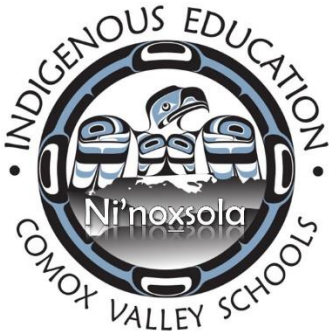


Ni'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools



Sheila Buchanan
Blueberry Season



Whenever it was blueberry season, we would take the train to a small community 35 miles from our town of Lac La Biche. This is in Alberta.

Once we arrived at the destination, the store keeper would come and get us and take us to our camp for a month or two. He would drive a tractor with a wagon attached to it, that's where we would ride. He would then leave us out there in the wilderness where the blueberry patch was and that is where we would set up our tent.

We had all of our camping gear with us, but we never had any modern conveniences, no gas stove or barbecue. We cooked all of our food in the open fire. We always set up camp near a river so we could have water to drink, cook and wash with. We could also catch fish from this river.

The store keeper gave us some small boards and nails so we could build our own boxes to put the blueberries in what he owed us. The reason for this is so he could buy our berries. That is the reason we spent all that time in the forest. We sold our berries to make some extra money.

We picked several boxes a day between the 3 of us, my grandma, grandpa and I. The store keeper would come out once a week to get our berries, but we never saw him, because we were out in the bush picking berries. We would start early in the morning until almost dark. He always left a note to say he picked up so many boxes, so we knew at the end of our journey. Sometimes we had to walk a few miles to get to the berries.

It was a long day but we took a nice lunch of bannock and if we caught a fish we would cook it in the open fire. We also set snares so we could have some rabbit. We didn't have a cooler so we had to catch everything fresh and eat it right away. We were so busy picking berries all day and didn't think about isolation.

At the end of the day we were so tired, had to cook supper and go to bed after dishes were washed. This was a daily routine from end of July to beginning of September.

We never took a day off.

This was how we spent most of our summers.

There was always something to do and we never had any boring days.

Sheila Buchanan (Kookum)

