Burton: You lived in Brantford. Could you tell us something about the school, you know, about the size, and maybe the general layout?

Jennie: It was a red brick building, quite a size, and there must have been about, if I remember correctly, about 200 or 300 children there at the time.

Burton: Did these children live in or did they come from the surrounding district?

Jennie: We lived in.

Gladys: How many were from the Walpole district?

Jennie: There were... There was only eight of us from the island.

Gladys: Can you give me some of the names of some of the people?

Jennie: Yeah, Patty Joan Soney, David Soney, Sylvia Soney, and Wanita Peters, Rosemary Peters, Melba Kyosh, Connie Tushnik, and her sister. There must have been... Yeah, eight,
eight all together.

Burton: No boys?

Jennie: Yeah, I just mentioned... Oh, yes, there was. The Day brothers; there was Winston, Martin, Alec, and Patterson Ford was going to school there. That's all that I can remember.

Gladys: Can you tell us why the students were sent so far away to go to school?

Jennie: Well, I don't know about the rest. But myself, like my mother died and I was sent there because I had nobody really, I guess, to look after me. And I asked to be sent there. It wasn't because they wanted to send me away, but I went to the Indian Agent's office one night and I told him the whole story, that I wanted to get sent away from school because we were so blamed poor. And within a couple of weeks that's when we went. I say we because there was Patty Joe, David, Sylvia and myself; we went on a train to get up there.

Burton: Could you tell what type of train that was in use in those days?

Jennie: Train?

Burton: Yeah. Was it a diesel train or a steam train?

Jennie: I don't know, but it went pretty fast, I thought. I really don't know.

Gladys: Were they all Indian children going to this school?

Jennie: All Indian children, yes.

Gladys: How far were some of the other ones from?

Jennie: They were just Mohawks in the area, local area there.

Gladys: They all lived in residence there or was it just the ones from Walpole Island that lived in residence?

Jennie: They all, all the ones that went to school there they all lived there.

Burton: You don't know of any pupils that were from way out, like in the north country?

Jennie: No. To my knowledge there was none, just in the surrounding, like Six Nations. That's all.

Gladys: How long did you go to school? What years?

Jennie: I think I was there about five years.
Gladys:  What grade levels did they have?

Jennie:  They had from grade one to nine. And then like from grade nine there was college girls that went from there to town, and they took the bus.

Gladys:  How often did you come home to visit?

Jennie:  Just during summer holidays.

Gladys:  Did you like the school? Did you get along with the others?

Jennie:  Yes, I got along wonderful with everybody and I couldn't complain about that.

Burton:  Do you remember what years that you were there? You know, roughly.

Jennie:  If I remember correctly from '42 to '46, I think. No, that's only four years. Or '41, just forget.

Gladys:  Was it a modern school? Did it have running water and...

Jennie:  Yes, it was up to date at the time.

Burton:  How many classrooms did it have?

Jennie:  They had the junior and the senior classrooms.

Burton:  Was there also a farming operation?

Jennie:  Yes there was, yes. The boys milked the cows and looked after all the vegetables and so forth.

Burton:  And how do they find time to do that along with their schooling?

Jennie:  Well, the boys used to have to get up about six o'clock in the morning and then they'd have to do chores, and then they were in school by nine o'clock. And then they sort of alternated like, you know, the juniors and the seniors.

Gladys:  What did the girls have to do?

Jennie:  We did all the cooking, the laundry, sewing -- that's where I got all my training, what little I know.

Burton:  Did they also make the beds?

Jennie:  Yes.

Burton:  And cleaning up?
Jennie: Yes, everything. We even had to feed the staff.

Gladys: Were the teachers living right in the school too?

Jennie: Yes.

Gladys: How many teachers were there?

Jennie: Four, I think.

Burton: Do you remember some of their names?

Jennie: Yes, Mr. Yendel, Miss Fry, Mrs. Smith, and there was another one, I can't remember the name right now.

Burton: About recreation, what do the girls do, and what do the boys do for their recreation?

Jennie: They played baseball a lot, and soccer, and we used to go camping.

Gladys: Where did you go camping?

Jennie: We used to go on, right near the Grand River, in the woods. It was really interesting when I look back.

Gladys: Do you know how long after you left the school that it stayed in operation?

Jennie: No, I don't.

Gladys: Because I know that now it's a cultural thing. Who funded the school?

Jennie: Well, when I was there I understood that the... It was run by Indians anyway. That's what I understood at the time. I don't really know. It was a school set for the Indians.

