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TORONTO, ONTARIO  
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TORONTO, ONTARIO  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- One of her ancestors, captured during the War of 1812,  
married into the tribe.  
- Early organizer of native groups in Toronto.  
Evelyn: The following is an interview with Mildred Redmond  
of Walpole Island. The interview is being conducted in Council  
Fire on 315 Dundas Street East, on June 21, 1983, by  
Evelyn Sit.

Evelyn: When and where were you born?

Mildred: Walpole Island, Ontario, October 12, 1917.

Evelyn: Do you know the origin of your name?

Mildred: Not really, but I do know that my great-grandfather's  
mother was non-Indian. She apparently was captured during the  
War of 1812 from Detroit, her and her sister, and I gather  
that's where it came from -- that my great-grandparents were  
very fair, because of the mother being English, Scotch or

whatever. And I gather that's one of the reasons that they became white, he was married to a white person. The other thing that I thought of was that my great-grandfather, whom I remember, was very fair and when he became a Christian it could have been that he was named "White." Now I'm not to sure what that, what that whole meaning was, you know, that the name would be "White"; but I do know it has something to do with him becoming a Christian.

Evelyn: How big was your family?

Mildred: You mean my immediate mother, I mean my immediate brothers and sisters?

Evelyn: Yeah.

Mildred: I had one brother, two brothers I understand and one died when they were very young, and I have five sisters, and there was six of us. Six sisters and one brother were living.

Evelyn: What were their names?

Mildred: My brother who has since died, his name was Webster. My oldest sister -- who's in the hospital right now, quite ill, and I hope to see her this weekend -- her name is Raveena Pane, and she was married to an American, who died just about five years ago. The next one is Thelma, who died last year, who died last year at... who was married to a Canadian, English an English man, she died last year. Then the next came along Freida, who lived in Detroit and she was married to a Belgian and they're both deceased now. My brother Webb was married to a non-Indian Canadian girl, and they are both deceased now, my one brother. Then my twin sister, Jerry, is alive and she is married to an Indian on the reserve. And then I have my young sister, who is living in Indiana. So actually we're all, all of us, except for my brother and my twin sister have married, you know, and stayed on the reserve. The others have all been out as it were, all married out, but we all manage to see each other once a year when we have a family reunion.

Evelyn: What was your home like?

Mildred: Do you mean when I was young?

Evelyn: When you were a child.

Mildred: I've got some very fond recollections of it. My parents died, though, at a very early age, but it was my aunt who looked after the three of us, the three youngest, and also

my grandparents. And we lived with my grandparents during the wintertime, but in the summertime we would go to the front where my father had built a little house for his family. And they had... and we would go there in the summertime, live with my aunt. But she died the same year as my grandmother, and we

were sent away to North Medjet(?), Oakville. We only had about one year of schooling on the island when we lived with my grandparents. And I can recall her saying out at the window, when she was looking out the window and pointing to the school, saying, "While I live my grandchildren will be going to that school. It is only after that I die that I should like them to go to a school for orphan children, which will be the Independent Order of Foresters, run by the Independent Order of Foresters at Oakville, Ontario." The reason for this was... apparently she had send her, one or two of her children, to a school in Muncey, and the youngest daughter died and she was never informed of that, until after the funeral. It was something similar to that effect that she had a very low regard for that place, and hence the reason she wanted us to go to a white school, so that five of us were sent there -- my brother and my sister, Freida, were sent there before, ahead of time. They were there I would say maybe two or three years before my grandmother died and then that's when we went.

Evelyn: So, could you describe how your home was like?

Mildred: You mean on the reserve?

Evelyn: Yes.

Mildred: Well, my grandmother was very strict, I would call her, but she was a very... a person... we often said that she should have been the man and her husband should have been the

woman, because he's a very mild, very Christian-like man. And always I could see him going out in the field and digging, you know, hoeing, etc., whereas she was always making baskets, or going somewhere to help someone. I recall her having a bag of medicine by the door and if any time she was called, she would grab this medicine and I think she, the people around there looked up to her, and because she had a way with her, although they always said that she was a very domineering person. She was also at the same time kind in her ways and she loved people, and would do anything to help them. The other thing I recall about them was, there was a young man that came, that just come out of a residential school and he came over to ask them for their guidance and help in something that he wanted to do. And they were so pleased to think he had come to speak to them about this guidance, that he needed their say in it. And I can recall them remarking and talking to them, to each other, saying how nice it was of him to come and speak to them, and ask for advice. But actually my grandfather was a very religious man as well. He had a lot to do with the old Methodist Church on the Island, which has since burnt down, and they now have beautiful United Church there. But Sunday mornings we always, he always read the Bible and we always said Grace, and we would sit by our chairs and pray, and he would lead the, sort of the small family get-together.

Evelyn: What were the roles of men, women, and children?

