Evelyn: The following is an interview with Margaret Jeffries of Chapleau town. The interview is being conducted in the Goulding Room on 315 Dundas Street East on August 5, 1983, by Evelyn Sit.

Evelyn: When and where were you born?

Margaret: Chapleau. June 1, 1925.

Evelyn: How big was your family? Did you have brothers and sisters?

Margaret: Yeah, I've got to count them. Some of them are dead.

Evelyn: But the ones when you were a child, how many did you have?

Margaret: That's what I'm doing. One, two, three, four, five... Eight of us.

Evelyn: And what were their names?
Margaret: Lillian, Bella, Johnny, Charlie, Sammy, me, then Helen, and Donald.

Evelyn: What was your home like?

Margaret: Nice. Until we got sent to the Indian school.

Evelyn: Could you describe your home?

Margaret: Well, everything was nice, you know. Lots of fights with my brothers. (laughs)

Evelyn: How were the children treated?

Margaret: Where, you mean at our home? All right.

Evelyn: Well, how did your mother treat you?

Margaret: Good.

Evelyn: Could you tell of any experiences as a child?

Margaret: Picnics and blueberry picking and all that. They weren't too active after a while, they were so sick. My father was sick for a long time.

Evelyn: What did you do on a typical day?

Margaret: In the summer we picked blueberries or fished, you know. In the fall of the year we picked potatoes, gardening, you know, like pick up the stuff for the winter.

Evelyn: Was this your chores?

Margaret: Yeah, we went along with it. Usually we'd play half the time and work half the time. (laughs) You know how kids are.

Evelyn: Did you ever make trips outside Chapleau?

Margaret: Not that I remember.

Evelyn: So you never went to another reserve or anything like that?

Margaret: No, not that I remember. But Lillian remembers, she says we did. Lillian -- remember? She's older than me, she remembers that. She remembers when we were younger.

Evelyn: Where did you go to school?

Margaret: Chapleau Indian School.

Evelyn: Was this a residential school?

Margaret: Yeah.
Evelyn: What were your teachers like?

Margaret: They were fair. Actually, when I think of it now they were very good teachers.

Evelyn: What do you classify as a good teacher?

Margaret: Well, they had more time to spend with us children than what the schools here in the city have.

Evelyn: Any more?

Margaret: No, I mean they give us good education. Worked half a day with the school, half a day.

Evelyn: So, how were you treated as a student?

Margaret: Well as far as going to school it was good, but after school when we lived there and ate there, you know, it was bad. (laughs) Look out for the stick.

Evelyn: Pardon?

Margaret: I got punished.

Evelyn: How do they go about punishing you?

Margaret: Oh, you'd never believe me. I got beaten.

Evelyn: Who would do this, the principal?

Margaret: No, the engineer.

Evelyn: The engineer?

Margaret: Yeah, you know, you have to have an engineer in the school to look after the maintenance of the building, radiators, and all this, the furnace works. Him.

Evelyn: So, the teacher, when they want to punish you, they'd send you to the engineer?

Margaret: No, he'd come up to the office and give us a punishment.

Evelyn: So what type of things did you have to do to...

Margaret: Well, you ran away. Ran away from the school. She wasn't allowed.

Evelyn: Was this typical of most children? That they wanted to run away from school?

Margaret: I guess it is, yeah.
Evelyn: Did you find there was a lot of children punished?

Margaret: Well, not that many ran away. You were too scared.

Evelyn: And you were punished by the engineer. But other things did you have to do to get punished?

Margaret: Well, not listening to the staff. Sometimes we got away with it, sometimes we didn't. If you got caught you got caught. Stealing, if you're hungry.

Evelyn: So you weren't allowed to take any extra food?

Margaret: No.

Evelyn: And what sort of penalty would get for something like...

Margaret: Strapped on your hands.

Evelyn: So that was the only kind, eh?

Margaret: Yeah.

Evelyn: What were you taught?

Margaret: All the basics.

Evelyn: Anything practical?

