Casper: So this is how the names were given, and some, some, uh, children would, would get their names from their parents. And then they would get this, then they would have a naming ceremony. And that would be a name that they would have. But now, but today it's more, like, we, we still have, we still give children Indian names, you know, if we want to. The thing is, uh, what we, we usually don't have that, we don't usually follow it up with a naming ceremony. I know lot of Indian families who have, who give their children Indian names, you see. But, really, what it should happen, used to happen in the old days, was that you would, you would have a naming ceremony; such as a woman might have a baby and she'd want, she'd give that baby the Indian name, as soon as that baby was born. But, like, some people would give, like, you know, like, one name.
One woman told me one time that, she says, "I've got a new baby." This young woman that, you know, I knew her, you know. And she told me, says, "I got a new, I just got a, we got a new baby." And she says, "Her name is (Indian name)." "Oh," I said, "that's a nice name," I said to her. She says, "Well, do you know what that name means?" I said, "Yeah," I said, "I know what it means. "Well," she said, "It means spring," you see. I said, "The child was born in..." She said, "Yeah," she said, "the child was born in April and that's why I called her that. I gave her that name Spring, you know, springtime, Spring."

(Indian name) is another name for, you know, we, we don't, we don't use that word much today, but it means... we usually say (Indian word) today, you know. (Indian name) is another way of saying spring, you know springtime. It's a word that's not, that's not used very much among the southern Ojibway, you know. But the northern Ojibway, and especially the Cree use that, that's the, they use that word.

So today that's the way it is, you see. A woman will, can give her... and if she wished, though, she could have that naming ceremony. She could ask the, maybe a couple of old people, or even... Usually it's better to ask more than one, one elder, as we call them today to... If they would like to perform a naming ceremony. And, of course, a lot of old people today are reluctant to do that, you see. They think it's, they will say, "Well, I don't know how." They think it's complicated, and it's not complicated at all, you see. It's very simple -- a naming ceremony is very simple.

And, uh, usually at a naming ceremony, you see, you would follow it with a feast, like, with a... you'll eat and, you know, have a, almost, just like a birthday party, just, you know... But it has more meaning to it than that, you see. It's, you know, it's a, has a sort of a spiritual significance, you see. You know, that's, that's why we, that's why the, that's why you should have elders present, you see. And one of them would offer a certain kind of prayer for, you know. Well, then, that's it. After that, well, then you... or you perform a little ceremony, you see. You have the child standing there in front of them, or they might even... Stand around in a circle, stand around the child and then he would offer up this prayer, and tell the grandfathers that, you know, that this the name that this child is being given. And then he would ask the grandfathers to bless this name, you know. The prayer would go like that, you see, you know. And that was, that is the part there that, you know, and then after that, well, then, you know, it's all over. Sit down, eat, you know, everybody, you know, just, that's it, you know.

Jocelyn: Could you tell me about the grandfathers? What significance do they play?
Casper: Well, those are the, you know the, according to the, well, most Indian people, all Indian nations believe in, in the grandfathers. The grandfathers they, they're, are simple of the what they call the spiritual grandfathers. They say everybody has, you know, the grandfathers, who is, are special beings. Nothing, it's not your grandfather, although it's, you have a grandfather now, here, on this earth, you see. There are also grandfathers who are sort of, they're spiritual grandfathers, you see. And that's the way we, that's the way we, according to, in Indian ways and the Indian belief, that you must call on these grandfathers to, you know... They are the ones who will, who will speak for you to the, you know, to the... They have this power, or... Who will speak for you, or who will ask the Great Spirit favors, you know. And if you offend these grandfathers, well, then, they won't do that for you. All these, everything that the grandfathers, you see, everything that is spiritual is a grandfather, you see. You could even call the thunder grandfathers -- they are grandfathers, you see. Because this is why we say in Indian, when we say in Indian (Indian word), that's, we speak of thunder as if it was something, a, a, a being. We speak of it that way, you see. So then Indian people believe, well, those are grandfathers also. And anything else that you, they're one of the grandfathers, you see. And each of the four directions they, we... The Indian people believe that there is a grandfather for the east, west, north and south, you know, that's... In the Ojibway tradition, you see, we, they usually identify seven grandfathers. And in some, well, they only identify six.

Jocelyn: Why is that?

Casper: Well, they've, it's just a little bit of a variation, you see, you know, and... But in the Dakota, among the Sioux, they're always... what they represent as twelve, they also speak of it as grandfathers, call it grandfathers, you see. Well, you know, it's, this term here, grandfathers, is a, is a sort of, it's not really the way that you understand it, it's a way, it's a, it's a word that you use in order to convey this idea. And you see why the word grandfather is used is, because we, it is believed that these, that this, that these beings or whatever that is that you believe in, is like a grandfather. Because we were brought up to believe that a grandfather is very kind, that the grandfather will give you something, always giving you something. You go to the grandfather he's not going to refuse you, you know, he'll give you something. So it's sort of a, that, it's a word that is used to represent this idea of what a grandfather is. And this is why the term grandfather, you see... It's a very, it's a very, it's very hard to understand. You'd have to, you know, you just can't, you know, if you just say well, you know, grandfather. So that, you know, in these here, when a, when a, when a person or a Midewiwin is saying an invocation, or an oration, they're really, what, that is what he's doing. He puts himself before this thing here, and he speaks to it, you see. And he's
calling on the grandfathers to help him so that his, that his words, or his, you know, will be carried to the, will reach the, the Great Spirit, you know, that these words will be heard, you see. And that is what he's doing, you see. And if he does not, if he doesn't understand it properly, you see, he, he's not going to do it properly, you see. He's not going to be able to... And oftentimes you can't say this in English, you see, you have to say it in, in, in your native language, that part. So, because of, if this, he's, you know... A lot of people today, you know will think, well, I, a lot of people perform in the middle of ceremonies, you know, how they, native ceremonies, you know. And they, they do it in English, you know, every thing. They'll talk in English, you know. Well, that's not the same, it's really not the same, just really, you know. And myself, when I hear somebody doing that, you know, I'm really not with it, I, I, you know, I don't feel anything at all, it just really has no meaning for me. But when I hear someone saying it in the traditional way and using his own language, no matter if I understand or not, I can... Whether it's a Mohawk saying it in his own language I still get the feeling. You know, that, and so it's, it's a, it's a sort of a thing that you have to, you know... And, you know... And it's a, they really, when you also...

