HIGHLIGHTS:

- Briefly mentions attitudes towards the dead.
- Brief reference to Indian medicine.

NOTE: The Oowekeeno band name has a variety of other spellings: Owikeno, Oweekeeno and Oweekano. For the sake of consistency, Oowekeeno has been used to designate the band and the language, while Owikeno refers to the lake found in British Columbia.

Ada: Yeah, that's where they are. Frank is there, my eldest brother. I think Queenie is there, I don't know.

David: And where is the Sockeye Queen?

Lady: Do you know where (inaudible) is? Below that.

David: Yeah.

Ada: You know the river, before it gets too swift, and it's there.
David: Right.

Ada: And then there's the lake. There's another graveyard for us. You know where Johnny is, Agnes, Margaret? I don't know who's buried there, I don't remember. You walk up the hill; there's a cave where they bury babies.

Lady: Was it on that side of the river?

Ada: Yeah.

Lady: On the other side of the river?

Ada: Yeah. Cave there. Because they won't bury a little baby, they put them on the tree.

David: Oh they do, do they?

Ada: Like, you know, put them in a house or a cave.

David: When somebody died, like say a husband or a father died, did they bury anything with them when he went? Did they bury any valuables with him, or what did they do with his belongings?

Ada: Burn it.

David: They burn it, eh.

Ada: They burn it, you know. I don't know why. I couldn't tell you something, you know. I told Louisa, her father came, you know, Denny, Johnny, (Indian). It was so real. Said they were hungry, because we didn't burn anything for her father, because he didn't want it. He said he was hungry. When she goes home she's going to (inaudible), you know. Real funny if you're close to them when you die. They come back to you. The first time I seen Johnny for a long time, he looked just like he did; Agnes...

David: So you burn food for them, do you? Yeah. You prepare a meal for them.

Ada: You have to, you know, he smoke. "Here, father, this is a cigarette for you. Daddy here's corned beef," you know. You have to talk, you have to talk. It's really sad but you have to do it. I know it's old fashioned but, you know, it has to be done.

Lady: Yeah, we still do it up at home yet.

Ada: Yeah.

David: Did you do it for your dad?

Lady: Not for my dad, for Danny.
Ada: (Inaudible). Old Johnny, we put in a bottle of beer and the beer just busted. It wasn't even close to the fire.

Lady: What does that mean?

Ada: He accepted it.

Lady: Oh.

Ada: Only your father and I heard it. (Inaudible) after, you know, could hear Johnny and Agnes laughing. Your father look at me, I looked at him. "But did you hear anything?" "No." He said we better keep quiet about it, you know. That's the first time I told anybody about that, because we know we heard it. They were happy.

David: So that was a sign that they accepted it?

Ada: Yeah, they accepted it. I'd like to go back to... I asked Frank if anybody look after the grave but he says, "No, can't do it." Because it was a tragedy. I can still hear her, thinking about it now. Funny thing, I never see your mom. Gee, that broke my heart. He go up north, Agnes's funeral. "I'm scared of the plane. I'm taking Sid." (laughs)

David: That's Nora's father and your father?

Ada: Grandfather and my father, they were first cousins. And I think they should know a little bit.

David: What was Nora's father's name?

Ada: (Indian). That's all I know. Where's your husband? I want him to go to the store and get me cigarettes.

David: Yeah, he had to go to the Indian...

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Ada: I been away from home for two months.

David: Yeah, yeah.

Lady: You don't remember Johnny and them's names, eh? Their Indian names?

David: What part of the lake did the Hanuse go to in the wintertime? Can you remember that now, which river it was?

Ada: You know the first creek as you're going up the...

Lady: On this side?
Ada: Yeah.

David: The (Indian)?

Ada: Is that (Indian) or is it (inaudible)?

David: It would be (Indian) then if it's the first one, eh?

Ada: We used to have a lot of fun in the spring. You know the mountain goats? When they're mating you can hear them, you know, when they bang together. (laughs) Yeah. When the old goat is too old to fight he fell. You could his bones cracking. (laughs) Yeah, I remember that, you know.

David: Were there lots of goats then at that time?

Ada: Oh yeah. Yeah you could see them, you know.

David: Goat hunting was popular then, eh?

Ada: You know the mountain? It's like a valley.

