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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Description of grandfather making birch bark canoes.
Evelyn: The following is an interview with Lydia Somers of
Chapleau town. The interview is being conducted in the back of
Council Fire of 315 Dundas Street East on August 4, 1983, by
Evelyn Sit.

Evelyn: When and where were you born?

Lydia: I was born in Chapleau, Ontario, on September 16,
1920.

Evelyn: Do you have a Indian name?

Lydia: No, I'm sorry I don't.

Evelyn: How big was your family?

Lydia: My immediate family?

Evelyn: Your brothers and your sisters.

Lydia: I have one brother and two sisters.

Evelyn: And what were their names?

Lydia: Clara was the oldest, and I'm the second oldest, and I have a brother Clarence, and a sister Dorothy.

Evelyn: What was your home like?

Lydia: I had a fair home, but my mother and father separated when I was I guess seven. But what I remember of it was good. Whatever they had that was different between them I wasn't

aware of it, really, you know what I mean. But there were times when it would come out, but not too often.

Evelyn: Could you describe... Were your parents strict towards the children?

Lydia: Well, I was, they eventually separated and I was placed in a Indian residential school in Chapleau. I was seven years old. And they were very strict there. I had a fair knowledge of the Indian language when I went in, but they just wouldn't let us speak Indian at all. We were punished if we were caught speaking in our native tongue. It was just a thing they didn't want to hear.

Evelyn: So this, was this particularly typical of this residential school, or would you say most residential schools?

Lydia: They were all that way. All the Indian residential schools were that way, and it was the Church of England school. But really it wasn't, other than that it was a good bringing up. It was strict and very church-oriented. And we were going to church and observing all the holy days, and you had to. This was part of the system, and you grew up, and you just fitted into the system like everything else. You know what it's like.

Evelyn: So what were your teachers like?

Lydia: Some were very good and some were average. Some cared. This is the whole thing. Some really cared. Because up until, like we went by books, what they call the "primer", then. I think I went through every letter of the alphabet before you got into the primer, and then completed the primer and we went into another room. It was called the senior room.

And from there we only went to school a half a day and we worked the other half. I mean, I wouldn't ask my children to do what we had to do. Scrub over a board, and it was... But you accepted it. Maybe at the time I was looking for something and I just happened to fit in.

Evelyn: You said you wouldn't make your children do the same

thing. What sort of things?

Lydia: Scrub cement floors, scrub over a board, and it had to pass your immediate supervisor's inspection before it would go on to be rinsed and whatever you call it, the process whatever they put it through. And then that would be 5:30 in the morning you'd get up to do that. And there was baking to be done, bread to be taken out of the machine and put in the pans, you know. And it was a lot of work, you were ready for your bed at night. And then school, you did that for a half a day and then you went to school in the afternoon; or either you worked in the morning and went, you know, some would work in the morning, go to school in the afternoon and visa versa, you know. When you got to be a little bit older and you finished the lower grades in school.

Evelyn: Did the chores change at all as you got older?

Lydia: You were put on a month, for a month, you worked in the kitchen, for a month in the kitchen and you worked a month in the laundry, and then you were cleaning for a month. It was on a monthly rotation. It was hard work.

Evelyn: So would, say, the younger children did the same work as the older children?

Lydia: When they became of age, when they finished their lower grades in school, they kind of got into that routine too.

Evelyn: So there was actual practical learning as well as academic.

Lydia: Right. And at that time our teachers weren't... They came from most parts on the learning. They seemed that they weren't really qualified, you understand what I mean, according to the standards. And now that I see in the Ontario system they wouldn't be, because they were writing, forever writing their papers during the summer and they were getting their qualifications while they taught. They came from New Brunswick, and Newfoundland, and different areas, you know, to save the Indian.

Evelyn: What were you taught exactly? Geography?

Lydia: Yes, it was, in the Ontario school books like, you know, it was a formal but what was required. But on completion of our elementary school we had to write our high school entrance. I guess I can see it now, because it wasn't... because we weren't able to do it. It was because the teachers didn't hold a certificate that could qualify us for going in without writing. I did exceptionally well at school, I was a good student.

Evelyn: What were the other students like?