Gladys: What kind of punishment did they have if they did something wrong?

Jennie: Just strapping and put them in solitaire, solitaire -- whatever you call it.

Gladys: What kind of special events did your school put on?

Jennie: Concerts, and I can't remember what you call that local talent -- they used to have that.

Gladys: What kind of talent did you have?

Jennie: (laughs) Talent, I didn't have no talent. There were real good singers, I mean a lot of the girls. (Name) was one of them. She used to play the guitar.
Burton: Was there an assembly hall there or did you use one of the classrooms?

Jennie: In the dining room, which was, you know, fairly large. And they had like a stage up...

Burton: Oh, they improvised, or was there a regular stage?

Jennie: There was a regular stage.

Burton: Did they give prizes for the best entertainer?

Jennie: Yeah.

Burton: Was it paid in money or in candies?

Jennie: I forget now.

Burton: What about how the girls and boy were situated? Some schools the girls and boys were sort of segregated; they have a section for the boys and a section for the girls. Is that the way it was set up?

Jennie: Yes, the boys had their own part, like on the one side of the school, and then the girls vice versa.

Burton: And the only time they mixed was during the classes?

Jennie: Yes, and in the dining room.

Gladys: Were there different groups within the school? Like you have in the picture, I think, they were dressed in different uniforms, and were they school (inaudible) to wear?

Jennie: Yes, we had to wear these... We used to make the clothing ourselves, like we made the boys' shirts, you know, out of new material, and also the girls' uniforms. We did the sewing ourselves, you know, to make them. And we wore black stockings. (laughs) And we wore black boys' shoes.

Gladys: And were there different organizations or groups in the school?

Jennie: You mean in that picture?

Gladys: Yeah, from the picture.

Jennie: Well, those were the Girl Guides. There was four different groups there. Like I had a group of my own and the other girls had like, you know, the cardinals, and the, you know, so forth.

Gladys: You were the leader of your group?
Jennie: Yeah.

Gladys: And what kind of activities did you take part in?

Jennie: Just going camping and having the regular things that the girls do nowadays -- the Girl Guides -- the same thing, no different.

Gladys: What did you have to do to be the leader?

Jennie: They had to vote, they had to vote.

Gladys: Did you enjoy doing that kind of thing?

Jennie: Yes, I did. And we used to be in parades.

Gladys: Where would that be, in Brantford?

Jennie: Right in Brantford, right in the main street. That is the Girl Guides and the Brownies. And if there happened to be a parade, well, the Girl Guides and the Brownies would join.

Gladys: Were any of the pupils ever allowed to go into town to do shopping, or go in groups to visit, you know, different...?

Jennie: Yes, but we had to have one of the staff with us. And just the ones that were really, really trusted. And they also had like a girl ahead of the rest of the girls; they called her a monitress. She was in charge of the keys.

Burton: Did you have any services in the school, like...?

Jennie: Every evening.

Burton: Oh, just evening, eh?

Jennie: Every evening we had what they called at the time chapel service, every evening.

Burton: What do they do mostly?

Jennie: What do you mean?

Burton: Well, sometimes the principal would deliver a sermon or read passages from the Bible, or make announcements.

Jennie: Well, it was more or less a Bible study, I would say a Bible study. And they would have prayer.

Gladys: Where did you attend Sunday services?

Jennie: At the Mohawk Chapel. It was a church; we used to walk to church. And it was just a little ways from the school.
Gladys: Did all the students go there?

Jennie: Every student went.

Gladys: How many total students do you think that were there?

Jennie: I think there was about 200 or 300 at the time that I was there; now I could be wrong. Because there was a top and a lower dormitory. The lower dormitory was full and there was the top dormitory also, you know, was occupied by girls.

Gladys: Have you ever kept in touch with any of the students from the school, any friends you made there?

Jennie: Well, there was about five or six so far that... One of them come looking for me here on the island, in fact just about five or six years ago, looking for me.

Burton: I'd like to go back to the farming operation a little bit. Did the school raise its own food, like potatoes, and vegetable stuff?

Jennie: Yes.

Burton: Did they grow enough to sell outside?

Jennie: No, I don't think they sold any vegetables on the outside. They had a storage there, you know, for all winter.

Gladys: What kind of farming machinery did they have?

Burton: Did you use horses or tractors?

Jennie: I think they had tractors.

Burton: How about special activities such as school fairs?