David: Was there lots of goat hunting then?

Ada: Not many. Because there was a lot of deer, we had plenty deer, ducks, things like that. But to go after goats you have to go after them for the, you know, fat, you know, on the... You skin them, then you take the fat off and you dry it or something.

David: What did you use the fat for?

Ada: Heat the milk, something like that. Put it on our face when the wind was cold. And then we used to eat them too. We put them in long stick (Indian). That long stick, you know. We put the fat on the end of it and melt it and then we...

David: Oh, I see, yeah.

Ada: I think it was kind of tough.

David: It was, was it?

Ada: You know.

David: Yeah.

Ada: We used to carry chains from there. (laughs)

David: There were lots of deer around was there?

Ada: Yes. Johnny, he used to go way up to end of the lake. Used to go down in a canoe, all the ducks there. One time he had, I think, twelve. Have more of that, you know, to talk better.
David: What kind of a house, can you remember what kind of a house you were living in up in the lake? Was it a big log house?

Ada: Up the lake? No, it was just a house.

David: Did they have any totem poles up the lake?

Ada: No. No, because the people go up there to trap.

David: Yeah.

Ada: And dry fish. I told you that where they had good totem poles was at the little island. I think there was about six of them, big smokehouse, you know. Up at the place where we go we were in the smokehouse.

David: Oh, I see.

Ada: And my mom and I stayed there. Oh, another one. Did you hear about that flood we had there? Oh boy, we had a flood!

Lady: Where was that?

Ada: Up the lake. Came back up, you know, we had to move in the higher ground. Rain and rain and rain! About over a month. It stopped raining and mom said we'd better prepare to move because it's going to start raining again. And it just kept raining, raining, raining.

Lady: Where were you staying at that time?

Ada: Where we go.

Lady: Oh yeah.

Ada: We didn't think about any... Different family they go to different, you know.

David: I see, yeah. Yeah, I was just trying to find out which families went where, that's all.

Ada: We was at (Indian).

David: (Indian?) that's the next one up on the left.

Ada: Yeah. I forget who went there. All I know, Thompson went, you know, further up.

Lady: Would Nora remember anything?

Ada: Maybe, I don't know. She left when she was very young, but she remembers her grandfather (Indian). Why didn't
they do that when old people were alive about it? You know all the Indian songs? I think Hilda is the only one that knows the... quite a few. Because she listen to her mother, you know, I think she's the only one that can speak Oowekeeno. (laughs) No, everybody get along.

David: Oh yeah. There was lots of cooperation then, was there?

Ada: Oh yeah. Everybody get along. Somebody gets a deer and they used to have stick iron -- what you call it, cast iron -- and put the deer in there and everybody's invited.

David: So the food was shared then, eh?

Ada: Oh yeah.

David: When somebody got a deer.

Ada: Yeah.

David: All the families shared it?

Ada: Yeah. If somebody's got a bad luck they help them out.

David: Oh, I see.

Ada: Not like now. (laughs) Trying to think about something. We were the same. We were the same, you know, parents drinking. And we used to get together and we'd go and pick berries. One time all the kids, you know, we went up to the oolachan ground and we dig the potatoes up.

David: Oh yeah.

Ada: We dig the potatoes up, and carrots, and put it in the bag, you know, the sack.

David: There was a big garden there?

Ada: Oh yes, everybody had a garden.

David: Did everybody have their own garden or was there just one big garden that everybody shared?

Ada: Everybody had their own garden. Because the Indian Agent used to send us, send them seeds, you know, potatoes and even blueberries, and cherries, and strawberries. We had a lot of fun picking them up. (laughs) And when our parents finally sober up then they've got all the vegetables packed up. Then they prepare to go up north, I mean up the lake. Once they got it packed up then they're prepared to go up.

David: They take their vegetables up with them, eh?
Ada: Yeah. Potatoes, carrots, turnips, cabbage. Then they're good for the winter.

David: That garden was around Oolachan Town, was it?

Ada: Yeah. Real beautiful, beautiful potatoes. Did you ever have it in the buried? You make a bonfire and you get the rock and they'd get it red hot. And you dig the ground, you put the rocks in there and they put the potatoes in there, and put rocks on it -- buried. And then we used to get that stink eggs, mature them.