Speaking of grandfathers, you're also thinking of your ancestors, too. Those that came before you, you know, a long time ago, you see. You're really paying your respects to them, you see. And to me it's much more meaningful to do that, you see. You either, whether I'm a, even if I, even if I doubt it sometimes, or even if I have any doubts about it, well, you know, say, "Oh, that's foolishness. There's no such a thing." I can put myself into a state of mind where I'm thinking of my ancestors. I'm paying homage to them, paying my respects I, you know, because I didn't, because that is the reason why I am here. They gave me life, you know, and that's, that's very meaningful, you see. You know there's no, there's no faith involved, it's just that I know, I know it happened, that's why I'm standing here, you see. Well, you know, it's, it's that sort of a thing too, you see. At least that's, that's the... Some people don't like to talk about it because they, a lot of people say, well, you know, shouldn't talk about those things, you see... Because, really, Indian people are not, as a rule, are not, are not hung up on... no matter what these little ceremonies that they perform, these few that they believe in -- they're not hung up on, on, on and I, on something, or they don't become obsessed with an idea, you know. It's just a simple thing that they take for granted and that's it, you know. They just, okay, you know, they don't, they don't think about it and, you know, just... you know... Because that way you can get into all sorts of trouble, you see. Because you can never understand it really, so you don't try to understand it. Just, you know, you'd just, you know.

Jocelyn: Can I ask who taught you all of this?
Casper: Eh?

Jocelyn: Who taught you all of this knowledge that you do have now?

Casper: Well some of it, I heard it from old people. I used to talk to old people a lot when I was a young man, you know, and always talked to them. And they were always willing to talk to me, you see, they, you know, I'd just... Every time I had an opportunity I would, you know... Or sometimes maybe I would drop in on them, an old person, you know, just go and sit with him. Sometimes he might not say nothing, sometimes he might talk, you know, just, well, just... You don't have to ask him anything, you know, he, he was just talking. If you were willing to listen to him, he knows it, you know, that you, that you want to talk, you know. But you don't pry him with questions, you... It's so natural that it happens, you see. And that's the way it was meant to be, you see, and that's the way, you know... That's, that's, that's what I mean when I say a person shouldn't get hung up on it, you know, you don't have to... you know. Because if it's meant that you might understand it some day, well, you'll understand it, you see. But you can't understand it at once. You might have to have an experience, or you might have to, you may even live a lifetime before you... Oh, yeah, that's... Or you might even say, "Oh, that's what he said. That's what that old person told me one time. That's what he..." you know. Because they don't, you know, they don't explain things to you like, you know, they just... They might even say to you, "Well, maybe some day you'll find out. Maybe some day you'll know." It's, it's, just... wait, don't get impatient, you know. It's just sort of... Probably what they mean is, you have to live a whole life, a whole lifetime before you can really understand it, you know. It's not something that you, you can understand in one, one day, or maybe even one year. Or it's not something that you can read in a book, so you know. Instead of instruction there's rules and all that -- no, no it isn't that, it isn't that at all. In the old days they, on the, in the old, old, the real traditional, the traditional ceremonies is a very long ceremony. And it's very, you have to have a lot of patience, because, in the, I don't know whether they have any real ones today, you know, in the old way, really. But they tell me that in the old days that, that at a, I mean, you're having a ceremony, you know. Each, each person who wished to participate in there, or somewhere would be... Some would be initiated, but some others would want to just go through a time of their life, or maybe they become young, a young person maybe would want to... Would be advised if he shouldn't participate he should go to the Midewiwin ceremony. That might be the only one time he'd ever go, you see. So, and during those times, they say, you used to go through, a, a, you would go through a number of elders. It might be you have seven elders, or six elders, you see, and these would be representative of the grandfathers, you see. And you would have to go to each one, you'd have to stand up in front of each one and he would talk
to you about life. And then you go to the next one and he'd also have something to tell you too, you know, until you're finished. And sometimes, they say, that, that it took maybe all day before you would finish, you see, because someone there might, some old person there, old man would maybe talk a very long time, you know. And they used to say sometimes if he's very old, he's getting very old, but he still has quite a bit of knowledge, he might be getting forgetful, you know, and just repeating himself. And you cannot leave him until he's finished -- you got to stay there, you got to listen to him. And when he's finished, well, then you go to the next one, you see. You can't just, you got to stay there. Well, of course, he might be a little shorter, he might not take just as long, not quite long, you know. It's just one of those things, you know, that take a long time... It's a sort of a, really, you got to have a lot of patience, you see.

Of course after you're finished, well, then that's it, okay. You may never go to another one, or you may decide that you might want to, you know, sometime during your life, of course those things, they're not... I don't know if they have any in the, maybe in the far north, the far north communities, in some places, or Minnesota... But not here in Ontario. And part of that, in, that, Midewiwin ceremony was that you, you had to go to, you had to go to the Sweat Lodge first, you see. This was a preparation for the Midewiwin ceremony, you see. Because after all what a Sweat Lodge is is a purification ceremony. You're supposed to purify yourself of course, sort of. That's the religious significance of it, but it's also a very therapeutic, it's helpful. It's not meant to be a, to be a torture, or an ordeal of some kind, it's not meant to be that way, you see. That's why some of these people today, these new, what do they call them? Maybe a new breed of elders, you know. They're competing with each other who is going to, who is going to make it the hottest. Or who, and if somebody can't stand it and has to go out, well, then they say, "Oh, he really didn't come through very good." And it's not meant to be that way; you're not supposed to do it that way. So they're not, they're not doing it right, you see. You know, it... I know it, you know, when I hear about those things I, I know that's, you know, that isn't the right thing, it's not right.

Anyway that's what I know about it, you know, and that's, that's the way that I understand it. Maybe somebody else might, some elder might talk to you, I don't know. That's, maybe, I, I understand it this way, but basically the same thing, though. I mean it's, that, it's the significance and the, the, the, the, the, the, the spiritual thing about it, you see. And that's, that's... It really doesn't matter whether you, you, you, you do it a little differently or not, it doesn't really matter too much. But you must be careful that you, you, you do it in the right way, that you don't, you know... And you have to understand it, as I said. It's not an ordeal or it's not meant to be a self torture, it's not that at
all. No, it wasn't meant to be that way. I think a lot of people, I think today are being mislead, you know, and, you know these things are being, some people are... give it a wrong interpretation. It's, you know, anyway that's, you know, that's what I know about the, this Midewiwin here is not, it's the same as all, even among all Indian nations, native Indian nations. They had this thing here, everything was special, you see, whether it was a Ghost Dance, or whether it was a Sun Dance, or, you know. It had its spiritual significance, you see, and that's why they were doing it. And these things here, you know, are so far, are so old, you know... They go way back in time, that, you know, that today's ceremonies might, might not be the same as the old ones, you see. Because they weren't continued, they changed just a little bit, there were interruptions, they were revived, and soon as Christianity came in with western civilization, western philosophy, it had some influence on these things, you see. But you can always tell which, whether it is, whether it is the real thing or not, or whether there's too much, you know, I mean, whether it's been diluted too much, these things, you know.