Margaret: Well, we didn't have any Home Ec., I know that, but sewing, knitting, crocheting tatting. We had all that.

Evelyn: Besides all the basics, were you taught anything like life skills?

Margaret: No, I don't think so.

Evelyn: What were the other students like?

Margaret: They were easy to get along with. The boys are in one section, the girls were in one section. Got strapped even if I spoke to my brother.

Evelyn: So they were very strict about...

Margaret: Oh yeah.

Evelyn: About boys being the boys and girls being the girls.

Margaret: Yeah.

Evelyn: So was there ever any time where boys and girls ever interacted?

Margaret: No, not unless we're in the school, you know, how you
sit beside somebody? That's about all.

Evelyn: Did you ever play any sort of Indian games, or games at school, or on the reserve?

Margaret: Baseball, hockey, tennis. Oh, a lot of games -- ducking a rock, jacks.

Evelyn: Nothing particularly Indian though?

Margaret: No.

Evelyn: Were you able to maintain your Indian culture in the school?

Margaret: No.

Evelyn: How strict was this?

Margaret: Well, the girls that came in there that spoke Indian, didn't understand English, they weren't allowed to talk Indian. They had to learn English; if they were caught talking Indian they were strapped.

Evelyn: So you would say all in all this school was very strict?

Margaret: Oh yeah.

Evelyn: Do you remember your ancestral history?

Margaret: No, only what I read.

Evelyn: So do you remember anything of what your grandfather did, or what your grandparents did as a way of occupations?

Margaret: She did the washing. My grandfather was a layman, also a surveyor. And he died when I was a little girl. My grandmother died after, when I was about fourteen. I didn't know she died until, you know, three months later. That's all she did, was take in washing, you know. We used to go and deliver it for her and pick it up. She'd do the washing by hand. Then she tried to teach us to talk Indian. We used to just look at her -- we didn't know... And she'd sing in Indian, we didn't know what she was singing about, it's all hymns.

Evelyn: So you never learned any of it?

Margaret: No.

Evelyn: Do you remember your grandparents telling you of any of their experiences?

Margaret: No, there was too many of us grandchildren.
Evelyn: So you lived in a community...
Margaret: Yeah.
Evelyn: And was there a lot of native people?
Margaret: Oh yeah.
Evelyn: So how would you... What was the size of your community as a way of number of people?
Margaret: Native people or our whole town?
Evelyn: Yeah, native.
Margaret: There must be about five hundred.
Evelyn: In comparison to...
Margaret: Maybe two thousand.
Evelyn: So five hundred of the two thousand were native?
Margaret: Yeah.
Evelyn: Did the native people mainly stick together, or did they...
Margaret: Pretty near.
Evelyn: So if you did stick together what sort of community events did you have?
Margaret: Well, the boys they joined in everything -- curling. One thing they did play was golf, hockey that's about all.
Evelyn: Did the whole community participate in...
Margaret: Oh yeah, both. It didn't matter who it was -- French, or Germans, Italians, you know, Anglo-Saxons. They all went with it. There was no discrimination there.
Evelyn: So did you as a community intermingle a lot?
Margaret: Yeah.
Evelyn: So you really didn't stay apart?
Margaret: No. The whole town like.

Evelyn: So there was... So your reaction is that there was never any sort of discrimination or anything like that?
Margaret: No.
Evelyn: Was there things that you find that the other
cultures picked up from your culture?

Margaret: I hadn't noticed. I left a long time ago.

Evelyn: So were there any important individuals that sort of represented a chief on your... the native community?

Margaret: Yeah, Richie, Allen Richie. He was a good spokesman for the Indians.

Evelyn: What was his duties?

Margaret: It wasn't really duties. He just grabbed everything and, you know, helped it along... Got the people together. Like with the carnival... that's what, you know, big thing.

Evelyn: So he gathered you...

Margaret: Yeah, all the people, like the town's people, you know. Not only the Indians.

Evelyn: But he was pretty much the Indian spokesman?

