

Interviewed: March 5, 1976

Tape 70, Side 2 and  
Tape 71, Side 1

FISHERMAN:

Mr. Eino Ahola,  
#101 - 2180 Harrison Drive,  
Vancouver, B. C.

David Stevenson -  
Researcher

- Fished the central area all his life: Rivers Inlet, Smith Inlet, Knight Inlet, Kingcome Inlet and Johnson Straits.
- Was 11 years old when he went fishing in a skiff, but it wasn't until he was 17 that he fished on his own in 1915.
- He was born in Finland, he came to B.C. at an early age, his parents settled in Sointula, Malcom Island.
- They joined the communal effort there, which only lasted until 1905, when it went bankrupt.
- All the people that stayed took homesteads of 60 acre lots.
- The community attempted to make money by logging; fishing was not that important then.
- They fished mostly sockeye, the humpbacks, and the dog-salmon were thrown overboard; they took cohoes.
- Prices were low then.
- When he first went to Rivers Inlet sockeye was 10¢/piece in 1909.
- In 1915 price went up to 12½¢/piece.
- There has been a co-op store there since 1909; they had to start one because they needed one.
- When the Finns came to this country they weren't used to fish; they were short of meat and fish but they didn't consider cod fish of which there was plenty, as a source of food.
- They didn't take advantage of the salmon; they fished sockeye when it was running but they could have salted a lot of cod for the winter.
- They did eat some shell fish like clams.
- He started out with flat-bottomed skiff in Rivers Inlet; they used primus stove for cooking; before that they used four gallons coal-oil tanks for cooking, the primus came in 1914-15.
- They did most of their fishing at night, pulled the net in the morning and find what the net had done during the night.
- Fishing then was not the rat race it is now.
- They used a square chunk of wood with license number to mark their net; at night they had lantern to mark the net, which was a very heavy linen net of fifty foot mesh.

- There is a rock in Rivers Inlet called "Black Rock" which has taken many a net, but the water is mostly deep so there is not much worry about rocks.
- There was a union formed in 1925-26, he was part of the founding convention.
- The men from Sointula formed a local and joined the Fraser River Protective Association (B.C. Fishermens Protective Assoc.)
- After that there was the Fishermens & Cannery Workers <sup>Industrial Union</sup> ~~Association~~, then the P.C.F.U. for gillnetters, then the halibut men belonged to United fishermens Federal Union and the purse-seiners had their own union and they amalgamated into the U.F.A.W.U.
- He was a union member all his life except when he was working as a carpenter at Ocean Falls.
- Most of the time when he was at Sointula he was chairman or secretary of the <sup>Union</sup> local.
- 1936 was the biggest strike they ever had at Rivers Inlet....all the seiners weren't fishing much because sockeye doesn't travel in schools.
- The strike was over before the seiners were really ready.
- They left Rivers Inlet for Johnson Straits and received the price they were striking for...price went up to 50¢/piece.
- The strike leaders were Jimmy Lowes (?) and Tim Horn<sup>^</sup>buck (?) of course they had a strike committee there.
- The Native Brotherhood is first a cultural organization, not a fishing organization but eventually it came to be one.
- There are a lot of Indian fishermen who joined the U.F.A.W.U.
- The Japanese also had their own association before the war, but today they are integrated in the U.F.A.W.U. They also had restrictions as to where they could fish.
- Prices started going up after the war; until today you have to be a doctor or a plumber to afford it.
- He had his first gas boat in 1925. At first gas boats weren't allowed to go in Rivers Inlet.
- His first engine was a 5 HP Vivian, then a 6 cylinder Easthope, then a heavy duty 8 Easthope and then a 4 cylinder Red Wing.
- The gear is all nylon now and you fish daytime as well as night time.
- Nowadays the gear is very expensive...in the old days all he used were lanterns and net.

- At one time every engine on the coast was an Easthope.
- Fishing is now more competitive and you work harder to make it... today its a regular rat race with over priced and over equipped boats.
- Used to fish 5 - 6 days a week, now its only one or two days a week; the future doesn't look very good.
- Big run in 1973 but last two seasons have been poor and its harder for fishermen to stay afloat financially.
- In old days his expenses were very small, just nets and lanterns.
- Each cannery had their own colour of boat: Kildala was white... Wadham was red...Brunswick was blue...Beaver was yellow...Provincial was green.
- The colours were necessary for the packers to identify.
- He was a camp man at Strom Bay for three or four seasons and at Johnson Straits for the same company.
- Camp man...repairs the nets for the fishermen and managed the camp.

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(reduce to 1 1/2 IPS.)

- He prefers living up the coast and he still has property on Sointula one mile from the store and post office.
- Sointula has changed now from a Finnish Community to one with all kinds of nationalities.
- He used to build boats at Sointula<sup>for 50 years</sup> in the winter time and fished in the summer.
- Pilchards were fished by seiners...for the reduction plant, one year they just disappeared...probably because of the change in water temperatures.
- Some of them were canned, but they were too oily for Canadians.
- He was recently given an honorary member for life of the U.F.A.W.U. for his part in union organizing.
- During the buy back program, many Indian fishermen lost their boats and got pushed out of the industry.
- Many Indian people worked in the canneries but now they have no employment.
- Story about Kingcone Indians who got boats from the government but never paid for them.

- Tells the story about Skookum Charlie from Takoos Harbour who fished for A. B. C. Cannery at Good Hope.
- He was too old to fish and they couldn't get rid of him.
- They would have given him a boat if only he would go away from the cannery and he wouldn't take it; he must have been very powerful and strong in his younger days.
- Tells the story about Skookum Charlie and the tourist who took his picture.