Lydia: They were all bright. There wasn't, as I look back

now I didn't see, or I can't see where there was anything lacking in them, you know. Like you can see now that there are so many non-Indian children who are not capable of learning. But I never saw that there, never. They were all capable and open to learning.

Evelyn: So can you compare the past to the present and how things have seemed to change?

Lydia: There is a remarkable difference in the school system. Ours I figure was, as I see it, it was far superior than what they're learning today in school.

Evelyn: We're talking about native individuals?

Lydia: Yes, native. Because it was all Indians that I went to school with until I reached high school. And it was at that time a very good system. I mean there are different questions you ask children today and they haven't got a clue about what your talking about and it's very basic, and they, you know... I asked one boy, I said, "Do you know what an adverb is?" We were speaking about something, I just don't remember what it was. I said, "What is that word? Is that an adjective or an adverb?" And he didn't know what I was talking about. And he was non-Indian so, I mean he was seventeen or eighteen now. He wonders, "What is she talking about?"

Evelyn: So how long did you attend school?

Lydia: In Chapleau, I went there in 1928, and I think it was 1935 that I left. I was going on my sixteenth birthday.

Evelyn: Do you remember any of the children playing Indian games?

Lydia: Not openly. This was a thing that was almost forbidden. We would make tents, that was the only thing, out of burlap, you know, burlap? Make tents out of burlap. And

not Indian games -- this was absolutely forbidden. Anything we played was done very quietly and very secretively. And even roots that we would eat. We would go for walks, you know, and different little roots, or trees, or take the buds even from the, what do you call it, the roses, you know, the roses, the little rose. We'd eat those and different things. And the golden root, and the golden root we'd chew that.

Evelyn: But were there Indian games?

Lydia: I guess we all had our games, but we weren't able to share them openly so they were just forgotten, hidden and forgotten.

Evelyn: Do you remember any of these Indian games and how to play them?

Lydia: No I wouldn't, I wouldn't. I'd need a refresher in that.

Evelyn: Going back to your childhood, what were the roles of men, women, and children in the family? Were they basic, traditional roles, where the women did the cooking, the sewing?

Lydia: Yes, that's the way it was then and I mean it was just an accepted role that the man cut the wood and looked after the fires, and the women did the cooking and looked after the children. My father was a trapper and he would go out on the trapline. We did go with him one year and oh, it was beautiful. I thoroughly enjoyed it and it stands out so vividly. Everything, I remember every bit about it.

Evelyn: So what were the children's role in the family?

Lydia: Well, we would listen to my mother, because she would speak with us, tell us stories, or read to us. And I guess maybe she stimulated our liking books because she was a terrific reader, and did a lot of crossword puzzles too.

Evelyn: So what did you do on a typical day as a child?

Lydia: I think we played the same as children play with dolls, and cutting paper, and coloring, and play together, and we had our little fights among ourselves.

Evelyn: So did you do any sort of chores?

Lydia: We made our bed. We weren't all too successful but we made our beds, and hung up our clothes, you know, just the basic things.

Evelyn: Because you said your father was a trapper and so I thought maybe the children had participated in the trapping process.

Lydia: No, he had... The year that we went out with him there was another friend of his he had, they worked together and they had older boys, they were older than what we were. So they helped and doing the skinning, and whatever they had, the stretching, and whatever they had to do. Remember, it's a long time ago.

Evelyn: Do you remember your ancestral history?

Lydia: No. It's strange, you know, when we were raised in the town up until I went to the Indian Residential School. There was a closeness there in the family, but our traditional

history and background was a lacking thing because they were getting into the white man's way of doing things. And I guess they were going through difficult times, too, trying to adjust to this new way of life, and fit in. You know, we were in one area of the town and trying to fit in, or whatever you wish to call it. Be part of a community.

Evelyn: So you don't remember what your grandfather did, or your great-grandfather did?