Margaret: Yeah.

Evelyn: So how did you participate in the event like carnivals?

Margaret: We'd go out and we'd be spectators. We were too young at that time. Watch them, dog sleds, and ski jumping, skating, you know, anything goes on with winter sports.

Evelyn: Did you think there was anything particularly Indian that occurred in the carnival?

Margaret: Oh yeah. Dog sledding, and weight, and log cutting, and snowshoeing, all that.

Evelyn: So what happened, did they compete against each other?

Margaret: Oh yeah, they did.

Evelyn: So you would have something like one native person competing with just anybody?

Margaret: Yeah.

Evelyn: Is there anything, Indian food involved in the carnival?

Margaret: No, not that I remember.

Evelyn: Or anything as a way of Indian dance or displayed crafts?

Margaret: No. That probably came after I left. I think they
do that now.

Evelyn: Do you know the difference between bad Medicine Men and good Medicine Men?

Margaret: No, I don't know nothing about that.

Evelyn: What were some of the ways that the native part of the community made a living?

Margaret: Trapping, forest ranger, work on the railroad, lumberjacks, that's all I know.

Evelyn: So what was your family's occupation?

Margaret: He was a forest ranger and a trapper -- my father.

Evelyn: Did you ever help him?

Margaret: No. I was only young.

Evelyn: Did any of the kids help him?

Margaret: I don't know, I couldn't tell you.

Evelyn: You know, during the trapping process, could you describe anything of what went on?

Margaret: We didn't go with him.

Evelyn: But did he bring any of his furs ever at home or anything?

Margaret: Oh, he brought furs home. He brought beaver, big beaver.

Evelyn: What were some of the reasons you didn't go on in school?

Margaret: Well, the government cut us off on account of the War. Couldn't afford the War and afford our education. And also they said they girls don't need education because they'll only get married.

Evelyn: How did some of the... what does that mean for you? You couldn't go on so what did you end up doing?

Margaret: Manual labor, labor, no skills at all.

Evelyn: But were there some that could go on?

Margaret: Oh yeah. After the War some of them went on, some went even before, even when the War was going on, because they didn't see why they should quit.

Evelyn: So this is one way the War affected you. Were there any other ways the War affected people?
Margaret: No, that's the only one.

Evelyn: So there's no, did it affect any of the native boys?

Margaret: No. All they did was join up in the army, or air force.

Evelyn: So that's how it affected?

Margaret: Yeah.

Evelyn: Did the War affect your family?

Margaret: Oh yeah, I lost my brother.

Evelyn: Did the Depression affect your family?

Margaret: Oh yes, I think it hit right across Canada.

Evelyn: But since you were trapping and everything, you could get food.

Margaret: Oh yeah, we had lots of food. I don't hardly remember being short.

Evelyn: So if it didn't affect you as a way of food, how did it affect you?

Margaret: I guess rent, mortgage payments. At that time we had to pay for a lot of our own medical expenses.

Evelyn: So this affected most, not just the natives in the community but the whole community?

Margaret: No. Well the town, they helped each other, it was a small town.

Evelyn: Can you remember some of the ways that each person helped the other neighbor?

Margaret: Well, they'd help is somebody passed away they'd go dig the graves so they wouldn't have to pay for the grave-diggers. And when a man had a little bit more money he'd... if some parents had a child that was sick, well, he'd donate the money.

Evelyn: Were there any other ways?

Margaret: No, I think that's about all.

Evelyn: So all in all it was quite a sharing community?

Margaret: Oh yeah. You needed help, they'd help each other.

Evelyn: Do you think you could find that now?
Margaret: I don't know. I haven't been back there for quite a while.

Evelyn: So did you ever hear of any legends?

Margaret: No.

Evelyn: So that wasn't exposed to you at all?

Margaret: No.

Evelyn: So would you say most of your traditions and your customs were the same as those around you in the community?

Margaret: Oh yeah.

Evelyn: So did you have baby showers?

