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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Discusses the Walpole Island fair.  
Burton: We're talking to Robert Kiyoshk of Walpole Island about Walpole Island fairs. Could you, do you remember when you first came to the fair, you know, on this old fair grounds?

Robert: Yes, I remember quite a ways back we used to come into the fair ground on a horse and buggy. And John Crane -- they used to call him John James -- and old Joe Notty used to be the collectors at the entrance. They used to have a rope across the road, tied to a post on either side of the road, and if you don't stop they'd pull the rope up and then you'd have to stop. And I remember one time -- we were not coming to the fair, we were on our way to Alginack(?) to go and do some shopping, my mother and I -- this old John Crane he pulled that rope up like that and he said, "You can't go by without paying." And my mother said to him, "We're not coming to that old fair ground we're going to Alginack." And he said, "Why didn't you go around the other way over there, around (inaudible) road?" And my mother says to him, "This is a public road. Anybody can travel on it." Okay, so he let us go. But as slight as I was I jumped out of the buggy and ran into the fair ground and my mother kept on going.

And what you call used to be a policeman at that time there, old Leandre Rightman, and Earl Sands was the collector from the

what you call was a standkeeper on the fair grounds. That's the fair ground, they used to call it Pontiac Fair Grounds -- that's over here by the old fair grounds. The reason why they called that Pontiac Fair Grounds was there was a Pontiac Hotel right near by, but that's in the school house, little red school house. I remember that, but I never went to school there, but I remember coming to play ball with the boys and girls there from the Deck Settlement School.

And at that time, when we were at the fair grounds when my mother came back from Alginack, she stopped and picked me up. And I seen two men -- I'm not using no names, I still remember who they are, who they were -- I seen them going behind a bush over there and I seen them hiding in a great big bottle. I don't know what was in the bottle, but anyway me and my sister -- my step-sister -- went and picked that bottle up. I stuck it in my shirt, I took it home. When we got home over there my step-brother, Steven Kiyoshk, seen the bottle and he took it -- that was at night -- he took it. And they found him passed out somewhere on (name) Road. I don't know what was in that bottle but it made him pass out anyway; good thing we didn't drink it.

And I remember in the year 1920 Ray Taylor had a airplane in Wallaceburg. And he came to the island fair in 1920, I think it was in the end of August in that year. And Chief William Peters was the first Walpole Island Indian to ever ride in airplane. And he got on the airplane and Ray took him up. And when they got about half ways to the clouds, or closer to the clouds, he started to do the loop the loops in that airplane, and poor old Bill Peters, he fainted. Whether he fainted or not, anyway he passed out anyway. When he came down they had to revive him and took him to where that old Dan Tooskin used to live, and they poured some water on his forehead and he come to. That was a story of Chief William Peters.

And then on that same, at that same fair they had a sham battle, Indians and soldiers. And the soldiers were dressed in red, red coats, and the Indians in the old Indian costume. And Chief Elijah Sword was the one that was elected to be the chief on that group, and George Metson from Munsee was a cowboy and

his father was also there, Dan Metson. So when they had this sham battle they were shooting each other and some way, somehow, Chaplain or Silas Williams made a mistake and fired his gun too close to George Metson's head and scorched his hair off. And in fact what you call passed out, George Metson. And some way, somehow, they revived him. That was in 1920.

And then the following year, 1921, that's when the late Elijah Pinnance made a home run on that old fair grounds. And you know how far that back stop was from the fair grounds to where that what you call used to be, that Pontiac Hotel. That ball what he hit, hit the veranda roof on that house. And one of the spectators they said that's even a longer drive than Babe Ruth with a home run. I don't know how far that was from the home plate to the Pontiac Hotel, but anyway that ball landed on

the veranda rood and everybody was just yelling and jumping, clapping their hands. And as fat as what you call was, as stout as he was -- Elijah Pinnance -- he walked around the diamond. He didn't have to run and come right back and make the four bases, and without finding the ball. And he was the first man to make a home run on that fair grounds. That's when he first come out of what you call, he used to play with the New York Yankees. He still had that NY on his uniforms. And he called his name, he called his son Edward and Ben Pinnance, because Ben Pinnance played with Elijah Pinnance somewhere in New York State. And that's how Edward Pinnance got that middle name Edward and Ben Pinnance. That's all I know about that, about that time.