Lydia: My grandfather was a trapper and he had this plot of land on the reservation that he would plant vegetables. It was really a nice time because everybody would go and participate; we all participated as much as we could. We had to go down by canoe and take our water with us, and the coal oil, the lamps, you know, if we stayed overnight, and blankets, and everything. But it was nice, we made sure there was enough wood because he was getting up in years at that time. And there was... and my dad would go and get a cutting area and he'd have to have enough wood in the backyard, like the cord wood and that. Everybody helped. And it was a sharing thing, when harvest time came for the vegetables, everybody went down and picked potatoes, carrots, or sometimes they'd be tiny little ones but you picked them all. Then they would go fishing, they would go fishing, net, you know, net fishing. And he would put down salt fish for the winter. And there was always a hind quarter of moose in the summer kitchen, like, that would be closed off in the winter and it was cold enough that it would freeze. So there was always plenty of food, there was never a lack of food. And he shared, my grandfather was a good person, he shared. People would knock on the door looking for food and he never turned anybody away.

Evelyn: Was this sort of hospitality typical of Indian culture do you find?

Lydia: I think, I don't think any Indian sees another Indian hungry. This is what sharing I have found among the Indians. They will share, they have a slice of bread they'll cut it half and give you half.

Evelyn: So did your grandparents or your own parents ever tell you of the generations before, and the kind of experiences and things that they went through?

Lydia: No, I guess it wasn't an ideal situation and maybe it wasn't pleasant for them, so they never related too much. But my grandfather, he was a marvelous person, my dad's father. And the more I think of him today and the things that he talked about, it's just nature, nature. Like, they would come down if they were going out on a trip up north, like, and he would take rule and signs, or anything like that. You're going up to cut a line for surveying on it, you would come and ask him, "What kind of weather are we going to have?" He would take them out at night and show them the moon, and show them the leaves when it was going to rain, how the leaves turned, and he was so knowledgeable, so close to the earth, you know, he was beautiful. And the more I think of him it gives me that inner good feeling to know that he was my grandfather, you know. And my mother was raised by, her mother died at birth and she was raised by her uncle, actually, and they were just terrific people too, just marvelous, just so good inside, you know. And

they'd give you little things like a piece of bread with brown sugar on it. That was a terrific treat -- you hand that to a child and they would say, "Well, that's not good enough." You really learned to appreciate the very small things. And that

was really sharing what they thought was beautiful, and you accepted it as such, it was just terrific. My heart, I feel so good inside when I think of them, you know. My mother's father showed us how he put a rack on, how they stretch muskrat, you know, and different things like that.

Evelyn: How do you do that?

Lydia: How he put it on, it was like, it was shaped like that and how he put it on there. And then the beaver he would lace on a big, like a big hoop he'd make it out of wood, you know, and that was kind of a soft willow or something and make a round thing and he would lace it. He was more that inclined. My other grandfather was more earthy, you know what I mean, with the ground. They were beautiful people, one was so different from the other and yet they were, you know, they were very good friends. My grandmothers used to go and visit each other and it was great.

Evelyn: Did you belong to a tribe?

Lydia: I was a Chapleau Cree.

Evelyn: Did you belong to a reservation?

Lydia: Well, this land that I was telling you about down in the lake, we used to call it down in the lake, that was a reservation and there was nothing there. They had to cut trees and, you know... Grandpa had one -- it was way down the river, but he moved up closer as he was aging. And my dad went and got help and they uprooted trees, and cleared an area there where he built a log cabin for him, and a outhouse, and they dug up the ground and got him started again.

Evelyn: Do you know that name of that reservation?

Lydia: I don't know if it's got a name.

Evelyn: But it was considered...

Lydia: I think there's only one person to this day up to now that has a right on that reserve, one or two. One is a step-brother of mine here in Toronto, and one is another person up in Chapleau. So it's all rock. If anybody could make anything grow on there I'm telling you they were wonderful. Had to be because it was all rock, something like planting here. They used to have a lot of fertilizer, take it down in canoes. They had to do everything on a canoe, you know, take fertilizer down, with seed, with water, until they were able to find something that was fit enough to drink. They had to dig a well, or a spring.

Evelyn: So he lived pretty much by himself.

Lydia: No, he would stay down there, just go down there in the summer and come back and forth like, you know. He stayed right in the town. As a matter of fact his house still stands today in town, but it's been renovated now. It's still there.

Evelyn: Did he make the canoe himself?