Jocelyn: If somebody were to come up and ask you what your religion was, what your answer be to that?

Casper: Well, I would tell them, well, I was baptized as a Roman Catholic. I belong to the, I... in the white world I'm a Roman Catholic. But in the Indian world I'm not. In my own mind, I am not. I don't belong either. I'm neither a Protestant or a Roman Catholic. Those things really are only things that, that I had no control over, you know. You know those things were, you know. I couldn't say, "No, I can't do that. I can't accept that," because those were given to me when I was child, you see. You see, but today I can make up my own mind, you see. So in my own mind I know who I am, you see. If anybody wants to call me a Catholic, well, that's all right, okay, they can call me Catholic. And if anybody wants to call me something else, well, okay, that's all right, that's what he thinks I am, you see. But in my own mind I know, I know who I am, you see. And I know what I, and I know what I should believe in, you see. So that really it doesn't bother me at all, it doesn't worry me at all, you know, it doesn't bother me.

Jocelyn: Well, do you feel that we've talked enough, or is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

Casper: Well, it's kind of hard to, sometimes, but, you know, sometimes I can tell, you know, I can just sit, you know, talk, you know. And at times I, you know, I just sort of, it's like catching a person in the right mood.

Jocelyn: Oh yes.

Casper: You could also, too, you can also teach him away from those things, you know, such as, "Well, look, will you tell me what this is all about, and what you're doing?" Such as today,
here, in the interview, you see, you know, I sort of tried to, you know, instead of just, you know, recalling things, you know, I did tell you a few things, but... A lot of things that a man might, could recall, and then he, and, you know, the, at certain times and just to be, you know... But it just sort of comes spontaneously sometimes, you know. It's something that you don't, don't really, I don't think it's hard for, for anybody to prepare yourself for an interview. The interviewer might be, "Well, these are the things, you know, I'd like to ask you these questions," you know. See what, see what he thinks, you know. Or if he wants to tell a little story. Well, I think maybe I told you a little story, a few, you know, one story about the, the old things that I remember happening on the reserve, such as the paydays, and the treaty, our treaty days or whatever you might want to call it, you know. Sometimes they have much more meaning when you, when you're saying it in Ojibway, you know. So I don't really, you know, when I say payday, or, you know, it really doesn't have any meaning for me, you know. But when I say (Indian), it's much more meaningful to me, you see, because I know that's what it was in the, you know, back in... I can just, the whole thing just comes to me, you know, what it meant to the people and, you know, how they carried on during this time, you know, and how it was, you know, people would be expecting it at a certain time. And as the day got closer, well, everybody was getting excited, you know, and everybody was waiting for it, you know.

Jocelyn: It has more meaning when you, when you, if you were to sit down and talk to somebody in Indian about it?

Casper: Oh yeah, I would, it would really have more meaning for me, you see. Because I think maybe, you know, to recall some old things, you know, well it's, I think, too, you could, you know when you, when you speak Indian you could tell, tell them a lot more, or you can think up a little, a lot of things that happened to you, you know, little stories, you know. Sort of like the, you know, like the old man that was asked, you know, he was asked to do some tapes. Of course he did them all in Indian, you see, he was talking in Indian, you know. And he, well one story he recalls is that he, you know, he just, you know, he remembers coming, coming to this, his parents moving to a new community, you know. And they come from somewhere else, you see, and of course they speak a little differently, you see. And he recalls that, you know, people are making fun of him because he was just speaking a little bit different, you see. Now he tells all this in Indian, you see. "But that," he says, "that's the way my, that's the way they spoke where I come from," you see. And he said, "This place, new place here where, where we went to live," he said, "these people are speaking, speaking a little bit different, differently," you see. And they, they think him a little strange, you see, because he doesn't speak exactly the way they do, you see. It's a nice little story, you see, so he goes up and, you know, but he tells about these. Says, "I wasn't..." you know. Then he says that he didn't learn to talk English
until he was about fifteen years old, you see. I mean that's little stories like, well, you know, he says, I, what he used to do, you know. When he was a child, you know, go fishing. Well, one day he catches a big fish. Well, of course, he's got his friend along with him. They were little boys and they catch this big fish, you know, and it almost pulls them into the water, you know. And Marley, his friend, helps him, you know, and they, so they finally, they finally get that big fish ashore, you know, how they... Oh, stories like that, you know, and what happened to him in his childhood, you know. It's very nice to, nice to listen to the tape, you see, because you, you know, but for me it's nice, you see, because I can understand the language, you know, even though he can... I can understand all the, the reason why he was, why they thought he was speaking a little bit strangely, you know, because I still hear those kind of people that speak like that, you see, you know, just a little bit different, you see.

Jocelyn: And who taught you how to speak Indian?

Casper: Well, that's, you, my parents did that. I mean that's the language I learned. I didn't learn to speak English until I was seven years old, until I started going to school.

Jocelyn: And how long did you go to school for?

Casper: Well, I went to school till I was about eighteen years old, I guess. But it took me a long time to become fluent, you see, even though when I was, when I was going to school. I mean I, I would only read in English and talk English, try to talk English to the teacher, I would hear. See, soon as I got out of school, as soon as I went home, well, I'd begin to talk Indian again, and that would be the... I'd hear my language, you see. So it took me a long time really to, really, you know, really to become fluent in, or reasonably fluent in English, you know. It took me a number of years, you see. I could also find, it was always much easier for me to say something, or to express ideas in my own native language, than I would, you know, in English, you see. And this is why I enjoy a story when I, in Indian, when somebody old, or if I hear it on tape, or if I hear an old person talking in Indian, Ojibway. But I enjoy that story very much, you see, it just really, you know... It's not possible anymore, or in this day, maybe, well maybe the younger generation don't, you see, they don't understand or they can't even talk it, or some few might, you know, understand enough of it to, maybe, but not really, you see. So...

Jocelyn: Since you've come to Toronto what kind of things have you become involved in?

Casper: Oh really the, the, in the early years when I, when I first came out here, when I first came to what they -- Mississauga, the city of Mississauga, well... When I first came there, you know, I mean I, I only left the reserve, I
didn't mean to leave it permanently, I always meant to go back. But, you see, it just happened that I'm, that, you know, I never, I never, I never went back, you see. I didn't really have any intention of leaving the reserve permanently and this as it went on I was able to find steady work, steady job, and I sort of became attached to the job, you know. I couldn't leave it because I was making a, you know, a reasonably good living, you know. And it just, the years just went by until finally I raised a family, you see.

