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CHIEF KATIE RICH TALKS ABOUT THE TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS AT DAVIS INLET

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CBC RADIO NETWORK 11:20 "MORNINGSIDE"

Host: Peter Gzowski
*Guest: Katie Rich, chief,
Davis Inlet*

Peter Gzowski: It was the winter of '92, '93 when the spotlight of the national media was first turned on the tragic problems of Davis Inlet. Katie Riche was the chief then, spokesperson for her people's need to relocate. She stepped down from that position but she is back now and she is with me in Toronto this morning to bring us up to date on the situation in Davis Inlet. Chief Rich, good morning.

Katie Rich: Good morning.

Gzowski: Do you like to be Chief Rich or do you like to be Katie?

Rich: I like to be called Katie.

Gzowski: Do you?

Rich: Yes.

Gzowski: Your name is actually Kiti. Is it K-I- T-I?

Rich: Kiti. Kiti.

Gzowski: That's the Indian name.

Rich: Yeah. Yeah.

Gzowski: You are just back from Ottawa?

Rich: We were in Ottawa last week, all week. We met with many crown members. For example, we met with Tobin, Irwin, the Reform Party, Bloc Québécois, NDP. We were there to lobby support for the relocation of Davis to Shango(?). We were quite pleased with the support that we are

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getting.

Gzowski:

From all parties?

Rich:

From all parties, yes, yes.

Gzowski:

There is a story that the price of it has gone up, which I don't understand. Why does the price change?

Rich:

Well, they tell us that we underestimated some of the ... for example, the school. I can't remember the other one. They tell us that they have to jack up the price of it. When the government signed the political statements last year, they knew that it's going to cost over \$80 million to relocate.

Gzowski:

It's going to be even more than that I think.

Rich:

Yes. Yes.

Gzowski:

There is going to be a church and a school.

Rich:

We are applying for a church ... No, sorry, a hospital, a school and a port and some band council buildings and that sort of thing.

Gzowski:

Is it going to happen?

Rich:

From what we understand from Ron Irwin, the minister of Indian Affairs, he is still sticking to his commitment to relocate Davis, and one of the conditions that we had, we had to do 30 studies whether Shango was a viable place and that sort of thing. We have done all that. All the studies point to relocating Davis to Shango.

Gzowski:

Shango is ... Tell the ways in which it will be better. First of all, it's inland, which means you are not isolated out on...

Rich:

Well, it would be on the mainland, yes. We are on an island right now. People felt that they would like to choose where they want to live. Davis Inlet was not chosen by the community. Basically, Shango would be on the mainland. It has lots of space. For example, right now at Davis we have no room to build more houses, for example, and the ground is shifting all the time, and as the ground shifts, in the spring, the houses move as well and it creates structural damage to the houses.

Gzowski:

What's the hunting like around Shango?

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Rich:

Shango, it would be close to the hunting grounds of the people. They would have easier access. For example, in the spring and fall, we are not able to travel in the mainland. That's what the people are hoping for--that they would hunt all winter. They would have access to the hunting grounds.

Gzowski:

I don't understand what the timeframe might be but I would sure like to have you tell me about that. There is another land claim and mining clash around Shango, isn't it? Aren't there mines staked out around there?

Rich:

Well, from what we understand, the island that we are on now was staked by mining companies. Shango was also staked. We spoke to the premier about it. He said that he would talk to the mining companies so that Davis and Shango would be exempted from staking. Voisie Bay is about 30 miles north of Davis. It's very close to Davis. People felt that these mining companies (and the provincial government is allowing it to happen) ... these people are stealing ... they are practically stealing land, which our people and the Inuit have hunted in those area for many years--many generations.

Gzowski:

My understanding is that the mining companies really want to get t his settled, too. One story that I read said they would like to negotiate with you themselves.

Rich:

On thing that's been happening is that over the last month we have decided that we would sit down and negotiate with the mining companies, and that's what we are doing now. WE signed an M.O.U. with the mining companies.

M.O.U.?

Gzowski:

Memorandum of understanding. It's just a guideline. [inaudible]. Hopefully ... I think it's with the next [inaudible] that we set up another meeting with the mining companies.

Rich:

That would be extraordinary, wouldn't it, an agreement between the mining companies and the people.

Gzowski:

Well, as much as I hate, personally, myself, to sit down and negotiate with them, the people felt it's no use trying to stop, because they are getting bigger and bigger everyday. You know, we will negotiate and see what we can get out of the resources that's been taken out of our land.