Margaret: Well, we had baby showers, wedding showers and all that.

Evelyn: And did you, would you celebrate the same way?

Margaret: Celebrate just the way the white people done it.

Evelyn: Where you skilled in any crafts?

Margaret: No.

Evelyn: Did you know of other individuals among your community that was skilled in crafts?

Margaret: No, we never had no craft work up there.

Evelyn: Nothing like making...

Margaret: No, just what we were taught at the school.

Evelyn: Do you remember any of your grandparents skilled in crafts?

Margaret: No.

Evelyn: So what made you move to Toronto?

Margaret: Work. More work up there. Things were opening up here in Toronto because the War was on.

Evelyn: So what were the kind of stories you heard about Toronto before came here?

Margaret: "Don't get lost." (laughs) I'm just being silly.

Evelyn: Anything else?
Margaret: Oh that's about all, just don't get lost.

Evelyn: What was your impression?

Margaret: Wow! This Royal York Hotel was real nice. At that time the Bank of Commerce was the biggest bank -- that was the biggest building here.

Evelyn: Were you excited?

Margaret: Sure.

Evelyn: Or were you scared?

Margaret: No, I was with my brother.

Evelyn: Did you have any other sort of experiences when you first arrived in Toronto?

Margaret: Just the street cars. The journey up Yonge Street seems to take so long. (laughs) Slow street cars.

Evelyn: Do you remember subways?

Margaret: Oh yeah, that was years after.

Evelyn: So street cars were the main thing.

Margaret: Yeah, street cars were running up Yonge Street at that time.

Evelyn: How much did a fare cost?

Margaret: Four tickets for $.25.

Evelyn: How was your, did you... Were you aware that there was a lot of natives in Toronto?

Margaret: I could hardly see any.

Evelyn: So you hardly interacted with them. When you did interact with them eventually...

Margaret: Oh, when you used to meet them on the street and say hello to them. Got to know them that way and I finally stopped and talked to them.

Evelyn: Did you feel it was the same anymore, or was there beginning to be a sense of change?

Margaret: Oh, there was a big change. As soon as I come to Toronto I noticed it. Then we'd meet guys from the army, Indian guys, stop and talk to you. When you'd see them on the street they'd stop and talk to you. We stopped to talk to them because we were all natives. That's the only contact I had with them. I'd go to church and never see no Indians, go to Sunday School and not see any Indians.
Evelyn: Do you think there's a very big difference between now and the past?

Margaret: Oh yeah, there's lots of Indians in Toronto now. It wasn't like that years ago.

Evelyn: Do you think they came for the same reason you did?

Margaret: Oh, I imagine so. I came here for work and I'm still working. (laughs)

Evelyn: Do you think there's a big difference, and what are the differences between the children, native children, now and before?

Margaret: Oh, they're exposed to a lot more, which is really good for them. That's the only way they learn. The community centres here they are doing fantastic for the children too, native groups.

Evelyn: Do you think they actually are more culturally aware?

Margaret: Oh yeah, they are, they are.

Evelyn: So where would you see the differences?

Margaret: Well, they have all these community centres for Indians. Years ago they never had nothing, nothing. All you see Indians was just hanging around.

Evelyn: Did you know anything about midwives?

Margaret: No.

Evelyn: So your mother never had...

Margaret: I just know what I read. (Tape is shut off for a while)

Evelyn: So how did you survive as a family?

Margaret: My aunt took care of me for about a year, then I come to the city.

Evelyn: So how young were you?

Margaret: I was about fifteen when I come here, near sixteen.

Evelyn: And from sixteen you went straight to work?

Margaret: Yeah, here in Toronto, been here ever since. So they put us in the Indian school, because they weren't able to look after us or something. That's what I hear after, you know. At the time I didn't know, I was a kid. And my brother passed away and then we all went separate ways. Johnny brought me down here -- the one that still lives, he brought me down here.
I got a job as a houseworker, live-in, and I was thankful for that, because I didn't know Toronto. (laughs) Go to Sunday School, go to church, go to Sunday School, go to church. You know, like John went to school with this other guy -- they all went to Witcliffe College, and Jeffrey Parktailer, now. Today, he is a bishop. And I met him in church here. Yeah, we all had a crush on him. (laughs) Good looking young guy. That's when I was a good girl.