But really in the first, in those years I, I actually wasn't involved with anything at all, even with my own people, you know, I mean I'd rather go... I was pretty much by myself, like, you know, my own, my only concern, I guess, was to, to be able to make a living and survive, you know, and in that, you know, so that... So the years just rolled by and it wasn't until I came to Toronto here, moved to Toronto and sort of meeting Indian people, and, and going to the community centre in, you know... I began to see what I had been missing, because I hadn't been really, I hadn't really bothered myself with my own people, you see, I don't know, you just... In fact, you might say, well, I really didn't know them, you see, really, and not knowing them, well, then I didn't know myself, you see. That experience came very late in life, you see, today I know that. You know, it's like, it's like a gap in my life, you know, maybe over, you know, a span of years there, you know, I really wasn't living. You know, I, I just don't really, you know, trying to, I suppose maybe trying to make a living and trying to be like somebody else, maybe trying to make myself into a another bone, or sort of disappear into a... you know, inside of something, you know, and just... I was, I really never tried to identify myself, or I never tried to give myself any identity in my own mind, you see.

So, you know, it's really a, today I think maybe one of the... When I came here, when I left the reservation in 1940, 1942, I mean very little... Native people were, you know, they weren't organized at all, you know. It was hard to find a place to go where you could, you know, meet your own native people. The only place maybe you could meet them is, well, you know... Maybe you might go to a hotel, but that's not the place to meet native people, you see, that's not the place, you see. Because you're going to get, it's a, because you're meeting the wrong kind of people. And you're apt to get the same kind of attitude as other people, as non-native people, that, "Oh, Indian people are no good. All they do is drink," you see. That can happen to you too, as an Indian person, as a native person. Because you're not communicating with your own people. The only kind of people you are communicating with is the ones who are like you, you know. They got nothing else to do, they, you know, they go and sit in there, maybe, in the beer parlor, or something like that. And they, really it's not a, you know, you just meet them there for a little while and then you don't see them again. There's nothing meaningful about it, you see, nothing meaningful. So you were liable to...
Just like I heard one man, one man told me that he, he had a niece. He said, "I have a niece," he said, "my niece one time said she used to be quite embarrassed because she was an Indian," he said to me. You know and he said, "She was going to school and she was well educated, but she always, she wouldn't admit that she was an Indian person," you know. And he said, "One time we were at this, at this place." He said there were, and it was a gathering of native people there, and you know the remark he heard his niece say, you know, about, "Well," he says, "all Indian people are only, are all drunks anyway." So he told her, you know, he says, "Do you know," I said, 'that you're Indian?' She says, 'Yeah.' 'Well,' I says, 'and I'm an Indian too.'" He says, "I'm your uncle," he says, "I'm an Indian." He says, "You know what you're doing is you're, you're running me down and you're running yourself down, you know, when you say that." He says, "All Indians are not drunk," he said to her. He says, "Are we drunk now?" The girl says, "No." "Well, I says," he says, "but you said that all Indians are drunk, are drunks. You and I are not drunk, I said, and we're Indians." So that sort of made her change, you see. You know this is what I mean that you're liable to get a, a, just one side. You don't see anybody, you don't see the other side of it, you see. And you won't be able to see the other side unless you, you look, unless you start looking around, and the main thing is to see the other side, you see. So...

(END OF SIDE A)

Ranald: Tape number JK 82.6, side B. This is the conclusion of interviews with Mr. Casper Solomon in Toronto, done by Jocelyn Keeshig on August 11, 1982. Occasionally my voice can be heard on this tape, as I have edited out some names at Mr. Solomon's request.

Casper: That's the way I feel about those things, you know. Sometimes it takes quite a while before you start to understand the whole thing. You sort of have to have many experiences first, you sort of have to... Well, it all depends on yourself, you see. If you want to live a certain kind of life, well, I'm... You're not going to, you know, you're going to be, your experiences are so, be very limited, you know. Like I said, you might only see the one side, but you'll never see the other side, you see. Because you, you're confining yourself to, you know, to a certain way of life and you don't, you know, you just don't, you know, it's very... you know, you're putting limitations on yourself, you see. You're not, you're really not ready to do anything, or you're not ready to come out of yourself and expand, you know. That's, and that's one of things that, you know... I think if you have a feeling for your, for your Indianness, it's like having a feeling for nature. It's just like being impressed by... You can go some places, you might see some scenery, you know, that's really, you know, really tremendous. You might see a big mountain, you might, or you just might, or you might travel another part of
the country and just, when you get there, you just feel a difference, you know. You look around, you know. You don't sort of, you know... Unless you can do that with your life, well then you'll never, you know... There's a lot of things that you're not going to be able to understand, you see. It's just like, sort of, you got to be able to travel. You got to be able to see a lot of things; you have to meet a lot of people; you have to meet a lot of, you know, you have to involve yourself with a lot of things, you know. That's the only, you know, otherwise you're not, you're going to be, you're going to be feel insignificant. You're going to be running away from something all the time.

Take here, the city of Toronto here, they say they got twenty-five, thirty thousand Indians. You can travel, you know, you can, well, you don't see any. Where are they? Well, nobody knows, but they're here, they're there. But they're not, really, because they don't get involved, you see. They're not... Some of them will even say, "Well, I'm not an Indian." Some of them don't even, they don't want you to ask them any questions about themselves, you know. As soon as you ask them about something about their life, or where they come from, well, they'll go into a shell. Maybe they'll become very reluctant to say anything, you know. They won't say anything, because they don't want to, because they're hiding. They're hiding from something, you see, they're hiding. And they're not really happy, you see, they're not really happy. How can you be happy when you're running away from something? You can't. So there's a lot of them out there like that. So this is what makes it hard for us to get, you know... There's only a few who, you know, you know, they don't have this kind of feeling about themselves, you know. And so, you know, they... But there are places where, you know, where it's different.