Lydia: My mother's father made birch bark canoes, but I don't ever remember anybody using them. He made them and I guess maybe the tourists could buy them up, because they never were around that long for anybody to see, you know. We used to go and visit him, walk down and visit him and see how he was making out with the canoe.

Evelyn: So that individual made birch bark canoes. You don't remember any of the process that was involved in making birch bark canoes, do you?

Lydia: I remember seeing it but I was quite young then. I remember seeing how he would put the cedar, he used cedar for the base of it, and then he would use long sheets of birch bark, and then he'd seal them with some kind of glue he had in a big pot -- I guess it was off the trees. And it would be sewn with roots, he sewed it with roots. It was interesting. You don't, you never think that this will be a memory, or you're busy doing other things. And maybe if they had, if there was anything there that I would have thought, "Well, this is interesting." Like we'd muck around his pot of... I guess it was gum off the tree or something that he would use, I don't know what it was really. But he would stay down there. At that time he would put a tent and he stayed down there. And we used to go down and take him down groceries.

Evelyn: Did you make tents regularly? Because some individuals make tar paper shacks or something.

Lydia: No, we, when we were children make, sew burlap together and make burlap tents.

Evelyn: But none of your parents ever made tents?

Lydia: No, when my dad was trapping he said he always made a lean-to. Now what he made it out of I don't know because I was never out on the trapline.

Evelyn: You lived in a town, Chapleau town. Was there a lot of natives besides yourself?

Lydia: Oh yes. It was one area of Chapleau they called "Lower Town" that was down by the river, and that was an Indian settlement, like. There was another area where there were the French, and another area where there were the Caucasian or English, whatever you wish to call them, they lived. And there was an Italian section.

Evelyn: So it was like a town with separated areas?

Lydia: Yeah.

Evelyn: How big was your section as a community, as the number of people?

Lydia: Oh, I guess maybe about a hundred, maybe two hundred, give or take.

Evelyn: So there was no sense of a chief was there?

Lydia: No, there was no chief. But if they were looking for any direction or anything I remember my grandfather getting, receiving mail from Geneva Park, because apparently they had something. Up around Orillia they'd have meetings but he never was, seemed available to get to them. He suffered a heart condition and I guess he wasn't too well, you know, and he had a large family of his own. There was six boys and six girls in my grandfather's family.

Evelyn: Were there any sort of important individuals that existed in your community if you didn't have any sort of a chief or anything? Were there any sort of Medicine Men?

Lydia: No. I remember one time when there was somebody in Chapleau very, very ill and the doctors had given up hope. And they got somebody, I think it was from around Fort William. There was an Indian lady that came in, came to my aunt's, it was my aunt's daughter, and it just happened that I was there. I was going to high school and I used to go down to my aunts for my lunch. And my dad was there and I said, "May I stay?" He says, "Yeah, sure." And he was interpreting for the Indian doctor, Dr. Shinn, and it was interesting. And she treated my Uncle Charlie -- he'd come home from the First World War with, he'd been gassed, and she treated him. And when he came home they had given him six months to live and he died in 1931, '32 I think it was, he came home in 1919, I believe it was. And he lived under her care and I don't think if it hadn't been for her that he would have lived that long, you know.

Evelyn: You said that the doctors had given up hope.

Lydia: Given up hope for this girl and he mentioned to my aunt, he said, "Now don't give her any of my medicine." She had credentials and showed him papers, and letters that were written from people that she had helped and cured. So he said, "Okay," he says, "just don't give her any of my medicine." He said, "You can use yours." So within a few days she was up walking around -- unbelievable.

Evelyn: Do you know what she actually gave him?

Lydia: I wish I did, I certainly wish I knew, I certainly wish I knew what it was but I don't know. She had them all

wrapped up in little packages, you know.

Evelyn: Were they sort of roots, or leaves?

Lydia: Roots, yeah.

Evelyn: So you've never encountered actually going into a bush and picking up these roots, or herbs, or...