Mildred: Well, the children were never allowed to talk. They were to listen, but we were never encouraged to talk when the elders were there. And the other thing was the children were not to know any secrets, or anything of, you know, we were always, you'd almost think that we were put aside to say, well, children are not to be heard from. So that the encouragement

to talk out was never there, we were just to be seen and we were to behave ourselves. I remember what happened was my... one of my cousins had died -- she had come to live with us and my grandmother was looking after her. Her name was Deena, and she had TB, and I guess there wasn't much you could do for her. They brought her downstairs, we were sleeping upstairs but I could hear them this one night all praying and singing, and apparently she died that night; but we were sent to school the next day and it was only through at school that we found that Deena had died, and that was in our own home. And we were told to come home.

Evelyn: How were you treated as a child?

Mildred: We were all, you know, there was not that, there was love and care but it was a little different. There was not that much affection shown. We were... if we did anything wrong, we were punished for it. I remember getting the whip over my legs, because my sister and I did, because we smashed eggs that we found that were, you know, behind the barn as it were. And my parents, at least my grandparent, especially my grandmother, giving us a whipping for having thrown those eggs -- somebody had told her about them. It was a beautiful life as far as we were concerned. We would go down to the lake and fish, and they didn't seem to worry too much about us drowning, or anything like that. And there was apple orchards, there seemed to be a lot of apples, a lot of cherries, pears, when we lived with our grandmother. And she also found several apples had been eaten and a bite taken, and she would know that would be one of us and she would scold us for doing just that. I think we had our, we knew where we were, exactly what was right and what was wrong, and she kept us really under her thumb, as it were.

Evelyn: So what did you do on a typical day, as a way of chores and duties?

Mildred: We didn't have chores to do in the sense that we might be(?) our children was playing outside, and enjoying life, running around, catching butterflies, or chasing the hens, or climbing. We loved climbing trees, and going out in the bushes and just playing around that part, you know. And fishing, we loved to go fishing. We'd even try and get fishhooks made out of safety pins just so that, you know, we'd be doing something with our time. It was a free time of the year for us, going to the farm even to, not to the farm, but to the bushes, to get maple syrup. That was the high time of our life as well, of taking some eggs and boiling them in the maple syrup, you know, before the maple syrup, you know, thickened. And just going out in the woods and being there to smell the

fire and to help empty the maple trees, the pails.

I can also remember my... if anything was to be done that the men all got together and helped each other, and there would be maybe a feast. If they were helping a farmer doing something extra they would all get together and eat together, especially the person who they were doing the favor for. The homes were not too close together. Therefore you were more or less, you know, to visit anybody it was a ritual as it were -- maybe Sunday afternoon, Saturday afternoon. And then helping doing the grass, sweetgrass, when my aunt would braid the sweetgrass -- they would teach us how to braid that. And I was getting ready to go to Cahmore(?) Park to sell their native crafts, and we always enjoyed that, going to, you know, just to, getting away from the Island. And we'd go buy rowboat and then stay with them all day. Those were the good parts, and if anybody got sick, we were always fighting off doctors, because it seemed every time a person did have a doctor they died anyway.

The doctor was never called until it was really, it was really necessary and the person was probably... So we were terribly fearful of doctors. Also I recall my grandmother giving us Castor Oil, and how we just hated it, and she'd have an orange and they would hold onto to us to have this Castor Oil, the orange juice, or the orange after that was our "thank you" for taking, you know, the oil. We seemed to always have plenty of food. And I also remember my grandmother's making Indian bread, how beautiful and thick it was, and that was usually on a Sunday and we'd have our dinner on a Sunday. But I imagine she might have, she probably did that during the week as well, but it seemed to be a little bit more, you know, for Sunday dinner.

Evelyn: You took, you talked about braiding sweetgrass.

Mildred: Yes, to make baskets. You know, and they would make baskets and put twine, put the sweetgrass around, you know, the thing -- use it as making baskets.

Evelyn: So can you describe the process?

Mildred: Well, she would, they would dry it. And they put it in water, and then after a while, as long as the grass didn't break, then we would just put the, it would be long braids, real, not too much, and just braid it. And then they'd be ready to make baskets out of it. But I also remembered my grandfather sitting down by, and putting the ash, white ash, the tree to make baskets, Indian baskets and my grandmother would do that; but he would go out and knock on the ash so that the, I don't know how you would call it, would bring the stick up, or...

Evelyn: The layers?

Mildred: The layers, would soften the layer and then each he would bring it up. And I would also see her coloring that up

with a dye. I don't know, there was just things that happen, you didn't worry about anything because they were there. And I often wonder what would have happened to us if we had been sent to the Shumuck(?) School, or all these other schools that my friends, or people from the reserves would go, but she was very definite about us not going to an Indian residential school.