Jennie: Yes, there used to be this big truck used to come after the children and we used to ride in the back of it. And some of our work was taken over there by our teachers, and we'd get prizes, like for whatever prize we got, and we got money. And we used to go to the Oshweagan(?) Fair -- that's where the fair was.

Gladys: How would they manage taking 200 or 300 children to the fair? Who would they get to supervise?

Jennie: All of them wouldn't go. I think it was only the junior class, like, would go one day. And then the next day they'd kind of divide the classes.

Burton: What sort of meals did they serve? Do you remember any of the menu that they used?

Jennie: Well, we used to get soup. I guess they were pretty good but up until we had Zimmerman there, Mr. Zimmerman....
Burton: He was the principal?

Jennie: Yes. When he came there... we never used to have ice cream until he came there, and we never had cereal like, you know, box cereal until Mr. Zimmerman got there. We used to have like mush -- that's why they got the name "Mush Hole". (laughs)

Burton: That was the...

Jennie: We got real good food after Zimmerman became the principal there.

Burton: This Mohawk Institute, this was not on the Six Nations Reserve?

Jennie: No, it was right in Brantford. If I remember I think it was on 200 Mohawk Street.

Gladys: Was the city built up at that time?

Jennie: It was fairly built up at the time.

Gladys: Was there paved roads?

Jennie: Yes.

Gladys: Right to the school?

Jennie: That I don't remember.

Gladys: Can you remember how long the school had been there before you were there?

Jennie: No, I never... No, I couldn't remember that.

Burton: Do you know... You don't know whether the church had anything to do with it, towards the building of the school?

Jennie: Well, it seems to me that the... One of the teachers one time was giving a history on the... And if I remember correctly, she said something about an Anglican mission, something to do with that.

Burton: In other words it was a Anglican mission school?

Jennie: I think it was.

Burton: Was the school subsidized by the Indian Affairs, do you know?

Jennie: Well, it had to do something with Indian, well I would imagine Indian Affairs.

Burton: Made a contribution towards the running of it?
Jennie: Yes.

Gladys: How did the teachers get along with the pupils? Were they pretty fair in dealing with them?

Jennie: Yeah, I thought they were really nice -- at least I got along with them. Of course there were those that had fights with the teachers, like at every school.

Burton: I understand that it's no longer used as a school. You don't remember when it was discontinued as a school?

Jennie: No, I don't.

Gladys: Was the...? I've been there recently and I've seen that they have another school built to the side. Was that building when you went?

Jennie: No.

Gladys: It was just the one main building?

Jennie: Just the one big building.

Burton: Do you remember anything else about the school?

Jennie: Well, all I can say right now is, "Gone are the days but not forgotten." (laughs)

Gladys: Can you tell us some of the, one of the best things that you remember about it? When you look back, what was the best thing that happened when you were there?

Jennie: Well, going to school and concerts is what I used to look forward to.

Gladys: Did you sing?

Jennie: With the rest of the girls, yes. (laughs) But there was some really good talent there, you know, from the Six Nations.

Gladys: Did they have a school band?

Jennie: No, but they had their own instruments, like guitar and piano and mouth organ.

Burton: When did you have to retire in the evening?

Jennie: School got out at four, and then right after school us girls would go down to the play room and play for a while; and then supper was between five and five-thirty. And after supper we'd get ready for chapel service; and then after chapel service we were allowed to stay up -- the senior girls were allowed to stay up till about nine-thirty -- and then after that we'd have to go to bed. And then the staff would come
along, the matron would check on all the girls to see if they were all sleeping or, you know, everybody in bed. And then after midnight I guess she used to make the rounds again to see if everybody was sleeping.

Burton: I guess she was trying to see who crawled out of the window. (Jennie laughs)

Gladys: What time would you have to get up in the morning?

Jennie: We used to get up about six-thirty.

Gladys: And did chores before class?

Jennie: Yes. Well, we had to. There was the scullery girls, and the laundry girls, and the ones who had to go in the kitchen. I worked in the kitchen and in the dining room most of the time, and senior laundry girls.

Gladys: How were you able to attend classes...?

(END OF SIDE A)
(END OF TAPE)

INDEX

INDEX TERM	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #

EDUCATION

- residential schools: IH-OA.001  J. BLACKBIRD  124  2-16

PROPER NAME INDEX

PROPER NAME	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #

BRANTFORD, ONT.: IH-OA.001  J. BLACKBIRD  124  2,10,13