Lydia: I wouldn't have any idea what they were. I was, I mean we, I thought that was her life, you know, and her choice. But I've often... At the time, maybe if I had asked a few questions, I would have received some answers. But you don't think at the time -- it was a traumatic experience for my aunt. She was quite concerned about her daughter and this was the last resort and, you know, it just wasn't appropriate to be asking questions, I didn't feel. Because children were in the background anyway, you know, you were to be seen and not heard.

Evelyn: So, was this typical of most natives that they relied on Medicine Men and that?

Lydia: If there was anybody really seriously ill. But they did have their own little Indian roots, and leaves, and barks, and what have you, you know, they'd boil up. I know my dad always had this golden root and we used to go and pick it, and to chew that. That's good for you, you're supposed to chew it. I'd say, "Oh, my dad says this is good for your throat." Have you ever had golden root? No. It's bitter but it's recognized today in medicine.

Evelyn: What is it supposed to help you with?

Lydia: A stomach, it's for stomach trouble, condition, but it's, they had faith in it. It was a gentle thing, you know. I guess it was a cure all, it'd make you feel better.

Evelyn: Was there anything else like that that your grandfather gave you?

Lydia: Well, there isn't any here. This is leaves that grows around, I don't see any here. I'll show you a burn. I burned myself on the stove one day, it must be this leg, it was after my daughter was born. That was just a touch of the oven, and it was all holes, you know, how it gets infected. I guess, my general health wasn't too good at the time, after just having a child, so my grandmother saw it so she... It was infected and red and it was sore, so she went out, she says, "I'll fix that for you." So she went out and she got a leaf from outside and she washed the leaf off and she put it on me and just wrapped it. She says, "Come on back. You come back tomorrow." The next day just, it was just oozing with all the infection and everything coming off like pus, you know, and she put another one on. She did that twice. And she said, "Okay, just put a bandage on it and let the air at it and that's it."

Evelyn: Did you ever hear of bad Medicine Men as opposed to

good Medicine Men?

Lydia: Never. What was that name now? My word. At the school there was a name, I forget, I can't think of it. It is an Indian name and they would call that, it was supposed to be something scary. I wish I could think of that. Somebody else has likely brought it up to you. I wish I could think of it. I was telling my son about it not too long ago. Yeah, it was supposed to be some Indian terror or something. It wasn't anything that I had ever had any previous knowledge of or anything, but it was stories that other Indian girls had told us and it was kind of a bad, bad person, you know.

Evelyn: And what was this person supposed to do?

Lydia: Oh, come on! (laughing) I guess really we knew that it wasn't possible but... You know how we listen to ghost stories and everything. Nanabush! Nanabush, I think it is, Nanabush. I think that's the name. And I believe it is.

Evelyn: Do you remember the story behind it?

Lydia: I don't remember the story, but it wasn't a nice story anyways. If it were nice I would likely remember it, but anything scary you choose to forget.

Evelyn: Do you know some of the ways the Indians within your community made a living?

Lydia: Trapping, mostly trapping before Christmas. And then they'd go what they call "spring trapping". That was the muskrat and I guess the beaver, mostly muskrat.

Evelyn: So it was mainly trapping?

Lydia: Trapping.

Evelyn: So there weren't any other ways?

Lydia: Well, they worked casual work, like, you know, in the town. Maybe they were working on the roads in the town. My dad trapped and in the summer he worked for the forestry branch fighting fires, and working for the forestry branch. Lands and Forests or whatever it is, that new name now.

Evelyn: Was there any sort of modern conveniences?

Lydia: Well, really the only thing we had was running water in the town. But in the school we had every convenience. It was steam heating, hot and cold water, and flush toilets. It wasn't the best, I mean if they were going to send you back to your people, what's the point in giving you flush toilets and all this, you know? I didn't see the logic, I never did. Like they would bring them out of Moosonee, and bring them out from way up north and teach them all this and then they'd send them

back to these outposts, you know, where they had... At that time you couldn't go by train, you go by train I guess and maybe dog sled, that's years ago, you know, and... But there was eventually trains, really, but there were these outposts, you know, very bad. I mean teach you, give you their way of living and then expect you to go back into the woods and fit in with your own people. That was kind of stupid in my way of thinking anyway.

Evelyn: You mentioned trains and dog sleds. Were there any other modes of transportation?