But coming down further -- I don't remember just exactly what day it was, or what year it was -- when they moved the fair grounds to the Austin Sands Fair Grounds they used to call it. That's the new fair grounds. And then the first steamer that

pulled in there at the dock was steamer Wakeeta bringing some passengers from Toledo and Detroit, Michigan. I don't know how many people there were in there, how may passengers. But anyway the band, when it played a selection at the dock and then led the parade into the fair grounds. And Elijah Sword...

And there used to be a little fellow, they used to call him Sam Mohawk, he was only about four foot six and weighed about 98 pounds. But he really could dance; he could move around just like weasel. And then one of them chiefs in from the state of Wisconsin -- he was an Indian dancer and an Indian drummer -- he made a speech on the grandstand and he said something that he was about 76 years old and he was still on the stage. And there's always somebody trying to be a copy cat, and what you call, Sam Mohawk was called to make a speech and he said, "I'm 62 years old but I can still do the war dance pretty good, and I come to the Walpole Island fair every year to help out the Walpole Island fair."

So this went on until the time the Lone Ranger came to Walpole Island. That was not too long ago. The Lone Ranger almost died on, in front of the grandstand on Walpole Island fair grounds, because it was Stan Isaac and myself went and met him on the race track. And Stanley was, oh, he looked terrible, but he looked like a real wild Indian, you know, them big long hair and just one feather. And I don't know what I had on, anyway I had a red jacket one and we went and met, what you call, Lone Ranger. He was riding on Silver King. Some way, somehow, that Silver King slipped on both legs, hind legs, and fell right over and fell on top of Lone Ranger and Lone Ranger couldn't get up for about five minutes. We had to go and help him up.

That was the same year when Eva Johnson won her first pony race. I don't know if anybody would remember that far back, but Eva Johnson can tell you she rode the horse that never had been broken. She was the first rider to ever ride that, and

that pony belonged to George Kiyoshk. And she made pretty good, and made the pony run straight, just like a tame horse, a broken horse, and then at the same time won the race. So everybody was shouting and congratulating Eva Johnson. That was the same time Lone Ranger was there.

And I remember one time me and the same person, Stan Isaac, were appointed to lead the parade from the fair grounds, I mean from the dock to the fair grounds -- that's when Thousand Island came, if anybody remembers steamer Thousand Island. I don't know, there were over 500 people that got off. And me and Stan were the head ones on the parade and then Ben behind us. And this song they played was that, what you call, Pop There Goes The Weasel. And then there's, what you call, Stan Isaac started dancing and the way he looked, everybody jumped like (inaudible). His hair was going flopping up and down on his back and everybody start to laugh. And when we got to the fair grounds, at that same fair, you know, there was a lot of people on the grandstand, sitting on the grandstand watching the races and the dances of all kinds, you know, Indian war dances. And a certain Indian woman -- I'm not using her name but I guess anybody that remembers that far back will remember who I am talking about -- she came pushing down, pushing her pram down the race track, and somebody had a great big piece of cardboard pinned on her back, on the back of her coat. She didn't know that it was on there. It's that first prize on there and everybody started to laugh when she walked by that, what you call, in front of the grandstand and a great big tag

on her back that says "1st Prize". So if anybody remembers that far back they'll know who it is. I'm pretty sure she's still alive today.