I went to, to, when I went to Morley this, this summer, the Morley Reservation, it's a large reservation, Stony Indians. It was really, you know, I saw a lot of, I saw a lot of young people there, and most of them young people are bilingual. And there's one there the, the, I was speaking to the, to the one of the teachers. He's a white teacher, he teaches on the Indian reserve. And he says, you know, he says, "This is the... you know these people here," he says, "are very strong in culture, they're very strong." And yet these people are, are living like, like anybody else. You know, they, they have a restaurant on the reserve, a very big restaurant run by the band and with all Indian staff. All the young people are working there, you know. They act much like white people, they act like anybody else. But at the same time it doesn't, it doesn't effect them at all by being strong culturally. In fact, it makes them better, they're very friendly, you know. You walk in there and they smile at you. They ask you where you come from, you know. Especially, they pay, you know, especially if you're an old person. You walk in there, like myself, you know. Right away they, they treat me just a little bit different, you know. They want to, with a little bit of
respect, you see. They make sure that, you know, that they, that I get what I want, you know, that... "Well, here's an old person. Let's serve him first." And, you know, that's, they just give you that little bit of special attention, you see. That's because they've been taught to respect old age, you see. That's what I mean that they were very nice people. I was really impressed, you know. So it is, you know, if you... So it's not something to be ashamed about, you see. Because if you, you want to, if you live it, and if you see something good it, it's going to make you a better person and then you won't have to be ashamed. Because, because the good is there, you look for it, and then you won't... But of course if you don't, if you don't look for it you don't, you're not going to see it.

Jocelyn: Well, I want to sort of jump the track here. I was wondering if, if you knew any ghost stories that you could tell me?

Casper: Eh?

Jocelyn: Any ghost stories.

Casper: Well, here's a story I used to hear, and actually this is a true story. I'll tell you a true story, it really happened. I guess it must, oh, this was a good many years ago, I guess, when people were, you know, had just, hadn't been on the reserve very long, I guess, in Cape Croker. A lot of them used to go out and work for a while, you know. And about the same, the saw mill I was talking about, you know, was there then, you know, Witcher's saw mill, you see. And sometimes the men used to go and work there for a while, you see. So this man, he was working there. He went to work there; I guess his brother drove him to work, horse and wagon, you know. So he took him down to work, he had to be there. So he wasn't on the job any more than a hour that he had an accident. You know, one of the... something happened there that a board went right through him, you know, so he died right there. So his brother, well, his brother took him to town, took the body to town and bought the coffin, and was going to tape it up, and got the body ready, and, and his brother brought the body home, you know, take the body home right away before dark. And it was getting on in the afternoon, you know, and it took a long time to, to drive from Wiarton to Cape Croker. So he put the coffin on the wagon and he was sitting on it, like, you know, and driving the team. And as he was nearing home, on the way, someplace, he was, he wasn't too far from home, you know. And it was getting a... you know, the sun had set already, you know. And he was starting to worry -- he wanted to get home before dark. And he looked behind and he saw his brother walking, walking behind, you know, walking behind the wagon. Yeah, he was walking. Well, he didn't know what to believe. He knew the body was in the coffin. Yet he was walking behind the wagon, he... So he started to whip the horses, you know. He didn't know what else to do, you know. And his brother was right behind him, no matter just how fast he went his brother
was always behind there, walking. Oh, he was so scared, you know, he didn't know what to do, he didn't know what... So finally he just kept on driving, you know. Well, and finally, you know, he looked again, well, he didn't see him anymore.

But for a long time he, his brother followed him -- just walking behind the wagon, yet the body was in the coffin. "Oh," he said, "I was so scared," he said. "I didn't know what to do." He says, "I just almost keeled over." He didn't know what to do.

Jocelyn: Does he know how come this was?

Casper: Eh?

Jocelyn: Did he know how come this was happening?

Casper: No, he didn't know. All he knew, all he could see was his brother walking behind the... And yet he knew the body was there, inside the coffin, and his brother was walking behind the, walking behind the wagon. So it must have been a very frightening experience for him.

Jocelyn: Yeah, I'd say so! Did many experiences like these ever happen on the reservation, like, were they common?

Casper: Oh, I don't know how common they were. I think sometimes that things like that happened, I think. I remember one time I had an experience something like that, although I didn't see anything. I was coming by this... I didn't know the house was empty, I didn't know the people had left. I was coming home late at night, you know. I was, I was still on the reserve, you know, a young, young man. And I was coming home late at night one time. It was about, oh, after midnight. And I was coming by this house and all of a sudden I heard people in the house, like they were having a party. I could hear the chairs being moved, I could hear the table, you know, somebody was dragging the table around, and I could hear people walking, tramping on the old, stomping on the floor. Like, you know, I kind of thought to myself, "Well, there must be a drunken party," I says. And I looked at the house -- pitch dark, no light! So I thought, "Well, they must have pulled the blinds down." And then I, I could hear someone coming down the stairs too, you know. But I couldn't hear anybody talking or yelling, there was just this noise, you see. So I thought, "I'm going to go and take a look and see what's happening. I'm going to go and look in the window." So I started going like, went to the house, you know, and then all of a sudden I heard a door bang, you know. Somebody come out the door, you know, and just banged it, just slammed the door shut. "Well," I thought, "well, somebody is coming." So I hid in the, you know, I hid in the grass, you know. I just threw myself in the grass and waited for someone to come along. Well, you know, after waiting there for about five or ten minutes and nobody came along, and I looked at the house again and listened. There was nothing -- I couldn't hear anything, absolutely nothing! Then
I had a feeling that I, you know, that, that maybe, maybe what I had heard wasn't, maybe there was nobody, maybe I had just... So I didn't go any nearer, I didn't go near the house. I went back to the road and I went home. So then the next day I was down someone else, you know, "Oh," I said to him, "they must have been having a big party there last night," I said. "They were really making a lot of noise," I said to him. "They didn't even have the light on," I said. Well, he just laughed at me and he says, "You know," he says, "those people have gone long ago. They left last week," he told me, "There's nobody living in that house." So there was nobody living in that house when I heard these, when I heard this commotion in the house. You know the only thing that was missing was the, you know, was people yelling. It was just like, it just sounded as if people were fighting in the house. You could hear the chairs slamming around, and then all of a sudden you see this door slam, you see. As I got near the house, you see, that's when the door slammed, you know. Well, I thought somebody had come out, you see. Oh, it was really so plain, you know, it was so real. And I really, you know, that's why I threw myself in the grass, you see, and lay there for a while; waiting for this person to come along, or persons, or whatever. But nothing, nothing happened. And when I looked at the house the house was still. There wasn't a noise in the house. So there was nobody in that house when I...