Lydia: Well, this woman came to Chapleau and she went up to Moosonee and she had to go up as far as Cochrane a number of years ago when I remember. And she had to take the dog sled from there. Up in -- that was before they built that railway.

Evelyn: Were these huskies or what kind?

Lydia: Oh, I guess they would be huskies, yeah. Very likely.

Evelyn: Do you remember any of the trapping process and what was the process of preparing a hide?

Lydia: No, they would just skin them and stretch them while they were wet. That's all I knew. That's the only part I saw,

you know, putting them, like my grandfather would put it on this big hoop. A beaver, and kind of sew it on. And the muskrat would be on a thin board but all the same from the top to the bottom. Then he would turn it inside out, like the fur inside and the skin outside.

Evelyn: When you finished with the hide, did you bring it to the trading?

Lydia: They were fur buyers right in town.

Evelyn: Was this through a bartering system that you got things, or did you get money for it?

Lydia: Oh, he got money, first, he got paid for it. And then there were fur buyers that would come in from Sudbury, you know, like in the spring. Or the boys would take, like they would get the furs together and then they'd go down to Sudbury and sell them.

Evelyn: Did Indians invest in their money?

Lydia: I don't think so, because a lot of them just lived on what they made during the winter. That would keep them in the summer. But it wasn't really that much. I guess the upkeep of the house or the home and clothing the children, I mean it was a burden, you know, to meet all these expenses. I mean if the winter had been poor, well, things were scarce. So if they had a good winter, well, it was different. They were able to get ahead of themselves.

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Evelyn: Why did your family choose to move to a community instead of staying on a reservation?

Lydia: Well, they were in the town before they had the reservation. They came to Chapleau from, they paddled. My grandfather came down Moosonee, or Moose Factory, whichever. And they just settled, this is where they settled near the river. And there wasn't even Treaty 9 or anything then at that time.

Evelyn: Was your community, even though other ethnic groups moved into the community, was it able to maintain any sort of native culture?

Lydia: None other than trapping, you know. Their main thing themselves was trapping and we had our own little form of church group like, you know. We had our own little church group and the W.A., and our own Bible class, I mean, which was affiliated with the Anglican church in Chapleau because the majority, we were most Anglicans in Chapleau. And the school was an Anglican church.

Evelyn: So did you celebrate any sort of Indian festivals?

Lydia: No, not that I remember. You see up until I was seven I was at home, after that I was in a residential school in Chapleau. So that was a "no-no".

Evelyn: Was there any sort of holidays that were important to your family?

Lydia: Well, Christmas, and New Year's, and most statutory holidays, you know what I mean, public holidays. But in the

fall after the... He got, grandpa got his potatoes and everything up, they would, and his fish in, that was a big do. Those vegetables were terrific, I'm telling you. Boiled fish, put them in the oven, nice, fresh, big, white fish, they were terrific, beautiful.

Evelyn: What was your basic diet?

Lydia: Well, we had the fish, and moose meat, and whatever was available at the stores and there was no... And vegetables, there was no shortage really. What they had to buy was the bread, or the flour to make it for the bannock, you know, that was very important.

Evelyn: Did you have a lot of wild things?

Lydia: Yes. We had geese, and partridge, an awful lot of

partridge, rabbit, most everything. Beaver, have you ever eaten beaver? I love it, it's much the same as goose and there isn't that much difference is there? Have you... There really isn't that much between beaver and goose I don't think.

Evelyn: Did you ever learn any Indian songs?

Lydia: No, I never.

Evelyn: So none whatsoever?

Lydia: My mother's father taught us part of, he had an organ and he used to play the organ, "Jesus Loves Me". We learned that one.

Evelyn: How does it go?

Lydia: I forget now. How one earth does it go. We used to sing it anyways I remember, (inaudible) something like that. If I could, you know, if you're among these people it isn't too long before you'd pick up, because I'd pick up the Cree. Because when I go -- I was up to Moosonee last year and the year before, and when they... If they speak consistently, like, in Indian, I can pick up here and there, and I answer them in English, you know, it's interesting. I would like to learn. I don't think it would be too much of a problem.

Evelyn: Were there any sort of community get-togethers?