Evelyn: So, how were the teachers like in the so-called, quote "white school"?

Mildred: Well, I guess when you look back now, you wonder how things would have been if things had been different. But at the same time I felt that there must have been something there that my grandmother, who to my mind and which when I hear people talk about it, that she was great, she was something. And I think that because she couldn't handle my father, she had sent him to a residential school, and he was able to get along with people both, both non-Indian and Indian. And I think she admired that in him; whereas, her other son, my uncle, they were all backward. They didn't go out to a residential school. And I think that she could notice a difference between her sons -- those who'd been to residential school, and those who hadn't been. They were much more, friendlier, more outgoing and that, was my father. So I believe that had been, had a lot to do with her sending us to an orphanage at Oakville, which is not run by native people. But when I look back myself I think about the sadness of when they asked us to quit talking the Ojibway language, and we lost that; but at the same time I feel myself that I'm as much to blame in not having it, because

there were times when I was working at the Native Centre that I could have gone and studied the language, but I never found any problem speaking in non-Indian -- English. Therefore, and if I did, if I had a problem with... I could always get someone to come in and do the translation. The majority of people I dealt with in the courts, and I worked for the independent or when I worked for the Native Centre, it was all in English.

Evelyn: So you didn't, did you learn any Indian games, or play Indian games?

Mildred: I've only learned some Indian games since I've graduated and I've been involved with different organizations, and they've done some Indian games.

Evelyn: But nothing you've learnt yourself?

Mildred: No.

Evelyn: As a child.

Mildred: Just, just hide-and-seek, and regular children's programs.

Evelyn: What is your ancestral history? You mentioned that your mother was captured along with her sister in the battle

of...

Mildred: Along with her sister. I would say that would have been during the War of 1812. And they were in Detroit and they were, the native... Indians, I guess, captured the two sisters. Brought them to Walpole Island, which is a matter of forty miles, and brought them to Walpole Island and one of them fell

in love, which would be a relative of mine way back, great-great-grandfather I guess, and she went back, was able to go back, to Detroit. And they... I heard someone say they never did see each other again. That the, the one that stayed on Walpole continued to stay and that's where my generation comes from. And other than that, it's through the War of 1812, and they were, the native people, Indians at that time were going out west, they were being... around upper part of Ohio, New York. They were being sent to, out west, and some of them got away and just wanted to fight with the British, and they're the ones that squatted in the part of the Island, back part of the Island, and they were known as the Potawatomis. And that's what I recall about my own family, is my grandparents being Potawatomi.

Evelyn: That they told you about this?

Mildred: My... they would talk, it was quite a well known thing. But my sister, my oldest sister, told me most of this herself.

Evelyn: Do you know the name of your tribe?

Mildred: Well, there was the Potawatomi, but it's Ojibway, Chipewyan in the Ojibway language, and Potawatomis in that part as well. There was a difference in their way of speaking, but not too different.

Evelyn: What does it mean?

Mildred: I can't tell you what it means really.

Evelyn: Okay, the name of your reserve is the Walpole. How did it get its name?

Mildred: Well, I would imagine it came from that great statesman, Walpole, that was known in England. I imagine during that time he knew a little bit that about Canada and Ontario, so they... that's probably where it came from.

Evelyn: Where did your people come from?

Mildred: Well, my people would have come from the northern part of Ohio.

Evelyn: And how big was the community, I mean as the way of number of people?

Mildred: Well, I think maybe less than one thousand. Maybe a matter of about ten or twelve families at that, that squatted on the south side of Lake Ontario.

Evelyn: Can you describe the reserve?

Mildred: Well, as far as I know it's about twelve to fifteen miles in length, and across from mainland to the Lake St. Claire is about three miles at the shortest part, the main way. I think Walpole is quite a bit ahead when it comes to doing their own government, in fact they were. It was said that they were the first ones that really controlled of how to spend their money. And they've done this through leasing of land. They got quite a bit of land that they lease out to the farmers, and they also have two hunting lodges there that they rent out. Because there's quite a few bull rushes, or swampy land in the southern part, which would be near Lake St. Claire; so that the native people there have, you know, done quite a bit of irrigation of the land and farming; have soya beans and things like that. And so besides the hunting areas, and

farming, they're really fixing their, fixing their own roads up and making sure that the roads are in good repair, and good condition.

Evelyn: Did you have a chief?

Mildred: My grandfather apparently was the last hereditary chief before the government came along, and then chose their own chiefs. You know, elected them. So that it's done by election now just like any other town, small town.

Evelyn: So what was your grandfather's name?

Mildred: Daniel, his first name. Daniel White. And my sister was telling us that he was the last hereditary chief that there was. There was, you know, automatically, his right to be a chief at that time.

Evelyn: So when you were a chief and you, how was he chosen?

Mildred: He wasn't chosen, he was born.

