Transcript of an Interview with Ansalewit Joe, August 10, 2005

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

**Gillcrist:** [ensuring correct pronunciation of her name]  
In what ways has the community’s path to self-governance touched your life?

**Joe:** Well, the fact that as a grade twelve class we got to take part in the first lot of self-government initiations I thought was really nice, and at our graduation ceremonies we got presented with a little plaque from Judy [White] and the Self-Government office, so I thought that was really nice. And I think that’s it’s a good thing that they’re including young people in the process.

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

**Joe:** Well about part way through the year, like I said, Judy came to us with a proposal to be a part of the self-government process because we were a little low on our fundraising. And so she proposed the idea that we be a part of her process and give her some statistics and present it to grades seven, eight, and nine, and we would get a *Much Music Video Dance* in return, as payment for our participation in the process.

**Gillcrist:** OK. So can you tell me a little bit more about your role in the process? Like what kind of presentation did you put on?

**Joe:** Well, we spent a couple of months on what we wanted to see as a part of our self-government. Say we took the clinic, and we wanted to see certain things done, changed, kept the same, you know, how much power we had over what decisions were made. We did a whole little template, sort of, and then what we thought, we presented. We handed out questionnaires got [grade] seven, eight, and nines to write down what they thought. So we just did what we thought and presented it to them, and if they didn’t like it or they didn’t agree with it, then they could write it down and Judy would have the statistics.

**Gillcrist:** OK. So what have been the experiences of the process of self-government in your view?

**Joe:** For me, it would be to see feedback to see all of the children actually listening to what you had to say, and listening to ideas that we had about self-government and voicing their own in the end.

**Gillcrist:** So what have been the more difficult parts, the challenges and obstacles?

---

*Interview conducted for the Aboriginal Community Development Centre at Mount Allison University, and transcribed in Sackville, New Brunswick.*
Joe: The challenges I would say would be understanding the whole aspect of self-government, right across the board, because we were kind of in the shadows about everything that went on this community. We weren’t completely in the know about everything that went on at the band office, all the decisions that had to be made. So we sort of had to have a crash course in that and then make our decisions from there.

Gillcrist: Who did the crash course? How did you learn about it?

Joe: Judy, and we got a couple of presenters to come in. Gerard Joe came in and gave us a little overview on economic development. We just had little things like that, but mostly it was Judy.

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

Joe: I think self-government in Conne means empowerment. Empowerment for our people, and our community to make decisions and choices and to move further into the future, you know, that one step further.

Gillcrist: So what do you envision for a self-governing future, like if you ever have children or if you ever have grandchildren, or even just with your community. What would that look like on a day-to-day basis?

Joe: That’s a hard one! I think for me it’s more... I just want to see our community be self-sufficient. Making our own decisions and not having to depend solely on outside influences and stuff like that. Just being able to govern ourselves and make decisions for ourselves.

K. Gillcrist: OK. Are you familiar with the exploratory process that your community’s undertaken with self-governance? Like with the negotiations and things?

Joe: Yes.

Gillcrist: Yes? OK.

Joe: Well, some of them, not all of them!

Gillcrist: How do you think that the process was handled within your community and also by the federal and provincial government?

Joe: Hmmm.

Gillcrist: I would think that’s the harder one!
Joe: Yes! That is a hard one! How was it handled… what do you mean?

Gillcrist: In terms of community involvement, or reactions form the community or reactions form the government throughout the entire process and the negotiations.

Joe: I don’t think that it’s been a really bad process. For the most part our community is informed on everything that’s going on and they’re not left in the dark or anything like that. The community is always involved and any information you want you can get. I think if there’s a lack of anything it would just be on the community’s part that they just didn’t go and get the information – it’s not that it wasn’t available. The information is there – it’s whether you want to go and get it or not.

Gillcrist: What about the government?

Joe: I really don’t know.

Gillcrist: So what kind of advice would you offer to other First Nations communities that might be thinking about exploring self-governance and the same process that you folks have?

Joe: I think it would be just to have a strategy. We went right across the board with elders and youth and community representatives and I think that’s a good way to go. To cover the whole spectrum of your community and see what everybody wants and then come to some sort of consensus about what everybody wants. You’re not going to make everybody happy, but when you have the majority that is pleased with what you’re doing then I think that’s a good thing.

Gillcrist: OK. What do you think that your community or a community would need to have, or to do in order to prepare to carry out the process successfully?

Joe: Information. A lot of information. And background information on where you’ve come from and where you want to go. That’s always a good place to start.

Gillcrist: [bits of conversation]
If the process were to begin again from the start, would you make any changes?

Joe: I don’t think I would make any changes, but I think I would involve more of the youth. This year was just the grade twelves, but I know it’s going to be the grade twelves from now on until they’re done. I think they should go a little bit… have sessions with the [grade] sevens, eights, and nines because our information session was they were all together in one group. I think they need some background information too on what’s being done in the community because they don’t really know. Self-government, OK, we want this and we want
that but they don’t really know why they want it or why it’s being done the way it is. So I think more information for the younger generation would be a good thing.

Gillcrist: OK. I mentioned before that we’re documenting your process and making the information available on the Internet. Do you think that that’s valuable? And who do you think will benefit from the initiative?

Joe: I think it’s a very valuable thing because almost anything you want to find is on the Internet these days, and I think a lot of younger people will connect with that. But I mean, if you’re in a conference somewhere and you want to bring up something about this, all you have to do is click on the computer and bring it up, and then you can present it to whoever you want. So I think it’s a very valuable thing.

Gillcrist: And that’s pretty much it for me. You’re the quickest yet! Is there anything else that I haven’t touched on that you feel is significant or anything else that you want to tell me about that will expand the information we already have?

Joe: No, I’m pretty good, I’m done.