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HIGHLIGHTS:

- A long, repetitive monologue in which the informant compares the past and the present.

Earl: ...Kettle Point. Been living here for quite a few years. I been born in Sarnia on November 6, 1923. In our times, the day that I was born, I guess, well, it's approximately fifty years ago because I'm fifty years old now. The house that we lived in in the time that I was a boy was just an ordinary frame house. Frame house, it had no insulation, no foundations, no furnace, no oil stove. All we had was a couple of stoves, wood stoves and my parents had quite a time in raising, the time that we were being raised.

We cut wood over the wintertime. I can remember helping my dad cutting wood. We probably cut five or six cords of wood a week and got about a dollar and a half or dollar and a quarter a cord for it. At time we'd only get approximately seventy-five to a dollar a cord. Which in great comparison to our day wood sells, I believe, in the neighborhood of thirty dollars a cord in London. Depending on the areas where you buy wood now, it's various prices. I've been selling wood here to the Indian people in Kettle Point for ten dollars a cord during this past winter. Just more or less, I just been cutting wood to help people out that didn't have a chain saw and didn't have no way of trucking the wood out of the woods to bring home.

I've had four brothers, two sisters -- that was our family. And I went to school in Kettle Point. And the school where I attended here in Kettle Point was just an ordinary building. But down through the years it has been fixed up a little bit and insulated, remodelled, but it's the same old school. I mean, it's all wood. If this building ever caught fire, well, it wouldn't last too long because the lumber is real dry. And the lumber that they used in them times were good lumber but it was rough. But down through the years it has got so dry that if it ever caught fire, well, she'd go down in a matter of minutes, or you could say a matter of minutes, depending on the wind.

Our teacher, as I can recall, was an Englishman. I only attended school up in this area up in Kettle Point for about a year. And I was sent to residential school because we were poor and had quite a few little miles to walk to school. The winter season I didn't go to school because there was too much snow and we had no way of getting out.

My dad used to park his car on the ice or make a road on the ice. This was the only source of getting out from the area where we lived. We had to travel by ice. I mean, we drove on the ice with our car. It was quite tough -- I mean real tough. If the young people of today could look back to the years when I was a boy and see the hardships that we had in the time of our growing up...

Also, I can recall the winter months, I never had no overshoes. My mother used to try to make overshoes out of an inner tube. That's out of a truck tire or car tire. You know, the old inner tubes that the older cars used to have. We had no clothes hardly and our footwear was very scarce. So therefore she'd take inner tubes and try to sew them together to make overshoes for us in order to go outside.

So anyway, I was sent to residential school because we were poor and we didn't have no way of really making money like they do now. But that's another point, we'll get to that in just a few minutes. I attended school for seven years. I went to residential school and was there for six years and here for a year in Kettle Point. But as I was saying, our teacher was an Englishman, and we had an hour and a half probably for lunch,

which was dinner. And half an hour for recess time. We used to play golf. We used to go across the road from the place where the present school is -- there used to be a field there -- we'd go out there and play golf. We had the flag poles and all, everything up. And recess time we'd all run for the golf clubs and take for the field. Some would stay and play ball or do something around, play tag or something around the school. So we...

I can remember at one particular time which really amuses me, I even think of today. One of the ladies -- she's a woman now, she was just a girl at the time -- but she took the golf clubs and she also went golfing. And just about noon, about one o'clock, the inspector came. You know, the inspector for the school, him and his wife came to the school. We were on our way into the school and this lady, Josephine Bressette her name is, she took and put the golf ball down and give it a real good whack. (laughs) The inspector just about that time was going into the school, him and his wife, going through the school yard. This ball was hit just perfectly and whack, the ball landed right on the inspector's wife -- well, on her head. And down she went. (laughs) I often think of this, of this particular time yet today, and I've told different people of what we did when we were in the school and what, some of the minor things that happened.

We had paper chases -- this is supposed to be education -- and the teachers would make us tear up paper and then they have two guys go ahead and, you know, whoever caught these guys would be the next ones in the next paper chase to have their turn in order to go out and spread paper along through the bush and hills and one place and another to see who was going to be able to catch them first. This was involved in education in my day. And another thing I learned to do, I can remember when I went to school, I used to say my ABCs backwards. And maybe I could say them backwards here just to show that I'm not just saying that I learned to say my ABCs backwards in that time. I learned to spell and we had slates -- we never had paper like they have now. We had these little carbon pencils and we'd mark on the slate and when we got through with our work in school and you'd have a brush or a damp cloth and you'd wash your slate off and do your lesson, whatever was required for you to do next. But the ABCs, I learned them, to say them backwards in school and they go something like this: z,y,x,w, v,u,t,s and r,q,p,o,n, m and l,k,j,i,h, g and f and d and c,b,a. That's something I learned when I went to school. Of course, we had to learn them forwards and know them forward and also backward. So in the time of my little girl growing up, my youngest girl, I learned her to say the ABCs backwards so she can say them like I can.

