HIGHLIGHTS:

- Discusses the guiding industry on Walpole Island.

Burton: The hunting in Walpole Island in the area of duck hunting, muskrat hunting, fishing, and hunting clubs. You've had a lot of experience in this, you've been a trapper and duck hunter. I wonder if you could tell us something about duck hunting, how is it set up? Well, especially in the public marsh. How do you go about...?

Clayton: Duck hunting.

Burton: Yeah.

Clayton: All right. Well, probably, there's probably about fifty guides on Walpole Island and we have a gentleman's agreement on Walpole marsh according to our band members that we have to stay at least a quarter mile apart from each blind, respect each other's blind, you don't go into them. And you use somebody else's blind, leave our decoys there, nobody bothers them, and it's managed that way year after year. The revenue that comes out of the marsh is quite an amount, and also it brings you money for the guides, also the people that work for the guides. Most of the hunters are Americans. I'd
say 75 percent are American hunters, the other 25 would be Canadians from various parts of Ontario. I, myself, have hunters from Germany, they come from Japan, and they also came from Sweden this past year. And these people from Japan come in their boats as far as Philadelphia. From there they fly to Detroit. From there they rent a car and come in to Walpole Island to hunt, which they claim is one of the best hunting areas in North America.

Burton: Well, what steps do they take in order to hunt? What's the first thing they do to come and hunt on Walpole?

Clayton: Well, to hunt on Walpole Island, if they haven't got a guide set up they first go to the police, or they go the Indian band office, and ask for a guide. The guides' names are listed at the band office and also at the police station. And they must buy their permit to hunt on Walpole, and they also have to have their (inaudible) license, and their duck stamp. Most of all I guess they have to have their gun license before they can come to hunt.

Burton: And there's two ways they can hunt. They can hunt on a daily basis, is that true? And on a seasonal?

Clayton: Yeah, daily basis is one way and also seasonal permits are sold. And the guide fees vary from anywhere from $30 to $50 per man.

Burton: What does a guide do before they start hunting? What preparations does he make?

Clayton: Well, preparations are... I usually start at least a month ahead of time. That's cutting weeds, grass around the pond, in the pond area; also building blinds which takes quite a bit of time preparing, and taking boats and canoes to go into, punt into the blinds. Also get everything fixed up and ready for duck hunters just to come in and step into your boats, and decoys taken in. And he steps into your boat and take him to the blind. And you call the ducks for them and you got them. You got your dog, or if you haven't got your dog you walk out and pick the duck up wherever it falls and bring it back in, and then you put another shooter.

Burton: Well, how about this whole marsh area? What do you do to get it ready for hunting?

Clayton: The whole marsh area we have pumps, we have pumps set up, tractors. The dike has being diked around, or the marsh is being diked around. And you get these tractors and pumps going, pump water into them to get the water level that you want, which is what... Guys like to see a lot of water there so the ducks will come in to these ponds in watered area, marsh area.

Gladys: What kind of ducks would they usually shoot?
Clayton: Kind of ducks? Well, in marsh you get your, early part of the season, you get your pintails and teal. And there are also the grey mallard, and the black mallard. But the teal and the pintail leave then the mallards alone stay around into the marsh area. So after the marsh freezes over then we go outside in open water and blind out along the river or in the bay areas. Along the edge of the weeds we set up our decoys, then we get mallards, red headed canvasback out there.

Burton: As a general rule what equipment do you use? Who owns the equipment?

Clayton: The equipment is owned by individual guide. Sometimes some of the guides on the Island here have a lot of equipment; people that just started don't have as much. I have about 12 to 14 boats all total, myself. Bunch are canoes to punt people in, and outboards to take the people in towards the blinds. It cost a lot of money to get started. There are some that are just starting, they walk in, walk into the blind, which is a little harder way of doing it.

Burton: What about the lodging for the sportsmen? Where do they go for an overnight stay?

Clayton: The lodging is decent around the Island. They can only go half mile off the reserve or go a little further -- three miles north you'd have another motel there, or right into Wallaceburg there's hotels. Also the new hotel called the Oaks Inn, which is seven miles away, and the lodgings and food is good. We have two restaurants on Walpole where they can have their dinners or sandwiches made up and coffee made up for, to take out, or to come in for dinner and go back out in the afternoon -- providing they didn't get their limit in the morning.