Different lifestyle there than on the reserve. We don't know what reserve is, Lillian and I don't know what a reserve it -- we come from the town, right from the town. Anybody talks to us about the reserve we don't know, you know. We listen to the other people. Lillian and I will listen to somebody else's conversation.

This town we grew up -- there was no prejudice. I didn't know about prejudice. Then I come here to Toronto years after. "Gee, they're discriminating against Indian, I wonder what the hell they're doing that for?" You know, I couldn't figure it out. At this time there was lots of Indians, in the 1950s. I remember one time when I was on the lake ships and I was sailing. My sister and I, my young sister. Oh, we had such a tan, you know, from lake ship. Now we're Indians, we don't deny that. We go to a bar, to a hotel -- they didn't have bars then. We didn't drink all we wanted, like the boys wanted a few beer... We wanted coke, or pop, you know. "Oh, come on with us." (laughing) And the waitress stops me at the door.

She says, "You're native." I says, "Right." She says, "Where's your blue card?" I said, "What's a blue card?" I didn't even know anything about a blue card. She said, "Sorry, I can't serve you." So the boy says he can't serve because I'm Indian. I says, "You go ahead," I says, "I'll go across the road to the restaurant and grab a drink." (laughs) First time we ever heard about a blue card, it was a shock. Now today they don't need it. But when I was sailing up the other way, like in Quebec, never ever asked me about a blue card. Never found nothing, no discrimination over there, not like in Ontario. In Quebec I used to go there for a drink, have some beer. "Oh," the boys told me, "you better order a beer. They might throw you out." (laughs) I wanted to see a floor show and some nightclub, I even forget the damn name of it, oh, Rockettes. I don't know if you've ever been to Montreal. Go in there, so we ordered a beer. You know what they bring us? Great big quarts of beers. "Holy God, I can't drink all that." I didn't even drink beer, didn't even drink at the time. (laughs) And here I'm dying for a bottle of pop and they drank beer and I couldn't order pop. But one guy ordered a pop, you know, like we switched drinks. He says, "I'll order a pop for you," and we switched and I drank the pop and he drank the beer. They had a good floor show, Rockettes.

Evelyn: When was this?

Margaret: Oh, years ago, '48, '49 that was probably before you were born. I had a good life. Yeah, seen lots of places,
didn't have to pay for it. Travelled with... Deer Supply. Then they tell me, "Don't get lost in Toronto". Then you go to bigger city than Toronto, you go to Montreal. (laughs)

(END OF SIDE A)
(END OF TAPE)

INDEX

INDEX TERM  IH NUMBER  DOC NAME  DISC #  PAGE #

CHIEFS AND CHIEFTAINSHIP
- duties of  IH-OT.025  M. JEFFRIES  118  11

CHILDREN
- work of  IH-OT.025  M. JEFFRIES  118  3

CITIES
- impressions of  IH-OT.025A  M. JEFFRIES  118  17,18

DEPRESSION (1930s)
-  IH-OT.025  M. JEFFRIES  118  15

EDUCATION
- and child labor  IH-OT.025  M. JEFFRIES  118  4

EDUCATION
- and cultural suppression  IH-OT.025  M. JEFFRIES  118  8

EDUCATION
- residential schools  IH-OT.025  M. JEFFRIES  118  4-8

GAMES
- for children  IH-OT.025  M. JEFFRIES  118  7

WORK
- for wages  IH-OT.025  M. JEFFRIES  118  13

PROPER NAME INDEX

PROPER NAME  IH NUMBER  DOC NAME  DISC #  PAGE #

CHAPLEAU, ONT.  IH-OT.025  M. JEFFRIES  118  2,3