David: What kind of eggs? What are they?

Lady: That's... you tell him what stink eggs are.

Ada: You know, it's fish eggs.

David: Oh yeah.

Ada: Fish eggs, you know, they mature it first. And then you put it in the barrel and you press it down with rocks. Leave it there for about, oh, six months. Lot of people have died because they can't wait for it to mature. Auntie Mary, she couldn't wait.

David: What is there a name for that, what was it called besides stink eggs?

Ada: I think Nora knows.

Lady: What is (Indian)?

Ada: That's it, but it's another one. (Indian) is when they, it's not matured like the other one. Do it two different ways, (Indian). Separated from the (Indian), I guess you call it, and you put it in the barrel.

David: Was it called a cheese, was it like cheese? It wasn't called salmon egg cheese was it? Indian cheese?

Ada: Yeah, call it Indian cheese. (laughs) Oh boy. (laughs) Pick the garden, there was lightning and thunder, so we had to stay at the village, a whole bunch of us kids, you know. No blankets and fortunately Roy he had matches so he had to make a bonfire in the Indian house -- that's how we kept warm. All we had was salted oolachans and potatoes, and carrots. (laughs) They wondered where we were. We used to go (inaudible). You know that Indian crabapple?

Lady: Yeah.

Ada: Sometimes we used to go and pick that. You get a handful and he was going to take them out with that making a face. (laughs)
David: Yeah, they're really sour.

Ada: One time, you know, across the river? I forget the name -- Sockeye Queen.

Lady: Oh yeah.

Ada: Yeah. We went down once on the boat picking berries, blueberries.

David: Yeah.

Ada: Somebody said, "Bear." Everybody went running to the boat. And I had Johnny with me and there's a big, you know, log. Here I was running, "Where's Johnny?" (laughs) He was just behind that. (laughs) I had to go and I grabbed him by his hair and (laughs)... I think the bear got scared of us more. (laughs) We left all the blueberries.

Lady: Do you remember how they used to make those oolachan traps? How they fished with them?


David: How did they make the traps?

Ada: Well, it's long nets and as you go along it gets bigger and bigger, you know, mesh, like a net. I know mommy used to make that.

David: What was it made of? Cedar?

Ada: Twine.

David: Twine.

Ada: She made one half way when she died and Queenie got that and she's supposed to finish that, and I guess they just let it go. I don't think there's any more there, is there?

Lady: Not like that.

Ada: No.

David: So it was a net that sort of like a funnel?

Ada: Yeah.

David: Yeah, I see. They sort of scoop the fish up with it?

Ada: No, it (inaudible), you know, stake, you stake it down.

David: Oh, I see, yeah.

Ada: And then it's open.

David: Yeah.
Ada: When the oolachans goes up they get into it and they just tighten the end.

David: Like a purse where you draw the string?

Ada: Yeah. Surprised I didn't make one. Well, I guess I can make it but, you know, I don't know how to start it the way my mom did. Well, I can do that but I have to get nets, you know, cut them up, you know, and it wouldn't be the same.

David: You could still make something like that though, eh?

Ada: There's one totem pole standing yet.

Lady: Where?

Ada: On the other side, you know, old saw mill.

Lady: Is that in the mouth of the river?

Ada: Yeah.

Lady: Where abouts would that be? Is it further in?

Ada: You know, it's right in the... I think it should be standing, I don't know. This one here at the Stanley Park is preserved, that's how come it's standing. It must be over a hundred years old.

David: Whose pole is that?

Ada: It's not ours originally.

David: Oh, I see.

Ada: It's supposed to come from, I think, from this inlet. I think it was brought up there, you know, dedicate somebody that had died. A chief.

David: I was going to ask you about how the people got along with the Indian Agent and how were they treated at that time by the Indian Agent.

Ada: He was pretty good. Like I said, he used to bring us, you know, all the seeds to grow. They were pretty good.

Lady: Doctors and stuff, was there a doctor they used to go to every once in a while, or did you have your own medicine?

Ada: Most of them used to have their own medicine. Like my sister, Mary, her husband had cancer I think. Anyway, it was something that, you know, that they couldn't cure and he used to get the pits. I don't know how they did it but, you know, they kept him alive for quite a while.