Another time old David Kiyoshk used to have a soup stand on the fair grounds, and Dave and Christine they sat up all night. They didn't have anybody to guard the stand for them and they had to sit up all night so nobody wouldn't come in and take anything out of the stand. So just about coming daylight they both fell asleep and just at that time their hired girl come in and she took over. But some way, somehow, Christine forgot to tell that hired girl that she had some hot chili and hot peppers in the soup. But she kept on stirring them and boiling them, and put some kind of beans, pork and beans, whatever, she put in there make hot chili. And the first customer that came, I think it was around maybe about ten o'clock, or maybe eleven o'clock, before noon, the first customer that came was old Henry Labod(?). He ordered a bowl of soup and when he tasted that he started to run and jump. Oh, I don't know how hot that stuff was that made him run and jump. Anyway, he started drinking water and drinking water, and pretty soon what you call asked him, somebody asked him on the track there, "What's wrong, Hank?" "Oh, they tried to poison me over there, they tried to poison. They gave me something real hot. I can still feel it in my belly and even in my lips." So they went over there and investigated and there she was still. She was pouring some cold water in her soup -- that's after Christine woke up and told her about what happened, what she forgot to

tell her. So that was, what you call, Henry Labod's(?) first Mexican meal and he couldn't stand it.

Another time, when what you call first came to Walpole Island, that tightrope walker, or cable walker, his name was James Hardy. And the cable was about 20 feet off the ground; it was

a real tight cable. And he used to ride back and forth on a bicycle on that cable, backwards and frontwards. I don't know how he could do it. And then pretty soon he went and got a baby's high chair and put it right on the cable and stood on that chair without falling. And that was a great treat to the people, both the Walpole Island people and the spectators from the States and Canada. That was not too long ago, that was after, just about the last fair they had on that fair grounds.

And another time I remember is when what you call came down there, the Barlowe Trio, acrobats and aerialists they called them. And Mr. and Mrs. Barlowe used to throw their little girl back and forth over their heads and back and forth -- they were standing about 20 feet apart. But one little mistake they made was what you call, that Mrs. Barlowe, didn't have a good hold on the girl and she went right over and happened to be a great, what you call, in a bunch of canvas, tarp or whatever you may call it, on the ground and that's where that girl fell and that saved her from getting hurt.

Another time is that butcher from Wallaceburg, his name was Bill Locket, he used to come to Walpole to buy cattle, to buy cows. And one time he came in there and he didn't know there was a fair going on. Maybe he knew about it all right, but he had to go through the fair grounds to go and shoot a cow back of the fair grounds some place. And those Mounties that were guarding the fair grounds seen him coming down there and he had a rifle over his shoulder like that, looking around see if he could spot that cow some place. And the Mounties went after old Bill Locket asking him what he was going to do. He says, "I'm going to shoot a cow." "What for?" "Oh, I bought it." "Who did you buy if from?" He named the person, so they went over there and that saved him from getting into trouble.

That's only how far I can remember those old fair times that took place. Both the old fair grounds and the new fair grounds, the last one that was there was the time what you call got -- I forget his name now -- I think his name was Joe Pinnance. He got into some kind of accident and that was the last fair they held on that old, new fair grounds. And they had to take Joe to the hospital from there and I don't know how long he lasted after he came back from the hospital. Anyway he didn't last very long. That's when he first took sick is right at the fair grounds there. I don't remember just exactly what year that was, but anyway that's the story is how far as I can remember. Okay, Burton?

Burton: Well, do you know how the fair grounds was lit at night?

Robert: At the new fair grounds, I don't remember exactly what year that was, they used to have a machine, some kind of a, they called it a, not diesel but...

Burton: Steam engine?

Robert: I don't know whether it was run by steam engine or not, but anyway they had a little building in it, a little house in there. That's where that engine was. And that, what you call, that's where they got their power from. It was just a homemade contraption, but it lit the fair grounds pretty good. And some places the, what you call, the bulbs didn't work on some places. But around the main drag as you come into the fair grounds it was real bright. I just forgot what they call that engine what they brought. They had a name for it but I just can't remember. That's how we got the electricity. And then later on I guess they got the real hydro, I don't remember.

Burton: Do you remember that guy who set up that hydro service there?

Robert: I don't think I remember his name.

Burton: Would it be Glen Nickle?

Robert: I think it was him. I'm not sure now but I think I can get information from Irene Campbell. She was the secretary for that man at that time.