So after that one experience I had... And another experience I had was when somebody almost ran into me. I was walking at night, I was walking with someone else, and then this guy here decided we'd go for a walk. It was getting late, but, near midnight. He had a long flashlight, he had a six-celled flashlight, it was one of those long flashlights, you know, powerful spotlight. And we were walking along, you know, and there was just a fresh, some fresh snow on the ground, just hardly covered the ground, you know. It was late in the fall, you know, and we were walking up the road. All of a sudden I heard someone running, someone running towards us, and he was running on my side of the road, I could, you know, he was running. I could hear, I could hear this person running, you know. And I thought, "I wonder who that is?" So he just kept running almost, you know, in fact, I thought he was going to hit me -- I turned around, like this you know. And he stopped right in front of me -- I could hear the stones, you know. Like, he stopped so suddenly that he slid, and I could hear the stones flying like this, you know. And I told this guy here, and I said, "Hurry up! Get your flashlight out! There's somebody here, somebody pretty near run into me." So he got his flashlight out. He shone it all, he shined it all over and looked for tracks. There wasn't a track on the road, there wasn't a track. We even went over the fence to see, well, maybe it might have been a deer, maybe it jumped over the fence. Nope, there was no sign of anything at all, no tracks. But it couldn't have been a deer because I could really distinguish, I thought it was a person running, you see. And
when a animal is running, well, then you know that, you know, you can tell, you see. But this person that was running really was someone, or it was like a man running, you know. And he just about, in fact, well, I dodged, you know, I turned around like this, because I thought he was running into me, that's how close he stopped in front of me. But there was nobody there.

Jocelyn: No explanation for it?

Casper: No explanation for it, but it just happened. And we couldn't find any track, or any sign, nothing at all. Oh, those things sometimes happen. I remember another thing that happened (tape is shut off)

Ranald: A woman we both know.

Casper: ...well, when she was, when they first got married they, the first year, the first winter they didn't, hadn't quite finished their house, you know. And they, and they were living in the kitchen, you know, the kitchen part -- they had it all finished, you know. They had everything in there. They had a bed there, right, and they had a large window there. But the way they'd come in, you see, was they'd come in through the other part that wasn't finished, you see. That was the way they would come in, see, and then went into the kitchen. And the stove was in there, you know. But one night they (tape is cut off).

Ranald: The woman heard someone knocking.

Casper: It was about two o'clock in the morning she heard someone knocking at the door. And she said, "I wonder who it is?" So she looked out, you know, it was moonlight, you know, at night, it wasn't a dark night. And there was snow on the ground, this was in the wintertime. So she looked out and here was a little man standing at the door with an overcoat and a hat, and a cap. And she said, "I wonder who that is?" Then she thought, "Gee." At first she thought, "Gees, that's my grandmother. I wonder what's she doing this time of the night?" You know, right away that's what she thought, you know, because the person was very short, you know.

Jocelyn: Three, four feet?

Casper: Oh, about that, about three or four feet.

Ranald: She woke her husband up. He looked up.

Casper: He says, "Go and open the door for my, that's my grandmother outside."

Ranald: She said, "Go open the door. That's not your grandmother."

Casper: She's too short, he's only a little man." And they looked at the man standing there waiting, standing there at the door. And they didn't, couldn't think of who it could be so
finally (tape cut) said, "I'll go and open the door see, see who it is." So he went out and took his flashlight, you know, and went to open the door -- there was nobody there. He thought, "Gee, I wonder where he went?"

So he went out, you know, he shined his flashlight all over, you know, in the snow, you know and all around the house -- never saw anybody, never saw any tracks, nothing.

**Jocelyn:** Nobody knows what it was?

**Casper:** Nobody knows what it was, and, but it was a little man, they both saw it. Saw this little man, both of them. Now, it's unusual for two people to see the same thing, something like that, you know, for both of them to see it. Usually a person has to be alone to see this thing, or he has to, you know, another person is not able to see. But they, but both of them saw this. And of course, you know, they told my mother about this, you know, and my mother told them, "Well, you've had a visitor." She said, "You should have maybe... he wanted something," she says, "maybe you should have put something out there." Well, this is one of the, this is one of the Ojibway beliefs. That if you see something like that you are, it's a, it's a visitation, it's a visit and that you should, you should really put something there, like maybe, maybe they should have put tobacco out, or something like that, you see. But they didn't, you see.

**Jocelyn:** It was a bad omen then?

**Casper:** Yeah, it was a bad omen then, you see. This, this sometimes takes a long time for this, you know, to happen, you know, if you see something (inaudible). You see, Indian people are more apt to see those things, you see. White men may never have that experience, you see. So there's this part of; you know... You might call it, well, it's a superstition, whatever -- call it whatever you want. To me I don't, I don't have a name for it, but I, I do have a, I do have a feeling that this is a, this thing happens to more, this happens to Indian people, native people. That's part of our Indianness. That's why, you know, it's sort of a thing that we -- a gift -- that we're able to... we have a warning from, we get a warning from, maybe, from somewhere, somewhere outside the physical world, you see. So that's one of the, you know, there are... experiences like that are peculiar, I mean like strange stories like that, you know. Some people will just say, "Oh, there was nothing at all. They just, they just thought they saw something." Well... But Indian people have never, never thought that way. They always put some kind of a, they always attached some kind of a, some kind of significance to this, either as a warning, or as something being brought to them. And they had certain, they would do certain things, you see. In fact, they would make an offering, they would put it out, you see. Of course, people today don't do that, you see, you young people they don't believe in that, you know.
Jocelyn: So this was a bad omen? They could have prevented something like that?

Casper: They could have prevented it by, by putting a, putting a, putting a, making an offering, you know, like even tobacco, or food.

Jocelyn: So in other words these omens are, they come to you to let you know something's going to happen and to tell you that you could prevent this?

Casper: Yes. It's hard to believe, but it is. But that is the way that the, the old people used to, that's what they used to say, that's what they would tell you.

Jocelyn: I imagine this is one part of the Indian culture that shouldn't be lost too, and not many people talk about it?

Casper: Yes, not many people will talk about it, because they, sometimes they don't want to be laughed at, you see. Sometimes some people laugh at it. They say, "He's crazy, those things don't happen." And that's what they say, "They don't happen." Until maybe it happens to them sometimes. Maybe, maybe, you know. It doesn't happen to everybody, only the special people, you know, people who are, people, people may, might live all his life and maybe never have that kind of experience, you see, depending on, you know...

Jocelyn: Is there anything else that you'd like to share? Anything you can thing of?

Casper: Well I, I, don't know.... Like, what, some more, some more stories, or some more, or whatever?

Jocelyn: Just whatever.

Casper: My personal opinion or, you know, stuff like that, the way I feel about it? Well, you know... Well, I think... Well here's a... another story that I... Well, this, this used to be -- everybody used to know about this on Cape Croker. I don't know how many people today know that on the... I think it's on Griffith Island they used to have, people used to have a landing place there. But they, you know, sometimes they did at this certain place they used to land there. They would, you know, like, fishermen would, if it was too stormy to come across they'd stay there overnight, you know. And at this certain place there, there were, it was an old... They used to say that is where the Ojibway and the Mohawk... That was one battle site where they, a place where they fought. And you find bones thrown around all over.