Evelyn: He was born into it, and the elected one, how was he chosen?

Mildred: Well just by votes.

Evelyn: And who participated in that?

Mildred: Well, I would say it was run the same way as it would be in any other town, city.

Evelyn: So, women participated as well as...?

Mildred: Not then, but I would say now they do. There's some Indian chiefs that are women in Ontario.

Evelyn: What was the duties of a chief?

Mildred: Well, I think when they would have council meetings he'd be there to sort of chair, and advise. I'm not too sure what they do now but I think it's the same thing. I think he's a head, anyway, of what is going on. And I think that he's looked up to very, very much.

Evelyn: Was there a difference between the duties that your father took as a chief that was born -- hereditary -- as opposed to a chief that was elected?

Mildred: Well, I'm not too sure, because I guess they could get to know what their roles were. And I think my father... I didn't know him, he died when I was two... From what I hear, my oldest sister talking about him, he was a very tall, handsome man. And I think that in a sense he had it, you know, that people did look up to him. And it was the same as my brother. My brother had the same bearing, and everybody looked up to my brother. Only I found my brother, is that he took to alcohol, and I'm sorry to say that is one of the downfalls of... I think he had, he had been brought up in school, in a white man's school, but he didn't have enough education. And therefore I think that might have had a lot to do with being a native, being with native people all the time and yet during the summer when all the crews would come in from the different boats, ships coming in, he would always invite them over to his place. And he became well known for his hospitality, let's put it that way.

Evelyn: Were there any other important individuals that existed on the reserve besides the chief?

Mildred: Well, there were all councillors, they were always nominated by the people, and if they figure that he's a good councillor he gets in.

Evelyn: And how about...

Mildred: But also I think there's a drawback to that too, because sometimes a chief gets in all the time but I think they've got to prove themselves at the same time. When they finally... they've voted in, a relative will give priority to their own relative, who has become chief and could still remain as the chief. So that has happened in some reserves.

Evelyn: Were there any individuals, such as Medicine Men on your reserve?

Mildred: Not that I recall, except that my grandmother being a person who was ready to go at a moment's notice to help give a birth, be a mid-wife, or if anybody was dying she's there with

her Indian medicine.

Evelyn: And what were these Indian medicines consist of?

Mildred: Well, probably a certain kind of herbs, you know, herbs from the ground or trees, anything like that.

Evelyn: Can you account of any other usages?

Mildred: Well, it's for coughing, and for nervousness, lack of sleep, and colds, and different medicines that they would use

if they had high fever. And, you know, making sure that they eat the proper food. I think it's... that was quite the thing that they had to do.

Evelyn: So, how does one become a Medicine Man or Woman, like your mom was, your grandmother?

Mildred: Well, I think it's their bearing. I think it's the way they, it's the way that they... Well, you can always spot a person who has something a little different to offer to humanity. If they're sincere and every people get to know. And I imagine it has a lot to do with my grandmother having achieved... she had to... She enjoyed doing things for other people.

Evelyn: But her learning about herbs and roots and things...

Mildred: Well, that would be handed down from generation to generation.

Evelyn: So, from her was it handed down to...

Mildred: I would say it was handed down. And we lost it because we left.

Evelyn: To go to the residential school?

Mildred: To go to the orphanage, yes.

Evelyn: What were some of the ways one could make a living?

Mildred: Well, I can't fully explain that because not having been raised on the reserve, but just learning and watching my own grandparents and my aunt working on the crafts of, you

know... And the food that they had to eat would be just from the, we always had cows, we always had pigs, and chickens. But they would make a little extra money through the crafts that they made. And you'd wonder exactly how my grandmother could afford to even have a car, which she did have. And before she died we might have had it for a year or one winter. I do recall being in there, all of us being in the car, to go to the Front, which is a matter of five miles away, to go to the Christmas concert. Christmas Eve was always a Christmas concert where all the native people got together and had a, you

know, getting together. And I recall going home. It was so cold and the wind, because it was those kind of a "T", Model "T", where they would just buckle those things against the window. Or the flaps would be, you know, open up to a certain degree. I remember doing that, though, going on a...

The other thing was we even had a cutter, and a horse called John, who would pull the cutter. We'd use that mostly for visiting and going out to... possibly selling some of the crafts that my grandparents had made. And then there was always a big wagon that they used, and a buggy in the summertime, buggy with a horse where we'd sit in the back part of the driver and somebody sit in the front. So all those ways of travelling we had, and I think that had a lot to do with my grandmother, who was a very ambitious and maybe domineering sort of person who had to have this. And she worked hard for it. And I recall going home the very first time we were in this store and my sister was with me, and this man whispered to somebody else, "Who is she?" And my sister told me, she says, "They were talking about you. They wanted to know who you were." And then they said, "Oh, that's the (Indian word) is grandchild meaning my grandmother. That was her name, (Indian word), the old lady. And she became known as the Old Lady, I guess, but everybody knew her and everybody knew her as being a very... getting things done. And I guess actually in her time she had everything, you know.