Burton: Has there been any thought of building a lodging for the sportsmen? Would this thing be a practical idea?

Clayton: I think it would be a good thing. It would be a big thing if we had a lodge, or a decent sized motel with, where you could serve dinners and breakfast for the sportsmen. It would not only cater to sportsmen it would also help the tourists.

Burton: And would also serve as a base for the fishermen in the summer.

Clayton: That's right, the fishing is good on Walpole. This is one of the best fishing areas in... Well, just like hunting ducks in North America is... the fishing is very good. You see, you hear people talk about Mitchell Bay area. They say the fishing is tremendous in Mitchell Bay. Well, this is a lot of baloney. You see, they rent their boats there and they come over to Walpole Island and fish. The Bay area itself is too open; there's no shelter spots, not like there is on Walpole where they can get right into shelter in case of storm. And we have the fish in our reserve and we have different species of
fish on the Island. So there are a lot of sports fishermen, which they would benefit by this motel there if we did have one.

Burton: Well, pursuing this subject of fishing a little further, it's set up pretty much the same way as duck hunting. Could you tell us maybe the difference between the two?

Clayton: Well, it's not... The set-up is quite different, very much different. If they do want a guide they pay perhaps the same amount of money for a guide. But most of the time you take a fisherman out to these fishing areas and you show them. Well, the next time he comes out he's got his own boat and equipment and he goes out on his own. You see, actually, the guide is losing out showing these fishermen where to go. It's a real fact right there.

Burton: Well, does this fisherman pay some sort of a fee for fishing in Walpole Island?

Clayton: Yes, there's a fee there for fishing on the Island. There's a season permit. We used to have, I think, a three day permit. I don't know if they still have that or not, but I know there's a fee there where they buy a fishing permit. Then they can fish all season for it.

Burton: What about commercial fishing with the seines? Is there very much of that?

Clayton: No, not now. There was two or three people had commercial seines and fishing in which they made a good living off of. But after everyone was closed down on account of mercury, well, they were closed along with it.

Burton: So they closed them down?

Clayton: When it'll open I don't think anyone knows.

Burton: What about muskrat hunting? How is that run on Walpole Island?

Clayton: Well, that's quite an industry. Again, muskrat hunting on Walpole Island is a big thing. Most rats come from Walpole Island that are sold at these auctions in North Bay and other areas. It's run by each individual. He has the traps, he goes out and sets them out. Later they start, probably October, go through the winter until spring. After the spring season run is over the trapping season is over.

Gladys: Can you tell us about approximately how many muskrats you can hunt on a good day?

Clayton: Well it's... You mean how many you can catch in a day?
Gladys: Yeah, a good day.

Clayton: It varies now because the muskrat population is going down so fast. You take five, six, about six years ago you could get anywhere from 150 to 200 rats trapping. It all depends how many traps you set out, you see. I used to set out 300 traps and get a couple hundred rats at least, you see, in them days. But now with the rats going down the way they are you can set out 300 traps and get maybe 50 to 75 rats and that's only when the run is on, you know. Before they used to get more and more than that. Lucky, now the people are lucky right now to get 15 to 20.

Burton: What accounts for the drop in the rat population?

Clayton: What accounts for it?

Burton: Yeah.

Clayton: Overtrapped, overhunting. Some start too early, some stop late. If they stop late the muskrats are already carrying the little ones and you kill the ones that are carrying the little ones -- there's a litter of six to ten rats there, but they're destroying.

Gladys: There's no by-laws governing...?

Clayton: There's no by-laws, no. And I think there should be some sort of rule or by-law set to when to start trapping and when to quit. Even if you have to go to the mainland, there are by-laws on trapping -- when to start and when to quit, you see. They start some place in October and they quit around the 15th of April.

Burton: How many Indian people are in the business of hunting muskrats? Are there quite a number?

Clayton: Yeah, with the price of rats now even kids and women go out. So if the marsh is well covered I imagine they'd be anywhere, every day, anywhere from 75 to 100 people out there. This is covering all the marsh from end to the other.