And if you camped near there, at that certain spot, you know, where there were, people that were all, used to always use it, as, you know... That's where they'd land, you know. At night you will hear those, you'll hear the canoes coming, you know, and men getting out of, getting off the canoes. And you could
hear them walking along the shore, you see. And then you'd hear them pulling up their canoes. And if you're, if you're sleeping in a tent they will come and throw pebbles on your tent; you'll hear those pebbles.

Some people used to get used to it, they didn't bother. Just that my father used to often sleep there, pitch a tent up and sleep and he'd hear these things. Of course, he had been told what they were. He says, "It's the, it's the dead warriors going back to look at the, look at this battle site, look at the, where their companions had fallen," you see. "Yeah, the spirits coming back to see it, that the place hadn't been disturbed." So people used to, they were always told, the Indian people were always told never to touch those bones if you saw a bone there, just leave it, don't touch it.

Ranald: The man who saw the little person was telling a story.

Casper: ...Once to a white man one time, you know. The white man started to laugh at him. He says, "Oh, that's not true. Somebody is pulling a trick on you. Somebody is doing that," he says, "that's not true at all." "Well," he says to him, "let's go and sleep over there tonight. I'll take you over there." Well, the white man took a gun with him. "Oh," he says, "sure, I bet we don't hear anything," he says, "that's nothing." Well, that is exactly what happened and the white man was so scared that he picked up his gun and he just shot everywhere, just all over.

Ranald: The friend was afraid.

Casper: He thought that he was going to shoot him accidently, you know. He just went wild, absolutely wild. And the Indian said, "See, I told you," he said. He said, "Go on to sleep," he said, "you know, "never mind, it's a, it's..." So they went to sleep.

Jocelyn: Why did they put the pebbles on the tent?

Casper: Well, they would come to the tent, you see. Sometimes they would, and sometimes they wouldn't.

Joelyn: Just to let you know?

Casper: Yeah, to let you know that they were, they were around, you see. But we just, we just, you know, you can just, you know, ignore it, you know, don't, that's it. Just for a little while that they come they, you know, you can hear them, you can hear the canoe, you can hear the paddles in the water, you know, they're paddling, you see. And then you'll hear the canoe, you know, hit the shore, you know, and you can hear them pulling their canoes up. And then you'll hear them walking along the, coming along the beach, you know, along the shore, you know. You don't hear any voices, you just hear these, this here, you hear the feet, and you hear the canoes,
you know. If you happen to be camping there they might just come along. Well, that's what used to happen to my, my father, he used to say that, you know... They'd go away after that, you know, after that. He said, "They," you know, "sometimes come to the tent," he says, "and they'll just," you know, "just throw pebbles on the, at the tent, you know. So I did, this really is a, I don't know whether it would really happen today or not, but it did happen, it happens. And many people used to talk about it, but, you know, would tell about it, you know. It was quite ordinary for them, you see. They didn't think nothing of it because they understood it as, well, it's the spirits of those dead warriors coming back, you see -- to see that the bones had not been... You see, actually, what would happen, you see, those bones, those warriors should have been taken away and, and buried, you see. So they didn't have that, they were left there, you see. They couldn't come back and bring them, or bury them, give them, in the proper burial, you see. See, in the old days they used to have these burial ceremonies, you see. They would, especially among the Hurons, they, or some of the Iroquois people, or even some of the Ojibway, used to put the body up on the trees, and they would leave it there for twelve years.

Jocelyn: For twelve years?

Casper: By that time there, they, well, there would be nothing but the bones there, you see. And that they would bury the, they would take the bones and bury them in a common grave, and this is what they used to call a ceremonial, a ceremony, you know. It was a burial, you see. Which they used to do, they... among some of them, they would do it every twelve years, you see. So maybe these warriors had not been given that proper burial ceremony. Maybe that's, maybe this is why that was happening, you see; they were left there, you see, they were never, you know, the bones were still lying there, you see. I told this one from Cape Croker, one young person from Cape Croker. She said she had never heard about it, you see. It's not, it's probably, not too many people know about it any more, you see. But it was... The people took it as a, you know... It wasn't something that they, you know, they didn't go around telling about it. It's not a ghost story, it's a thing that they experienced, it's a, that's what it is, you see. So they didn't, you know, they didn't go around talking about it, they didn't think it was anything unusual, you see. That's why then, you know, only, only, sometimes you would hear somebody, someone telling about it, you see. So that's, not many people knew about it then, or heard about it, or that, they hadn't been told. So this, you know, I mean it's, it's very strange sometimes.

Jocelyn: Well, you know what I going to be doing. This tape is, it's being donated to Toronto Public Library for education purposes.

Casper: Oh yeah.
Jocelyn: And is there, would you like to put any restriction, would you like me to take names off the tape?

Casper: Yes, I would like to see that no names are mentioned.

Jocelyn: So that would be (tape is cut) and there would be no names mentioned since you've requested. But there are no other restrictions on the tape, just the names?

Casper: No, just tell it as, you know, as I told it.

Jocelyn: The tape will always be in the Spadina Road Library, you know. You can encourage your kids to go and listen to it, and we'll take the names off of it. Okay, thank you.

Ranald: The names were removed from the tape in compliance with Mr. Solomon's request.

(END OF SIDE B)
(END OF TAPE)

ARTICLE ON MR. CASPER SOLOMON

*From Dimension, Vol. 8 No. 5, October/November 1980. (published by Ontario Metis and Non-Status Indian Association) - Edited transcript from a videotaped interview by Duke Redbird.

Casper Solomon was born and raised on Cape Crocker reserve. He attended grade school on the reserve and was sent to St. Jerome's College in Kitchener, where he received his secondary school education.

In 1939 he married and in 1940 he and his wife left Crocker reserve and moved to Mississauga where Mr. Solomon had a job at the oil refinery. The Solomons raised their family of seven children in Mississauga and in 1966 moved to Toronto.

After moving to Toronto, Mr. Solomon became active in volunteer work at the Native Canadian Centre teaching Ojibwe, and later served on the Board of Directors, a position he still maintains.

Encouraged by teaching Ojibwe to his grandchildren, he also started to teach at the Native Centre. Mr. Solomon has also taught at Seneca College in Toronto and currently instructs children at Wandering Spirit Survival School in Toronto.

We really speak the language. I think I could talk to my children and be much more intimate with them if we could
speak Indian. I feel I could say much more to them than I can in English. I always think they would understand much better, but I can't do that. It seems like I severed a link somewhere that I just can't join together. That's the way I feel.