Evelyn: What exactly, you mentioned your horse and a sleigh?

Mildred: Oh, cutter, we call it a cutter, which was a sleigh.

Evelyn: So that's just the name of...

Mildred: Just the name, yes.

Evelyn: So what other sorts of modern conveniences did one have?

Mildred: Well, the other sort I would say was just having the two-story frame house that my grandmother made. Apparently years ago they lived in lean-by, no, wigwams, and I guess those were lean-tos made by branches of trees, and so forth. And my aunt... At least my sister was telling me that my grandmother had always said that they were always cold in the wintertime, and hundreds of native people died during the winter because of the lack of real good housing. But I recall seeing a postcard saying, "This is one of the Indian homes." And that was the home we were raised in that my grandmother built way back, I imagine around the early '20s or around the 19..., you know, the 1890s. A frame house, two-story frame house. And as I say she must have been quite a woman, because anybody was sick she was the one, she was always called.

Evelyn: She built the two-story frame house all by herself?

Mildred: Oh no, I would say that she had the money to make sure that people built it. And I would say that they would

build it together by working together and they would supply the dinner. This is the way they used to do things. Harvesting -- they'd get the men to work in one field and another field, but

the people that they would do this, would get the dinners ready for them. So I, this is what I just, when you asked the question, this is what I would think that they all, this is how they did it. And the other thing, when they were going through the... the building is torn down now but I've got pictures of it, is they used square, square nails. Now, that would have been years and years ago, when they used to have those square nails.

Evelyn: Did your grandfather participate at all?

Mildred: Oh, I would imagine, oh yes, he was always kept busy, but his work was out on the farm.

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Evelyn: What kind of festivals did you have?

Mildred: I think one of the festivals that I recall now is the box social. That they would have (tape is cut off)... Over my aunt making my sister and I a box social with sandwiches, and then it would be raffled off. And how we were eating with this man who bought our boxes, and my aunt was so put out with us because we wouldn't even look at him, wouldn't even talk to him. (laughs) We were just young at the time, but he bought both boxes from us, and I don't know how much he paid for them, but anyway I recall my aunt really being put out with us because we wouldn't even as much as talk to him. We were so shy. The other was Christmas, Christmas Eve, where I think each child got a present and each one got candy or something like that, but it was children would be singing Christmas carols. And then the other thing that they used to have was

the camp meetings. We called going to the camp meetings and having corn soup and people getting together. We loved the summer when we would be swimming out in the river, nobody watching us. We were as black as, black as an ace of spades because we were in the water all the time, because we lived near the water by my, when my aunt would look after us in the summertime -- that's after my mother and my dad had died. But we would also go to Cashmore(?) Park on the American side where they would sell. We'd have stands there, and my grandmother and my aunt would meet and they would row over and they would sell our crafts. And the other was going to -- in the wintertime or early spring -- going to Chatham, to the market there, to sell the baskets, etc., that they had made. I don't recall them selling any food. I think everything we had we ate, I thought. But those were the things that were very good, you know, that I recall. I also recall sitting outside and talking. The neighbors would come over and talk with my

grandmother, and my aunt, and we were going out to visit. But we did most of our walking. Going anywhere was by walking, except to go into Wallaceburg, or any of those places. We didn't do that very often.

Evelyn: So what was the purpose of going to Wallaceburg?

Mildred: Well, to do their shopping. They would take the shopping and buy flour, food, meat, and that. But to go to Chatham and Cashmore was to sell their native crafts.

Evelyn: What were the traditional practices that you had?

Mildred: I don't know that anything that was very traditional, except at Christmas time. And as I say, my grandparents were quite religious and so Christianity was very much involved. And the traditions would just be using the, saving up the

roots and things that would make a person feel good, feel better when he came down with a cold. We were just Indian people, I guess. I recall getting on the, going to Wallaceburg to do shopping, which was always a treat. Hearing kids on the street saying, "Oh, here comes the Indians. Here comes the Indians," you know. And we'd be going by in our buggy, in our sort of buggies and cars; but everybody else used cars too at those times, not buggies, from the native people. And every Indian didn't have a buggy, you know, just those that were able to do the farm work and able to save.

Evelyn: So what was your basic diet?

Mildred: Well, I would say our breakfast was always porridge, always plenty of milk, because we had cows, and always eggs, but I know that they sold some of the eggs to the neighbors. And they made bread, Indian bread; and soup. We had, I would say we had a very good diet. And I also remember them making soup from the tassels of the milkweed, and dandelion leaves, they also used those. So, our basic diet was regular food that you grew on the ground; carrots, potatoes, because we had the cows, and the pigs, and everything. So actually by accounts we were well off compared to people of today, now, who haven't got those, but they have to go to the store now to buy. We didn't have to do that very often. We had cherry trees in our, and my grandmother would always do a lot of preserving. She was very, very busy.