Burton: Could you tell us what was in the fair ground, you know, all the buildings and all the things that were in it?

Robert: Far as I can remember there was that grandstand, and the exhibition hall, and there was another building there. I just forgot what they used to call that. That's where they checked all their stuff, like people coming into the fair grounds there, they used to leave their stuff at that...

Burton: Check room.

Robert: Check room. Well, we might just as well call it check room but they had another name for it. And what you call used to be the secretary or whatever you might call her. Mrs. Earl sands used to be the one that attended that check room. That's in the days of, what you call, I forget the name of that family that used to come to the Walpole Island fair from Sarnia. I think they were from Sarnia Forest, somewhere around

there. They used to have all kinds of stands there, like the spinning wheels and everything like that. And one time this old man, I forget their names now, he was hollering. He says, "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, step right up and try your luck. It will only cost you a dime, 10 cents to spin the wheel. You get a prize every time, it never fails. Every time you get a prize. This is one game you can play without losing." And I don't know how it happened some of those kids

come in there and they start spinning that wheel and they cleaned up, cleaned up the place, took every prize that was in there and the people almost got bankrupt as I understood. And what you call used to be the secretary at that time of the fair ground, was the late Charlie Jacobs. And he was telling my uncle there about what happened. I can't remember everything that far back now. In fact I should have got everything, in fact I got some of those articles in my papers there, what took place. And the time, what you call, the late Joshua White, he was coming to the fair grounds and he had a great big basket full of eggs bringing them to one of them standkeepers...

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Robert: ...something to eat. And they upset the basket and broke pretty near every egg, I guess. And Joshua was out of luck, couldn't make no money on his eggs. That was one of those great big hounds that used play around the fair grounds there looking for something to eat. I believe that was somewhere around about the end of that fair grounds there. And another thing that I remember is when what you call, Norris Notty -- he's still alive -- he was the first man to make a home run at that fair grounds, the new fair grounds. And I

believe the late Fred Emptems was a chief at that time and he went and paid him a \$5 bill for Norris making the first home run there. I don't remember just what year that was, but anyways he was the first man to make a home run on that new fair grounds, Mr. Norris Notty.

Gladys: Can you tell us some of the articles that they sold in the stands, like what kind of crafts?

Robert: You mean handy work, handicraft? Yeah, I remember the late Henry Neggs and his son, Paul Neggs, were the best penmanship on the burner. They used to make fancy writing on the leather with that burner. And a piece of leather, oh, maybe six inches long and about four inches wide would cost about \$4.50 and some kind of a poem and a picture drawn on that leather. And the best one I remember is when, what you call, Paul Neggs wrote a little poem on that, what you call, that piece of leather was "Please Do Not Swear Around Here, Not That We Give A Damn But It Sounds Like Hell To Strangers." That's the best one I remember what he used burn on them leathers. And those headbands, there used to be all kinds of them, you know, just the headband there like "Take Me In Your Arms", or "I'm Easy Money" and everything like that. Those made pretty good money too, and they say they were cheap too. You only sold them for about 15 cents apiece. And those leather moccasins, I don't how they.... Anyway, what you call used to make them, that Mrs. Henry Riley, Elizabeth Riley I think her name was, she used to make them. And Paul Neggs was the one who used to put the writing and the pictures on the moccasins. And those moccasins used to cost somewhere about from \$7, maybe some of them even \$25 a pair, but they have to be real

fancy, like bead work and everything on them.

Another thing they used to have pretty good was that sweetgrass baskets. Like they used to have all kinds of fancy baskets and everything like that. One little basket about maybe four inches in diameter or five inches and so high, they used to call them the sewing baskets made out of sweetgrass, or either birch bark. And those used to sell at \$15 for one little basket. Not very many of them made them but anyone that made them used to make pretty good money. And American people they didn't care if they paid so much, they still buy them anyway.