Rich:

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Gzowski: What role is Clyde Wells playing in all of this (in the negotiations, in the relocation and the miners)? I think Premier Wells believes that the Shango is not the right solution, that you should go into another kind of community where there is an established economy.

Rich: Right. Well, we don't agree with that. We feel that if our people are to be moved to another community, first of all, I don't think any other community would welcome Davis Inlet Inuit. I would prefer that we ... There are quite a number of times where Premier Wells has publicly stated that he won't stand in the way but he will provide the land. I don't agree with that. We believe that it's our land.

Gzowski: I haven't been to Davis Inlet, although I have been to all kinds of communities of about that size or similar places. Take me there a little bit this morning and tell me what it looks like and how it's different from when all that bottle stuff was happening and when the kids died in the fire. What would I see that would give me a sense of hope?

Rich: Well, first of all, you would see a lot of (this morning) people working. This year we have started constructing an outdoor skating rink. The community has decided that they would back the safe house being built for the children ... You know, we are still seeing children out on the streets late in the night still sniffing gas. We felt that we had to bring them somewhere, and that's why this safe house has been built.

You would see many people going off to work. You would see in the morning, for example, people on their bikes getting water. We have only got one well to service the whole community. You would see a lot of dogs running around. Basically, that's the way it has always been.

If you had come to Davis 15 years ago, I would have said Davis was helpless, because as soon as you walk through the door you would see a person drunk, but that doesn't happen anymore. Of all the meetings over the last three years ...

Gzowski: Do your bags get searched when you land at the airport?

Rich: I am sorry?

Gzowski: Do your bags get searched when you land at the airport?

Rich: No, no. We attempted to search bags but it didn't go anywhere. All the councillors that I have, that are voted in, are all sober. That's one of the

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recommendations made by the community [inaudible]. They prefer to have sober leadership so that we can make good decisions. About 50 percent, I would say, is the how much people are staying sober. We still see people staying sober. As more and more and people stay sober, the more they are aware of the problems facing us and trying to correct ... find solutions to the problems.

zowski:

I wish all the people of goodwill could come up with an answer ... If you could get the booze out of there ... You could legislate the booze out of there but sometimes the kids, instead of drinking, just turn to the gasoline can. I don't know what the answer is. Do you?

Rich:

Well, right now one of the things that we are doing is we are setting up a mobile treatment program in the country where we being the children out in the camp. Right now we have got ... I don't know how many we have got in the camp right now, but at the end of four weeks, the parents of these children will join them later. That's the approach that we have been taking all along, is that we would heal the family together rather than individuals.

One of the good things about this whole thing is that it's Innu treating Innu. We felt that it was a waste of time, even though it was a start for us to send children to Poundmakers a couple of years ago.

So you are doing it on your own land now.

Gzowski:

Exactly. Yes.

Rich:

Poundmakers is good, though.

Gzowski:

Yes, it was good, yeah, but we felt that ...

Rich:

You actually had kids come back from there and fall off.

Gzowski:

Yeah, yeah. It's too far away. There were so many people traveling there. It's better to do it in your own surroundings, that you are able to talk to your own people and that sort of thing.

Rich:

When you were charged with contempt of court for ... [CHUCKLE] ... What are you wincing for? [CHUCKLE] ... You could have just signed something and not gone to the slammer, but (Oh, no!) you went to jail.

Gzowski:

Well, that's one of the sacrifices that you have to take in order to make a

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point.

Gzowski:

What was the time in the slammer like?

Rich:

Well, some people say that it's a better experience being in jail, but I feel that it was a good experience for us, for the both of us. Nifa Burn(?) was the other person, and we had a great time. We did. We actually did.

Gzowski:

There is just no keeping you down is there?

Rich:

[CHUCKLE]

Gzowski:

I should ask you about "Gathering Voices." This is the book that actually brought you here. "Gathering Voices: Finding Strength To Help Our Children." This is some of the things we have been talking about this morning.

Rich:

Uh-huh. Yeah. One thing that's been happening was that over the last three years, when we did the "Gathering Voices" report, there were only few books around. So, a lot of people were calling about the original "Gathering Voices." So, we said, why don't we do a reprint of it and give the people an update. So, that's what we did. So, we are, you know, doing a tour to tell people and give an update on what's been happening in the community.

Gzowski:

You feeling good about it.

Rich:

I feel very, very good about it. Yes. Yeah.

Gzowski:

Where can people get the book?

Rich:

It should be in any of the bookstores.

Gzowski:

Good.

Gzowski:

It's nice to meet you in person. Thanks very much for coming by

Rich:

Thank you for having me.

Gzowski:

Chief Katie Rich was in our studio in Toronto this morning.

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