Evelyn: Was there ever any Indian songs or anything like that passed down to you?

Mildred: I can only remember one and I'm sure I forgotten what it was. We sang it once to this old, old man. He was around ninety, and laughed, and he laughed. He says, "I haven't heard

that song for years." And it goes like this, I only know a couple of words but I think you name each bird, or as you go by, but it was (Indian song), which was "the birds are singing,

are playing the drum and the squirrels are dancing around it." And I guess maybe that was just a couple of verses. I've never forgotten it.

Evelyn: Who taught you this?

Mildred: I would say we learned it from our aunt.

Evelyn: So, was there any community get-togethers on the reserve?

Mildred: Well, there was always the communities of when someone died, they'd always have the wake. And the other community things is when they were harvesting, or when something was being built, or if something was being moved people would come and help to get that done. Or the men would go fishing. But I don't recall any baseball teams, or hockey teams, or anything like that but I had a lot to do with the churches. Possibly they would have a feast in the church for one reason or other. And their camp meetings was another thing that would be a big community thing.

Evelyn: So did everybody participate?

Mildred: Well I think, pardon me, most cases they would, you know, it was something that they'd all go to, because there wasn't that much to do. There was no shows around, so your life actually was a lot to do with churches. That was a community draw.

Evelyn: Were there any sort of community meetings with chiefs?

Mildred: Not unless you... Maybe there's some big thing came along, they might have been doing that, but I don't recall. We didn't, weren't involved in that at all.

Evelyn: Did people talk of heroes, or people from other tribes?

Mildred: Never.

Evelyn: Never? Was there every any stories passed down to you by your grandparents?

Mildred: Not really. See, my grandfather was still alive when we went to the orphanage, and I can still see him hoeing the potatoes -- I guess it would be the potatoes -- when we left, and he was doing that. And several years later we found he had died, they had told us he had died. We didn't go home or anything like that.

Evelyn: When was your first encounter of non-natives?

Mildred: In the summertime at the cottage when we would, they would have maybe outdoor camp meetings and they would invite

the cottagers to come down. And going to the... We had summer cottagers come on our island, come and stay from maybe May, June, July, August, so we got to know... In fact, I was speaking to a group here and the woman, one of the people that were in the audience came up to me and said, "My mother..." no it was her mother, no, "My grandparents had a cottage on Walpole Island." And the one of the grandparents, or

grandchildren was Bill McVean, that is on the C.F.R.B. He's on the C.F.R.B, Bill McVean. Anyway he's a broadcaster and she told me who he was, and they had a cottage in front of us, where we used to live years before that time. There were three cottages on our land. And the, one of the cottagers, they've all died of course since, but we all got to know that they were leaving to go away, back. And if they had food left over they'd always bring it over to my aunt, or they might bring something for us. That's how we got to know, so we've had, we've been involved with non-Indians for years -- right from the beginning.

Evelyn: What made you move to Toronto?

Mildred: It was an opportunity that I had a job to come to, and it was through the orphanage that I was at. They asked me what I wanted to do and I said I wanted to work in an office. So there was a head office here, so they gave me that opportunity to come in and I stayed in Toronto.

Evelyn: So when you stayed at the orphanage, how many years was that out of your life?

Mildred: I would say about ten years.

Evelyn: And as a child on the reserve it was about six or seven years?

Mildred: Yes.

Evelyn: And from then, when you came to Toronto, it was the rest of your life?

Mildred: Ten years, yes. No, yeah, in Oakville I was there at the orphanage. And I learned a lot from that orphanage. We just had our... they had a reunion in Oakville and six of us were there; one from Florida, one from California, and five of us in Toronto. And it was so nice to see people that we hadn't seen for forty years. And they were so pleased to think, because we were known in the town as home-kids. We went to school in the public school but our home was in the orphanage, and that's where we ate and we slept and that was our life. But we all had friends; Connie Wood, and Connie Lee as I knew her, I met her. And there were others that I used to go to school with, I had a special liking to, and it was good to see them. Girls that... and I think it went through the whole school that there were some of the home-kids there, because we

were all known as home-kids. And it was really a good feeling. We may never see these people again, but because we were at the orphanage we all left and they all still stayed in Toronto -- or at Oakville -- to live, some of them. The majority of them lived, married and they stayed in Oakville.

Evelyn: Was this typical of most native families?

Mildred: No, no. Mine was, ours was very different, I would say. Most native families, I would say, that they weren't raised in their own homes, they were sent to a residential school. But with us, because we became full-orphans, and it was the will of my grandmother who wanted us to be educated in non-Indian schools, that's where we went.

