging parts of self-government for your community have been?

Drew: There's been a lot went on over the years in the past years. Even like my husband and the chief who weren’t eating on a hunger strike way back in '83 to get the government to recognize us, and our own Newfoundland government.

Gillcrist: OK. What does self-government in Conne River mean to you?

Drew: It gives the band the opportunity to run things, I think. Because they know here what we need. Probably somewhere else in Ottawa they wouldn't know what situation we are into. But with self-government it's more... I can't get the word but it's more benefit to us, anyway.

Gillcrist: So what do you envision for the future for a self-governing Conne River for your children, for grandchildren, and for the community that would be on a more day-to-day basis?

Drew: That the community continue operating, because they're doing a great job now, anyway to me. And I would love to get an old age home here. You know, because I mean it’s me and other people coming up. I probably might have only a few years left, or I might have a lot. The again, you take my grandchildren, when they come they're going to need something like this. That's the one I'm mostly trying to get in the water that they should have an old age home here. Not only for Conne River, but off reserve members across the bay and that. It's easier for the family coming to visit. I love to be in my home too, but I wouldn't want to put too much burden on my children. I would love to be in an aged home so they could see me and come to visit me.

Gillcrist: Are you familiar at all with the exploratory process of the negotiations that your community has undergone in the last little while?

Drew: Some.

Gillcrist: So if that's the case, can you describe how you think the process was handled, not only by your community, but also by levels of federal and provincial government?

Drew: Well when the government officials came here, to sign like the extension to the reserve, I think that was wonderful.
Gillcrist: OK. What advice would you offer to other First Nations communities who are also looking at the prospects of self-government?

Drew: I guess if other communities came here they would realize that what Conne River has... they have a Band council, they have a chief and what they did for Conne... Conne’s way ahead compared back to... If I had to go back in the ‘70s, we didn’t even have a road then! So if they come here and see how much this place has improved, what I would say is for other people to try self-government.

Gillcrist: So do you think there are any specific things that the community needs to have, or to prepare in order to have self-government be attained successfully?

Drew: I think if everybody cooperates to support the chief and council it will help a lot. There will be more positive things than negatives.

Gillcrist: If the process were to begin again from the start do you think that you would make any changes?

Drew: I’m not sure right now if there would be anything I would change myself. I think they are doing a good job as it is. I would support it.

Gillcrist: Well that pretty much wraps up my... oh wait! One more question! I lied!
As I mentioned at the beginning of our interview, we are in the process at Mount Allison in Sackville, New Brunswick, of documenting your process of self-government. Who do you think will benefit from this initiative and why?

Drew: I’m not sure who will benefit, but I hope that we will benefit from it here in Conne. And I hope that the University will benefit from it too, to look at it this way. But I’m not sure who is going to benefit, but I hope that you will benefit.

Gillcrist: We’ll keep you up to date.

Drew: Yes.

Gillcrist: Now, is there anything else that you think is important that I haven’t touched upon during the interview?

Drew: I can’t think right now of anything. I think you did most everything. That’s about it.

Gillcrist: Great.