David: Is that spruce pitch they used?
Ada: Pits.
David: Yeah.

Ada: Certain kind of pits. And there's certain kind of pits that bud, you know, and it's just growing in the tree. Mommy used to take that as a spring tonic.

David: What kind of tree would it be, though?
Ada: I don't know. I think I'd know it if I see it.

David: Were there any other kinds of medicines that were used, any roots?
Ada: Yeah. I forget what you call it -- got a lot of needles.

Lady: Wouldn't be stinging nettles?
Ada: Yeah. Yeah, that was it. You know the roots, they boil it, you know, and they supposed to help the people have T.B.

David: Oh I see, you boil the roots?
Ada: Yeah.

David: Yeah, and then drink the liquid?
Ada: Yeah.

David: Yeah. And it was good for T.B.?
Ada: Yeah.

David: What else was it good for?

Ada: Anything. I tried that on him but I guess I did it wrong. (laughs) Because he's got asthma. And they told me to get it for him. He had to go to North Vancouver to get it. Well, I tried anyway and I guess I did it wrong -- made him worse. "You trying to poison me?" (laughs)

David: When you were a little girl was there much basket making and weaving of bark? Can you tell us about that?

Ada: I used to go with my mother to get the certain tree, you know. She used to cut it and lay it down. She could make hats, sun shade, you know, baskets -- she could make anything.

David: That was cedar bark, was it?
Ada: I think so. Could make anything with it. And
there's another root too, and you have to tail it real thin and you can make, you know, baskets.

David: Does that root grow on the ground? Can you get that root off or do you have to go under the ground for it?

Ada: Yeah, you have to go in the, you know where, you know, the roots are. She just pull it up, you know, cut it, you know, real long one.

David: Would that be a spruce root?

Ada: I don't know. Wish I could have listened to my mother instead of going dancing. (laughs)

David: You mentioned that your parents would sometimes be drinking. Was drinking much of problem when you were a little girl? Among the old people was it much of a problem?

Ada: Well, everybody, you know, used to make home brew, then they'd all get together. Once that's finished they go to another one and that goes on for a while. That's before they're going up the lake.

David: Oh I see. Was it sort of a party before you went up the lake?

Ada: Yeah. They got to trap and fish, and...

David: Yeah. But once you're up the lake there was no drinking then, eh?

Ada: No.

David: And how about during fishing season? Was there much drinking then?

Ada: Not that I can remember. Everybody was working.

David: Yeah.

Ada: Because during the weekend they were fixing their net. My mother was. And think there's a lot of contradicting stories about Indians. Well, sure they drank, you know, but, you know, at certain times. Not all the time.

David: Yeah, it was a certain time of the year then when they could afford the time, eh?

Ada: Yeah. When there's nothing to do. There were really lots of people, you know, they... you know. Once salmon comes everybody is smoking salmon.

David: Working all the time, eh?

Ada: Yeah. Men went up hunting and women were smoking salmon. Everybody say that they drink all the time but that
is crazy. We had (inaudible) before they go up the lake, they have potlatches.

David: They did, eh?
Ada: And dancing.

David: There was a big feast then before they went up?
Ada: Oh yeah. Everybody enjoy themselves.

David: This was just sort of to prepare you for the winter then, eh?
Ada: Yeah. Something like that.

David: How many months would you spend up the lake? I remember Peter saying that February was a month for dances too, and I was wondering whether you came down for February or did you stay up till the ice left?
Ada: No, October. That's when they have the feast. Everybody's, you know, having a dance, giving people names and things like that. After that everybody separates to their own little place up the lake. And then spring comes they all come. And that's when everybody, you know, make home brew. After that they all, they're fishing.

David: Yeah, I see.
Ada: I didn't know whether it was about twice a year they used to get together like that. Can't do anything. Heavy, you know, heavy snow. Go to the trap line, the mink is frozen.

David: Did the women go out and trap with the men, or did they set their own traps? How did that work?
Ada: No, they just stayed home.

David: Oh, they did?
Ada: They just stayed home. And they can't touch their wives when they're trapping. (laughs)

David: They're not supposed to, eh?
Ada: No, no.

David: Why? Is that bad luck?
Ada: I used to remember your grandfather. I don't know, all I used to remember his white body going out -- he's going to take a dip in the river...

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