Evelyn: What were the stories that you heard about, about the orphanage before you went there?

Mildred: We never knew what the orphanage, we knew that my brother and my sister had gone to school, away to school and that's where we would be going. We didn't know it was called an orphanage. But we were home-sick the very first day because we missed the water. And... but there was no one to look after us on the reserve. And I recall how the group of people came to see my grandmother and I can still see her pointing at the school and saying, "While I live these three children will be going to that school." And she died three years later, and my sister, oldest sister, took us to Oakville and that's where we got our education.

And it was a good life. I guess maybe we didn't get the affection, and yet we did because one of the women who looked after the girls was a very religious Christian woman. And she and I got along together very, very well. She went back to Africa to become a missionary with the Indians from India, in... And I used to get letters from her, but I didn't get any letters last year. I gather she was in her eighties or close to nineties.

But I learned a lot from there. It was not a bad life. We got our, you know, they looked after us very, very well. And I took advantage of that. I just said, "Yes I'd like to go to school. I'd like to continue on going to school." So the time came for me to leave, I could have gone into any kind, it would have been easier for me to go to work in a factory, maybe not a factory so much as a, being a, looking after children, or being in Children's Aid or so forth. But I think that we learned a lot.

There was a Franky Hann, who was the Supreme Chief Ranger of the Independent Order of Foresters; used to come down, he was an American. Big, big man, I can still see him. And he talked to us every time he'd come at a dinner hour. And I can still see him say there's pleasure in serving others, there is pleasure in helping one another. And he would say that word "pleasure" in such a way, I can still see him say "pleasure"

and that stuck in my mind more than anything. And I think I followed that. There is pleasure in it. You get something back every time you do anything for anybody else. And Miss Blyne(?). I guess I was one of these affectionate girls who loved attention and too, but I enjoyed working, doing things for her, and the thank you I'd get from her would be just something worth while. That was the kind of life that I learned in that orphanage. Eating the proper food, and trying not to cause anybody any problem. And it was good.

Mind you, there were a few times that I felt, everybody felt that, as native people we were discriminated, because we were the only -- there were five of us in the orphanage. And I recall when there's a camera came all the way from England with the man, who wanted to take pictures of the orphanage and he would never ask the Indian group to have their pictures taken -- it was always the non-Indians. And I -- that really hurt. It's when you sort of found out that you were different. But when it came to clothing, my sister felt that she was being -- what was the word? Well anyways, she just had that feeling. And at the time I felt... but other than that, you know, they were very good to us.

I think they always knew exactly when a person was trying their best to be of good behavior, and that person was given credit and given a chance. And I happened to be one of those, and that's how I come to Toronto to work in the office. And worked for the Independent Order of Foresters for ten years, and where I met my husband, and then finally left to have my three sons.

But during those three years prior to that I wanted to do something -- meet other native people. And that's how I got the Native Indian Club started in my home, where I'd start to meet native people. And we wanted to get a club going, just like the Scottish and the Irish, and the German Clubs, and we didn't have any so we called the Y and asked them to help us -- and sure enough they did. And we would have our meetings at

the Y, and first it was, by this time, I had left the Independent Order of Foresters and working as a clerk, and typist at the Peakfreen's. And I recall getting these boxes with chocolates to distribute and I think we did close to fifty boxes of patients at the Western Sand of Indian and Eskimo, the first Christmas we became members of the Indian club. And that was really good. I'd go down there, in fact, I met a mother of one of Jim Dumont -- I don't know whether you know Jim Dumont. He's a very well known spiritual leader amongst the Ojibway, and Art Solomon, he worked together. It was through this club that the Native Centre started. That was through this club that I would say because we all sort of -- Indian people were coming into Toronto -- that the club... and it's still going. The only thing that I feel, I got away from it because I was so busy. They do have, they go have dinners and banquets, and they usually have a big dinner, a big do once a year -- and we did that when we first started, which is very good. But you

get away from it, because I became involved in the Native Centre. I was on the board right from the beginning and then they asked me to become a court worker, which I did. And I got to know the native people across Toronto. Helped form the Ladies' Auxiliary, which still exists. Hetty Sylvester is President of that, and Ella Rush, I don't know whether you, she's another person you really should, you should interview -- Ella Rush -- because she's one of the ones that I've known the longest of anyone there. And she was a nurse, married to a non-Indian. And I, she just called me not too long ago where I could go and get some rhubarb from her farm, so we went and picked up the rhubarb for here.

Evelyn: And also being a part of Council Fire.

