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A Talk with Grand Captain Alex Denny From the time of the coming of the white man--from 1610 when Membertou was Christianized, baptised, along with 7 or 8 other Micmac Indians--from then on the role of the Grand Council has changed. See, the role of the Grand Council was political. The Grand Council was in charge of land, allocating territorial rights to different "clans," if you want to use that word, within the Micmacs. Each clan would live in different areas. They had 7 districts. Every clan had their own chief or spokesman. I don't know where the word "chief" originates, but I'm sure it's non-Indian terminology. The Grand Council was in charge of different clan chiefs or heads of these Micmac people. Once a year they would meet. I'm told prior to Chapel Island they used to meet at Malagawatch--each tribal head would come down and tell them, you know, "Well, we didn't have a good year this year, in the salmon, the moose. The caribou were not that plentiful in our area. I'm wondering if we can move somewhere else." The Grand Council was in charge of allocating different territories and knowing where the people were, because of their constant fights with the Mohawks and other nations throughout Canada and eastern United States. The land, the furbearing animal--that was our life, that was our livelihood, that's how we survived. Our clothing, our meals, the Micmac education system, were based on that furbearing animal: how to skin, when was the good time to kill an animal. I remember growing up with my old man, Andrew Denny. I remember him and I, prior to when the pelts would be good for sale to a white man, we would go to, take for example, Gillis Lake. We'd sit there for 3 weeks. We would literally count how many different species of animal were there--he would know how many male and how many female--and he would make sure that he got half of them and leave the rest. Then we'd move on to somewhere else. (And that's related to the education?) Yes. It's just recently you hear about environmentalists and caring--all of this was passed down to us. You will, I'm sure, hear the Indians being stereotyped: "They don't educate their kids, there's no discipline." When I first started in the Indians' day school here, the nuns who taught us, God bless their souls, they would emphasize that you must have 8 hours sleep. When I was a kid, I had to get up at 7-- for some unknown reason. I could stay up as long as I wanted. But if I came in 5 or 6 o'clock 3 nights in a row, that means I'm tired. And my old man's philosophy was even a day-old child knows when he's hungry or when he's sleepy. The psychology in bringing kids up was not to show them but for the kids to do themselves, and learn. When the white man arrived, they found this Grand Council impregnable. After the missionaries had penetrated and gotten through to the Micmac people and got them Christianity, they started changing the role of the Grand Council from it being a political thing into it being religious, Membertou was the Grand Chief. To emphasize the point of how strong the Grand (45)i