We never went very many places when I was a boy. We attended the church here in Kettle Point which was the United Church and also we went to various churches. We never really participated in church. We were taken to Sunday School occasionally and I can recall the ministers from, some of the ministers' names. Some were from the United States and some from Quebec, various

places. We had Mr. Purdy here for a few years, was staying here. I understand he had to stay in one place a certain length of time before he got his license so he come and practised over here in Kettle Point for a few years in order to get his license. Well, that's not a very good thing to say, but nevertheless it's true. They had to have a church someplace before they could go out and minister amongst the non-Indian people.

There were various camp meetings in those times, revival meetings, and I guess they had church picnics but I don't recall any church picnics but I remember some of the revival meetings that they had and camp meetings which was good in them days. Various people from various places came and participated in the camp meetings and revival meetings. They had, in order to raise money for church or things such as this, they had strawberry socials and this is one way that they made their money, in having socials -- pie socials or bake sales or one thing and another like this.

Well, times have changed since I was a boy. I left school, I left the reserve after I got through school because there was nothing to do here at that time. The relief, or welfare as you might say, was I guess around about three dollars a month. And you had to be really helpless before you got that assistance as they... assistance from the government. Three dollars, big deal. (laughs) Who could live on three dollars? Try and live on three dollars today. You couldn't even have one meal with that much, hardly, unless you're a very small eater. Most people now are, as you look at them walking around, they're, you can tell they're well fed, nice and round. I guess if a famine come, they'd last for quite a while if you look at some of them. I guess I could look at myself also in this particular thing.

The change in living has been tremendous down through the years. Housing, jobs, one thing and another has, it's really changed. Now they have the welfare administrator, we have welfare here and people -- depending on how many children they have -- could probably get up to, just about a hundred dollars a month, a hundred dollars a week. Well, in my time, as I said, in my growing up the people that were on welfare, they got two to three dollars a month but now compare it. We are living in a different day and a different time when people get approximately eighty to ninety to a hundred dollars a week. Just on welfare from the assistance to survive. You can understand why there are many people walking around as big and round as they are. (laughs) So, as far as living conditions, it has changed tremendously.

The kids now are bussed off to school. They get on the bus, picks you up at your laneway and away you go. Years ago people walked to school. They walked for miles. I can remember seeing non-Indian children before the bus business had begun, I seen many non-Indians also walking on the roads walking to school, but this is a change. We're living in a day when it's seeming everybody is rich. If you want to work there is work

to be found. There is not too much work on the reserve though. Most of our people are painters or carpenters or roofers or bulldozer drivers or various kinds of work. This work doesn't, we don't find this much on the reserve. But we do have a fellow here that's working on the reserve who has been the grader man for quite a few years. We have, in our building process of building new homes, we have carpenters, we have plumbers. The only thing we don't have is an electrician. We have roofers, some of the boys are roofing in Port Huron. I personally, myself, I've worked for one company in Port Huron for twenty-three years. Twenty-three years in the one place and it was pretty hard to leave the place.

Now I'm working at the Kettle Point Park. I'm the park superintendent. I've been the... In the past I've been a constable, I've been the chief for one term. I've been a hockey coach for approximately seven years. I'm a councillor at the present time. I just been brought into everything and I've been to various reserves to, as called the evangelist to minister the word of God in various places. So I've been

around and amongst the non-Indian people. I have five sons and three daughters. I have also lost two boys in drowning. One boy was nineteen years old and the other boy was nineteen months old.

So I've seen quite a lot of things happen in my day. I say the change as it is at the present day is... You couldn't compare it with what the lifestyle was when I was growing up as a boy. It was quite tough, it was quite tough to survive. My dad used to cut a load of wood up maybe one week, and he'd have to save his money in order to, that we'd survive. Which was only about fifteen dollars for about one week. But as I stated before, the welfare has been a tremendous help and also I would say, if you could say it has helped all the way to some folk, because some people begin to depend on it. Instead of going out and getting a job, they depend on welfare. Which is good to many people but in another way it is harmful to some people because they're depending on it.