Mildred: Well, you know, helping to form the Indian club was one of, I feel, the real good things, because we got to know each other. Our kids had Christmas parties to go to of their own. And we had dinners, and special dinners where we invited other Indian clubs to come. Then being invited to the Native Centre to work as a court worker, that was a very challenging, because I just hated to get up before the judges, but they were very kind. And Major Worthy, like I remember her, she was Salvation Army person. She got along very well with me, and I with her. That she would just push me, she says, "Get up, get up. Speak for her, speak for her." And sometimes I'd get a little downcast, because I'd find so many native women sitting in the cells, and the same woman and I would go to her. I says, "Oh, so and so's in there again." I said, "I just don't feel I should talk to them, you know, I get so browned off." And she looked at me she says, "Milly, remember," she says, "today may be the day they change. One word from you just may cause them to change." You know, from their way of life. And not long after, about a year, I hardly saw any of those women there. The police used to say to me, "What did you do with those women? You don't see them like you used to. Did you drown them?" Because they'd all get to know them. I said, "No." But that is slowly, your acceptance of what they are, or were. You know, and I guess maybe I was patient with them as well. I think that is what helped.

Evelyn: How far back was the Indian club formed?

Mildred: I would say about thirty-five years ago. And the Native Centre about thirty years anyway, because I think we were ten years before the Indian Centre. But I think it's longer than that when they started to think about forming an Indian club, I mean a Native Centre. And I became... I was on the board, so it would be about ten years after the Native Centre got started.

Evelyn: So when the Indian club was formed, did you have a purpose in mind? Was this a collection of Indian...

Mildred: Just people, native people getting together to have a good time, to do social work with each other, to know each

other. And I wanted to know more native people. It's a sense of belonging. And I really feel that was the beginning of... And then of course we'd have our Christmas do, Christmas party, Halloween party. And it was good. And out of it came the Indian Centre, as I said. The Indian Centre was a little closer, did more like social work. And after two years, after its formation, they asked me if I would come and be a court worker, social worker. So, I thought about it and then I said, "Okay." And I was with them for about two years as a court worker, eight years as a -- no, eight years as a court worker, two years as a board member.

I left them, resigned. I didn't see, couldn't see eye-to-eye with a lot of things that they were doing, and I went down to (inaudible), I was there for four years. And in the meantime I joined the, helped form the Ontario Native Women's Association; and I'm going to Thunder Bay next month to speak to their national, no, to their provincial meeting, talking about my work here. After leaving (inaudible) there was a split and the group that wanted me to stay on and do work for native people got Council Fire going. And I was the one to do it, and I've been with it for five years. It's been my most challenging job. My most rewarding job. So many beautiful things have happened. And I was telling you about my special project in Winnipeg, all that I think has made my life so rich, and so, you know, so much. Things that have been done, but others have been involved in that way that; it's been really good. I've dealt with, formed the Old Age Group. Their first trip out from the Native Centre was through a van that I was able to get through the United Church Women's Group, of Don Mills. The mothers and the children -- I took them out on their first trip on a reserve, which was my reserve actually. Oh, things that

sometimes you think about, you never think about, and you think "Oh gee, it's been a long time coming." And now this is, as I said before, the most challenging job, but yet it's a fine, these people are not so different. They're thankful, they appreciate, and they show their thankfulness. So in a way I don't expect to go, I'll go on as long as I can. But you know, there are times when you have to quit. But right now what I have in my mind is that farm. There is a need for native people to leave here and go into the wide open spaces and see nature at its best. And that's my ambition, anyway. Instead of going to do shopping we should gather things and have them ready, and I've got a good group that are helping me here. But one of the things that have, at the beginning, is my own sister saying, "I wouldn't work there for the love of money." She felt demeaning for me to be down in this area. But I told her, I says, "Well, who's working for money?" And I said, "I've enjoyed everything I've done, everything I've done with the group, all that they've done with me as well. It's been very fulfilling, and I feel that if anything's to change they've got to do it themselves. That we are here to support them, and to accept them for what they are, and to try and bring that out, which is a lot of help to an individual." So it's been rewarding, and hopefully, I hope that I'll get a van, or even a station wagon, to take the boys up to the farm. We must go

this week if we can.

Evelyn: So, Do you think by coming into Toronto, working with all these natives, and organizations, that you finally... it's a link to your past or to your culture?

Mildred: Oh definitely.

Evelyn: Do you find that you've missed something?

Mildred: Not really. The only thing that I've missed was my language. When I hear those boys play at the pool table and they're laughing, and they're talking. And they're talking away in Indian. I'd like to know what they're saying. And yet maybe if I knew their language they wouldn't say, and they wouldn't have the freedom to say what they would want to in their own language. So that... I smiled once when I heard them; and one of the boys came over to me and said, "You know we're not talking about you," you know. And I looked at him and I says, "I know you aren't." I said, "I smiled because I just love to hear you fellows talking in Indian, teasing each other in Indian; or maybe one person trying to tell a taller tale than the other one." That's the only thing I've missed, but to an extent I really haven't missed it that much.

Evelyn: Thank you, Mildred.

Mildred: You're welcome.

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