My mother, I think she taught us to speak our language but as soon as we grew up we began to talk English a little more and then we talked English all the time. When she would come and visit or she would come and live with us for a while, we would just talk in English. Sometimes she would ask us, "why don't you talk in your language, why don't you talk in Indian instead of talking English, why do you talk English all the time?"

She wanted you talk to her in her language, that's what she wanted. It was a sort of a feeling, I guess, because talking English to her, well, you were just sort of, you were like a stranger.

I don't know whether everybody feels that way about it, but that's why it's important. I think some people should try understand some of the language or have a little bit of a knowledge of what the language is, even if they can't speak it fluently. Maybe I'm just being too sentimental about it, I don't know, but the feeling is there and I think that it is good that you can express your feelings so... I think this is what people miss today... I think they miss their language. They can't talk to their children like they would like to. It's not that they can't speak English, sure they can speak English, but there are times, you know, when they would rather you or I would talk in their own language.

Talking in your own language makes you feel that's alright, it's okay. This is you and I. This is my family. You know there are no outsiders. You sort of have that feeling of intimacy which you can't have anywhere else. You realize that you aren't somebody else, you have a feeling that you are you. You are unique in this world. You can identify yourself. You have an identity. You are not going to just get lost in the stream.

When you speak English, you become just part of someone else's culture... that your are not you, not knowing where you came from. And, I think, if you could hang onto that you'd feel a little self-respect for yourself. You sort of feel important too. Even though maybe, not only in a material way, you are able to say to yourself... well, this is who I am... I think it helps in a lot of ways.

I think young people today are not able to do that. A lot of them are into drinking and that sort of thing. They figure that's a way for them to be like the others, to join them, to be accepted into that society which they believe they can't get into. I think they may not know it themselves, they may not realize it, but maybe some day they will. Some day the
truth tells on them as they get older.

When people discuss the drinking problem among the Native people, if you ask them why does an Indian drink, they will give you many reasons. I don't think, actually, they ever give you the true reason, I don't think they really know. One of the reasons is, the Native people, I think, want to be accepted into the society, which I suppose is natural. This is their way of... It's the easier way, if you do it that way you are really not being accepted, you are being accepted by just a certain part of that society which is no better than you are. You are really eroding yourself, you see.

But as long as you're happy... because nobody says you are anybody else. You are an Indian. You can't walk here or go there. In that society, at that level, there is no discrimination, everybody is the same, you see. Indian people, they are happy when they are accepted, that's it. That's one of the reasons, I think, but I don't think many people know it though.

Was that a disappointment to you that you had to leave the reserve or actually did you really have to leave or did you want to leave?

I didn't really have to but it's not like today. You can get a lot of assistance on the reserve today, but in my time we didn't. I mean, this is one of the myths, that the Indian has always been looked after by the government. That's not the case at all. That's not the case at all. Because I remember the families who were practically starving, they didn't have anything.

Like such as maybe a woman, her husband would leave her, and she would have to bring up the family alone. She didn't get any kind of assistance at all. All she lived on was the treaty money which we used to get. That's all she would depend on; that's what she depended on to feed and clothe her children. I played with those children and they were hungry. I think they were hungry every day. In fact, some of them, in order to live, in order to eat something, many times they had to go out and steal. Well, this woman had no assistance at all.

And there was the Indian agent. I mean, I don't know whether he was aware of these conditions. If he was aware of those conditions, then I suppose he didn't want to, or couldn't, do anything about it. I mean, he was mainly interested in sending people to jail, that was his main job as far as I was concerned. Because from earlier time, when I was a boy, I saw people go to jail and none of them were criminals. I suppose all they did was drink. They drank... they got drunk and maybe they made some brew and they were caught. They went to jail for that anywhere from... usually three months, no fine, three months. And it was quite, you know, it wasn't anything at all, it was a way of life. Anybody who grew up on
the reservation would expect that he was going to go to jail at some time in his life. You know the Indian agent was going to send you to jail, you see, at some time in your life.

When you left the reserve did you become enfranchised?

Well, I didn't believe in that. I always discouraged it. What are you going to get out of it? Maybe some day you might want to go back. It's a place, you've got ties there. If I ever wanted to go back to the reserve I can go back. It's a thing that I will call my home. That's my home. That's where I come from. I don't consider Toronto my permanent home, although I've been around so long, maybe it's getting harder to get back.

Was it difficult making the transition, living on the reserve and then moving off, where did you go?

Actually, it wasn't too difficult because already about that time most young people, you know, they had some school and they could talk English. They could communicate with White people but we had quite an inferiority complex, you see, because we were brought up to be Indians. The White man was the dominant thing in your life. If you wanted to get anywhere you had to, first you had to be taught by a White person and that's it, and you had to live like he did, that was it. In order to get anywhere you had to conform to that image and if you didn't conform ... well, okay, you didn't get anywhere. You weren't told that but that was the way it was.

When I left the reservation, when I first came out: in those days we had no electricity on the reserve, we had no running water, we had no inside toilet. When I left the reservation I saw all these conveniences and also I had quite an inferiority complex. I saw people my own age... they had a job... they were working... they had a skill of some kind of trade, you know, they were... I thought they were quite smart. Later on I began to work. I went into a refinery. I worked in an oil refinery and there I worked alongside White people and I began to know them a little better, although I didn't socialize with them.

I had a place, I was married and I was bringing up kids but I saw these men at work, you know, I talked to them and as I began to know them a little better I then began to realize they weren't any smarter than I was. In a lot of cases, I thought they were stupid. There was nothing special about them and I was just as smart as they were and I could learn any skill or any kind of work I wanted. I could do whatever they did and maybe sometimes better. It gradually just dawned on me that I wasn't inferior in any way, gradually it dawned on me.

Where did you get the idea from that you were inferior, where did that come from?
Well, it comes from the reservation, you see, it was a way of life. In those days, not so much now but in my time there were certain things that played a dominant part in your life. Indian agent, a priest, or the minister, they represented this here society and they played an important role in your life. They educated you and everything had to go through their hands. Anyway, your father and mother did not make these decisions, these decisions were made for them. So, naturally, what happens creates an inferiority complex, you see, dependent upon, you are becoming dependent on the White society, you are beginning to believe, this is unconsciously, you don't realize yourself what's happening.

How were your parents in relation to this?

They must have felt their authority was being undermined by the priest and... yes, they did but there was no way that the could... they had come to accept it. I know many people were... my parents and some people the same age or around in that generation, they had already resigned themselves to that fact of life. It was a fact of life, there was no use fighting it.

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