Lydia: With the church yes. We would have, like on a Friday there would be an afternoon tea. I remember it used to be 15 , we'd go in and have sandwiches and maybe baked beans with coleslaw, and tea, and cakes. And this was, I think it was once a month they would have this raising money for the, our part of the W.A.

Evelyn: The community get-together was it just the Indians that took part?

Lydia: Yes. It was just our local branch like, you know, the W.A.

Evelyn: So, was there any sort of community get-together as a way of meetings?

Lydia: No, not that I remember. But they may have that I wasn't part of, you know, there pretty likely have been.

Evelyn: How were you aware of any upcoming events?

Lydia: How old was I?

Evelyn: No.

Lydia: In what reference? Worldwide or...

Evelyn: Worldwide or local events, how would you know about

these?

Lydia: We had an old... my father bought a radio. You wouldn't believe it. It was, oh, a huge thing, it was all battery operated and they put up this huge antenna, one large post there and a large post there and it was forever wires. It was all open, I'll never forget. It was K.D.K.A. and it had the earphones and the batteries underneath. My mother got the batteries wet somehow so we had to wait... so I believe they eventually sold it. But it was every Sunday night that was a very special night and we'd have everybody in, come and listen to the radio. There was two sets of earphones so everybody would take their turn. It was interesting.

Evelyn: So if someone decided to get married how would you know about that?

Lydia: Just word of mouth.

Evelyn: So, it's mainly word of mouth.

Lydia: Yeah.

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

Lydia: Not that I can remember.

Evelyn: So you never heard of any heroes?

Lydia: No, not until I really started into school like, you know.

Evelyn: So were you told of any legends from your family?

Lydia: No, not that I can remember.

Evelyn: What kind of marriage customs did you have?

Lydia: Just the same as today. Showers and what have you, and a wedding dinner or supper or whatever you want to call it.

Evelyn: Was there any sort, can you see if there is any sort of difference?

Lydia: There was no native culture or anything brought into it, it was just... I'll tell you, they were more or less accepting the white man's way of living, you know. And I guess this is what was happening.

Evelyn: Does it also apply to showers, baby showers?

Lydia: Yes.

Evelyn: So you did celebrate those things?

Lydia: Oh yeah, they'd have showers, and wedding showers,

and baby showers, and...

Evelyn: How was your family affected by the War?

Lydia: Which War? Both Wars? Well, I had an uncle who went over in the First War and he was underage. And he was the one I was telling you about that the Indian doctor looked after. He was gassed. He kept in touch with her and he got his... Of course he had to come down here too, to Christy Street, but he always took her whatever it was, you know, boiled up something and put it in a jar and this is what he drank. Eventually he died of cancer of the throat.

Evelyn: Was your family affected by the Depression?

Lydia: No, not really. I was in the school at the time, in the Indian school. They had, they were trapping and they had their land down there, so they weren't really that badly off. As I tell you, people would knock on the door looking for food, people whose husbands were on the railway and they were laid off. And it really never affected... Of course I guess maybe their standard of living wasn't as elaborate as what people have today.

Evelyn: So was this typical of most families that they weren't affected by the Depression?

Lydia: I don't see that it affected too many people, because they were close to the earth and they would trap. The Indian would, you know, you could go out and get your meat, and grow your vegetables, and what you got from your trapping was summer survival.

Evelyn: Do you remember any sort of native crafts that were done in your community?

Lydia: The only one I remember is my mother's mother. She would make moccasins, that was all.

Evelyn: Do you remember how she went about making moccasins?

Lydia: I never really paid that much attention, but I used to see her chewing, (laughing) chewing on something that was part of the moccasin. Putting it under here and chewing at it. She used to make them and make a design in here, you know, with silk thread. She didn't use the beads, she did it all with thread.

Evelyn: And she would go out and sell these?

Lydia: She would, like people would place orders and she would make them for them.

Evelyn: Do you know how much things like moccasins went for back then?

Lydia: I don't remember, I, not very much.

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

Lydia: I don't know. There was, I guess when I was called an Indian. My sister was going to school and I guess that's when I became aware that, "Heck, we're different," you know. And then you question your mother and father, and they weren't too thrilled with telling us how we were different and why we were different, you know. I guess it was difficult for them to accept too.

