

KENNETH BOUTILIER - SPRYBAY CULTURAL AND HISTORIC STORYTELLER

By: Maelissa Watson

Kenneth Boutlier's storytelling presentation at St. James U.C. Heritage Society, August 27, 2017, was truly traditional, old-time Nova Scotia Eastern Shore. The mirth in his voice, and the warmth in his heart for his community traditions, was well received and appreciated. The presentation was up-scale, woven in an interesting timeline; it kept the audience nodding, smiling, and remembering their younger years.

Kenneth was well prepared, dates appeared second nature, and he rarely consulted his hand-written notes. Kenneth quickly took the attentive audience through the stone age -The Mi'kmaq culture, the iron age, the industrial revolution, the history of fishing and the hardship of making a livelihood from the sea, the logging of the virgin forests, the various colonization's, the pulp mills, the consequences of gold discovery, the changes brought on by road building with locomotives replacing the sea as the navigation route to market; concluding with the dawning of the computer age. Kenneth gave special emphasis to the preference for individual and group presentation of home grown music tradition on the Eastern Shore.

The Story Telling program was introduced by individual musicians performing gospel music, patriotic songs, mostly in the traditional Scottish and Celtic vein. The talented music Artists were Ervin Beaver, Brian Malay, Elmer Josey, and Nathalie Ladouceur. The musicians were applauded, for their specialties', Ervin and Brian for the old time sacred gospel hymns, Elmer for his deep, melodious voice, belting out the words of his songs, so the many hard of hearing, could join in. Nathalie for her atheistically soft fluctuating voice filled with moderated expression, so appropriate for soulful melodies. Kenneth emphasized that music was a part of the warp and weft of the fabric of Nova Scotia Cultural life.

Kenneth's storytelling delivery was well known and recognized, but his singing voice and measure of counterpoint and harmony was the big surprise. *"McCarthy's Song"*, resurrected from Nova Scotia Archives, by a founding member of the Heritage Society Karen Crowell, was the highlight of the program for me. Kenneth remembered his Grandfather singing "McCarthy Song" written in the late 1700's. Many of the long-forgotten phrases touched a chord in my soul. Especially significant was the reference to currency: *"I'd paid to each farthing each treat that was called on"*. Those of us brought up with British Currency, remember there were 4 farthings in a penny, 240 pence in a Pound; and today we do not even have a penny currency in Canada.

All the Artist contributed to the enjoyable afternoon, and a reminder of an almost lost culture in our community, but most importantly leaving a footprint for future generations to walk in.