Burton: Maybe we can go to hunting clubs now for a few minutes. Do you know how many hunting clubs we have and what are some of the names?

Clayton: I think there are five hunting clubs on the Island. There's St. Fair(?) Hunting Club. I don't know the names of these other ones, they're steel companies.

Burton: Great Lake Steel?

Clayton: Yeah.

Gladys: Andersons?
Clayton: Andersons, and there's that one in St. Annes, I forget the name of that one there. McLeod, is it? No.

Burton: No, that's Wheel...

Clayton: Kelsey Wheel?

Burton: Kelsey Wheel, yeah.

Clayton: Yeah. And there's that other one that used to... Bee Bee Club.

Burton: Swan Lake.

Clayton: Swan Lake. They changed names quite a bit, you know. They're owned by mostly by American people that owns these clubs, but they are run, guided, they have guides there from Walpole Island. Two of these clubs, I think, are run by Indians -- as managers. I think it should be that all Indians should be managers in these clubs instead of having the white man doing it in our reserve, because people here have just as much, maybe more...

Burton: Knowledge about hunting, eh?

Clayton: Knowledge about hunting, yes.

Burton: Do you know what some of these hunting clubs look like? Are they big establishments, costly establishments?

Clayton: Well, some of them very nice. Must be costly to operate, to lease the property they are on. And some are neglected. They don't care if they dike it or not, their marsh. And these are the kind of people they just come there and hunt, shoot their duck, and then get out. I don't know if they're a meat hunter or not, they're just there to have some place to go in for shelter and eat and go back the same day where they come from, or the next day. But some of these other clubs are really kept nice and they must cost quite a bit of money, some of these clubs. It does cost quite a bit too to maintain the marsh if they have to pump all the time, and have people to go in there and cut weed to make channels for the boats to run around in.

Burton: Do some of these sportsmen use their lodges for fishing?

Clayton: Yes, I imagine they use them for fishing, bring their families there. Well, it's theirs, I imagine they could use it much ever the way they please.

Burton: You know what size area they cover? Just a rough...

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Clayton: I imagine they have at least seven square miles or more of hunting area, which leaves our own people less and less marsh to hunt in than they have, you see. We should expand. As our population grows we should have more and more land for ourselves. We bring in more money that what they're paying on leases in some of these hunting areas, as guides and the fees that the hunters, sub-owners pay. They pay $14 an hour, or acre. I'd be willing to pay that much myself to have a place to hunt and call it my own, as a lease.

Burton: Yeah, that's for sure.

Clayton: But the price of living now, that $14 an acre isn't very much money.

Burton: I think we've covered mostly everything unless you have something else you want to tell us.

Clayton: No, I don't think so. It's just that there are few things that could be improved, I imagine. We should think more of our own people to go out and make some money on their own, in our marsh instead of leasing it out, which keeps our people off welfare for the time being. It's a good life to be out hunting or fishing, guiding, instead of young people, young men that can't get a job anywhere during the fall months, or summer months. Instead of them just staying around doing nothing, looking at the other guides, because the other fellows have places where they can go and hunt and they don't have any place. It's kind of hard for them. I think our band council should look into probably one of these days taking over one of those marsh areas where we lease out, and let our own people in there. Set up their own hunting areas.

Burton: Yeah, I think that's it, you've got a good point there. I think we should do that with the Canadian Club.

Clayton: They don't... That's the one I was talking about anyway, that they're running down. See, they don't care. They don't even paint it, they don't do nothing with that. They don't dike it, the building is falling into the river, the only time they repair anything is when the board is broke or they can't, they have to actually fall through some of those docks before they replace them. Well, I guess that just about covers everything.

Burton: Well, I want to thank you for your information.

Clayton: Oh, you're welcome.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROPER NAME</th>
<th>IH NUMBER</th>
<th>DOC NAME</th>
<th>DISC #</th>
<th>PAGE #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WALPOLE ISLAND, ONT.</td>
<td>IH-OA.012</td>
<td>CLAYTONSANDS</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>2,3,5-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
-guiding, hunting and fishing

TRAPPING
-economic importance of

PROPER NAME INDEX

IH-OA.012 CLAYTONSANDS 126 2-6,8-12

IH-OA.012 CLAYTONSANDS 126 7,8