Evelyn: What was their explanation to you?

Lydia: Well, "You're an Indian," and... Tried to ask them how we were, you know, different; we were different color, different this, and your eyes were a different color, and your hair was different, and... So I guess maybe they were experiencing problems too, you know. I don't know how old was, when my dad was, when they came into Chapleau, but things were a little bit rough, I guess, adjusting to.

Evelyn: In your relation to the community around you not everyone was native, how was...

Lydia: Well, in our immediate area it was when you went to church and you saw these people who were different. You know, it really never bothered me, maybe it would some people but it never bothered me. And it was never stressed to me, you know, other than when I heard someone call, "You're an Indian" and all this. Somehow it never bothered me.

Evelyn: Was Toronto the first city that you moved to?

Lydia: Well, we had years ago lived in Sudbury. My dad was working with the Department of Northern Development or something so we lived in Sudbury for a while. Then we lived in Port Arthur or Fort William -- I forget which, they were so close together, we lived there. And we always went back to Chapleau and then after I got married I moved down to Toronto, my husband and I moved down here. We went back up a few times and eventually settled here, been here for years.

Evelyn: So, Sudbury must have been very different from where you had come from previously. Did it come to you as a shock to see so many buildings?

Lydia: No, strangely enough, no.

Evelyn: When you moved to Toronto did it come as a shock to you?

Lydia: No, no. I guess maybe my teachings that I had, things that I had learned in school, in geography and

different... Maybe it was gradually learning to accept different things and different people and that. This is the only thing I can give credit to.

Evelyn: So when you moved to Sudbury, it was very well populated...

Lydia: Not at that time there, about 1924, '25. '25 I think it was. They used to have the old street cars with the smoke coming out and we lived right, I'll never forget, it was right behind the station the C.P.R. station. We lived up on the hill a long time ago. But it's, I don't know, I don't ever remember it having startled or... Granted, I was fascinated, but it didn't frighten me in any way.

Evelyn: So when you did move to Toronto that didn't shock you either.

Lydia: No.

Evelyn: But did you hear about any stories before you came to Toronto?

Lydia: No, nothing different, because I had relatives down here, you know, and they would come up north and visit. So it was just a gradual filling in and here it is, now, this is where it's at.

Evelyn: So if you were to contrast the children now, native children now as opposed to your childhood, what would you say?

Lydia: Quite different. I don't know what has happened. I guess it's the general change, trend. There's so many other things available to them. It's easier to grasp and hold on to than the more difficult things, I mean where they would gain knowledge and a better way. It's easier to meet friends on the street, or so-called friends and go with them. It's easier to run with the pack, isn't it?

Evelyn: But you do see a sense of change.

Lydia: There is a remarkable change, and it isn't for the good, it isn't the best change.

Evelyn: So it wasn't always this way?

Lydia: No, no. No, it's sad but it wasn't. At least maybe it's my way of thinking, I don't know. But I see a remarkable change, with every group of people pushing, and shoving, and... You know, you get on the streetcar now, it's every man for himself. At one point they would make sure that older people had a seat. It's just no more, it's gone. And what has caused these things to happen, who knows. Like maybe it's the women's role has changed, maybe she has overstepped her role, you know, in seeking, where you think she has forgotten what she has left behind and maybe what she's left behind is better than what she's looking for. Her role is in the home, I always maintain

that.

Evelyn: So do you see a sense of deterioration with the Indian culture now?

Lydia: Very much so. And this is, I guess it's, maybe it's breaking into the white man's way of life. The women leaving the home. There are certain things that I believe a woman is expected to do; if you're expecting to be a mother there are expectations with that too, and the father has his expectations. And I think maybe they, that's what I say, what they've left behind it's more valuable than what they're looking for. Sure it's prestigious to go to university to have all these highfalutin degrees and that, but what are you? You know, that's what counts, who you are, what you are inside. You lose your depth by reaching for something else.

Evelyn: And you see this in the native culture?

Lydia: It's in most cultures, but everybody wants more. And they just drop off the children, it's gone all gone screwy, you know, it's too bad.

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