And there's another thing that I remember about the late (name) White. You know, he was crippled. He couldn't walk, he had to use crutches to walk around, but on his arms he was real strong. And he used to do some acts at the fair ground there. He'd put two chairs together, oh, maybe just far enough apart so he could reach both of them with one hand, you know, and he used to go up and down like that. And one time I remember he put a bottle of coke on the ground -- on the floor, rather -- and he went right down there and got that, what you call, that sipping straw into the bottle and drank the pop out of the bottle. And Eddie Kiyoshk was the master of ceremonies at that time and he used to say everytime we drank, whatever we drink, always goes down, but this went up that time. (Name) was upside down when he took the drink out of the bottle.

Burton: Who were all the Indian people that had stands there? Do you remember their names?

Robert: Far as I can remember is the late William Notty, Henry Neggs, Henry Riley, old Joseph Sword, that's about all I can remember.

Burton: Charlie K.?

Robert: Oh yes, once in a while I used to see Charlie K., but I guess he must have had somebody working for him. But anyway I used to him there, Charlie K. Johnson. Another one that I remember seeing there -- I don't know whether she had a stand, or maybe she was just working for somebody -- was that old lady they called (name), she must have worked with somebody. I don't think she would have had a stand of her own, I think she was working for somebody there. Anyway I used to see her behind the counter there.

Burton: Do you remember ever seeing Gypsy fortune tellers at the fair?

Robert: Yes. I remember they had a great big sign on the door, on the doorway in their tent that said, "Your Fortune Told". And me and Leonard Plaine, from Sarnia, went inside and asked them to tell us our fortunes. And instead of telling me my fortune that girl just kept looking at me right straight in the eyes. Pretty soon I says to her, "What are you trying to

do? I thought you were supposed to tell me my fortune, instead you're trying to hypnotize me." She said, "No I'm not." And I kept looking at her like that, right straight in the eyes and pretty soon the Gypsy girl fell asleep. Instead of her hypnotizing me it backfired on her. So Leonard Plaine still remembers that today. Any time he comes to Walpole Island you can ask him, he still remembers that. That was at the new fair ground. But I used to see them Gypsies, they used to even hunt snakes, those garter snakes and all kinds of snakes. They used to cut them all in little pieces just like pork sausage and fry them. They used to eat them, those Gypsies. And I don't know

how good they were but anyway it made me sick just to see them frying them. Oh, they were gobbling away there just like nothing, just like a bunch of kids eating candies.

Another person that I remember, she was from... I don't know whether she was from Moosonee or Moose Factory; she was a Cree. She used to work for... I forget now who she used to work for. She used to come there to the fair ground there. They used to call her Eskimo Mary, Mary (name). I think she was from Moosonee. My sister had a car at that time -- my step-sister, Eva Blackbird. So this Mary got us to take her to Wallaceburg; she wanted to buy some fish. So we took her to Wallaceburg. She bought, oh, quite a bunch of them little herrings, or something like that -- they were not cooked. She brought them to the fair grounds. When she got back into her stand there, we were watching her. I don't know what made us watch her but anyway she got hold of one of them fishes, little wee fish, you know, chewing away just like eating banana, raw. That's a Cree woman from way up north. I believe she was part Eskimo, because Eskimos are the only ones that I know that don't cook their meat. But anyway now... I used to work with quite a few Eskimos in Toronto, but these Eskimos that comes around Toronto now from up north they cook their meals the same as anybody else. But this Eskimo Mary, I don't know whether she still does that or not. But anyway she moved down to (inaudible); that's where she is right now.

Burton: Do you know who ran the fair? Who organized the fair, the group that organized the fair?

Robert: Far as I know I don't know whether they organized the fair, but anyway there used to be the big wheels around the (name). Arthur (name), Peter, and the late Joe Sands. Not Joe but Joe Sands from up Highbanks. Those were the big wheels that I remember of long ago at the fair. But whoever organized it I do not remember that far back.

Burton: I think we've covered this subject pretty well and I want to thank you for your information.

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(END OF TAPE)

INDEX

INDEX TERM	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
WALPOLE ISLAND RESERVE -Walpole Island fair	IH-OA.005	R. KIYOSHK	125	2-16