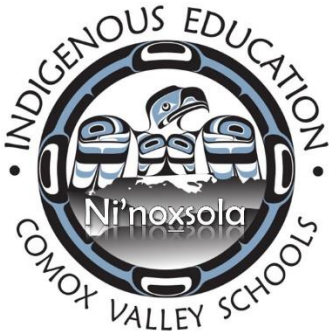


Ni'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools



Sheila Buchanan
The Trapline



My grandfather had a toboggan on the trapline, but we were never allowed to play with it. It was his mode of transportation.

He used this toboggan to transport his blankets and food to the trapline, and he would hitch the dogs up to it. The trapline was away from the town of Lac La Biche. The only way to get to the trapline was to go to the main little house by train. From there, it was another 10 miles to the trapline. That was where the dogs and toboggan took over.

It was quite a trek because the dogs had to break a trail through the deep snow. It would take most of the day to arrive. A lunch was always packed, and a small fire built to make tea to warm the body. It also gave the dogs a rest and they were fed. It would be evening before the trapline was reached. It was very tiring, but supper had to be prepared and the dogs fed again, so it was awhile before retiring for the night.

Rest was especially important due to the cold winters, so the first day was spent resting and preparing traps and snares and then relaxing. The days would be grueling once the trapping began. Snow trails had to be broken. This was done by wearing snowshoes. Most places were reached by foot, there were distances where the dogs and toboggan were used to transport traps and food for lunch.

If a lot of animals were caught, it was difficult to carry all of them on a backpack, some were very heavy. Traps and snares were set for all sorts of animals, and the whole animal was taken home because the meat would be eaten once it was skinned and the fur removed. Nothing was wasted. It was not a sport to kill animals, it was for survival and a way to earn money.

This was the trapper's way of life. The dogs were never abused, they were well taken care of so they could perform their duties. Toboggans were unbelievably valuable and not to be played with. It was like a car today, the only means of transportation.

Sheila Buchanan (Kookum)