A lot of our boys work out through different towns. Like we have people working in Sarnia, Port Huron, London, I guess up near Grand Bend and Forest and various places. We have people working that's, I guess you could say working for the reserve. Like some of the young fellows are doing now, they're... They take a questionnaire around and ask, you know, what has happened in the past and in the future, at this present time of how things has changed. Things have changed tremendously. We have homes now that are being built. I can recall the first home that was built here under this program, the housing program which is about twenty-three years ago. My home was one of the first homes to be built and before I lived in a little log house. It was, I paid \$200 for this little log house and there was no insulation. It had gyprock on the inside and the logs on the outside. Well, there were some years that they didn't even caulk the, you know, the parts in between the logs on the outside. It was quite small but that was the best we

could do in the time that I, after I got married, and having a home. So that's just a little bit of comparison to what people have now.

And when I was a boy, our home was so cold that the water would freeze in the pail and the wash dish and anything that would freeze. We had to more or less protect our food. And I can recall the times that I would wake up in the morning and... I slept beside a window and there was, you know, after a snow-storm, usually there was a little crack in place in the wall or window, well, you know, the snow would blow in there. So I've, I woke up different times in the morning with snow on top of me. And people today talk about the, how cold they are. And as I recall in the days when I was growing up, if they lived in the time that I was growing up, man, I don't know, people I guess would freeze.

But we survived. We never got sick, we were always healthy. Nobody went to the hospital, nobody got sick. I don't know what would've happened if somebody did get sick. But we stayed at home and nobody was sick all winter, nobody ever got sick. But since you've taken electricity into your homes, we had no electricity, we had an oil lamp, a little lantern. But now you have your furnace. The people are not satisfied with just a, just something to heat the home. Everybody today wants a furnace. "Give me a furnace." I'm in the council and some will come to the council and say, "Well, we'd like to put a furnace in our home. We don't like this thing of oil space heaters..." Or one thing or another which in a sense is dangerous because there is explosions have happened in various places. But it's on account of carelessness. I've got two oil space heaters in my home. I'm at the park house now which has a furnace, but I also have a home. I live at the park because I'm in charge here. But in my own home, I have a big home and now it's only heated by oil space heaters. And we get along quite well.

But as time goes on, changes happen and people wants to get up with the, you might say living up to date. Everybody wants a furnace or they want a new car. They're not satisfied with an old car any more, they want a new car. And now this, they don't only want one car, maybe want two cars. You know, depending on how well off they are. As I say, some people can get ahead if you want to work, get out and help yourself, you can get someplace. You can make a little money because usually there is not that much work on the reserve. We have our band staff working here which again is a, when you think of the salary and everything that's paid out, it's quite a lot. But that's the difference of living today and living in the day that I was growing up. People have jobs and they make a lot of money. When I was working in Port Huron, I made around about \$6.30 an hour roofing. And the painters today, the carpenters that go out to work for, they are making ten, eleven, twelve dollars an hour. That's an awful difference. And I was, I can remember my dad was working, I used to go out and help him. He'd work all day for probably seventy-five cents. And a lot of times we'd go out and we'd cut wood for some farmer and all

we would do is get a little bit of beans or maybe a pig head or something like this. You know, just for survival. But now the things have changed and, man, you go out and you can buy groceries. We go to a store now and we buy fifty dollars, fifty, sixty dollars worth of groceries and this doesn't even hardly take you all week. It's only a part of your living.

Our Indian language as I see it, it's gradually dying out. In our reserve here, Kettle Point. But I can't say this for various reserves up north because the small children that have often come to maybe the powwows here in Kettle Point or come down here to visit or, well, used to be in the camp meetings, well, they used to, all they do is talk in Indian. Small, little wee, little wee chaps. So I think the Indian language in some areas is gradually fading away.

(Break in tape)

I believe that the Indian language is declining to an extent in areas. But you can't compare this all across Canada, because depending on the area that we could mention, take up at Saugeen or Cape Croker, all the kids up that way, they talk in Indian. So on the questionnaire, I was looking at a questionnaire that said, "Do you think the Indian language and ideas are on the decline to a great extent?" Well, I can't say this for every place but I know that in Kettle Point here alone that it is on its way out because even a lot of our older people any more, they don't talk in Indian. I never did understand Indian, never been able to say anything in Indian till I went to church. And then when I went to church it was all in Indian. So I had to just dig in and get to learn and understand some of the language in order that I would understand what was being said. But nowadays it's all done in English. And we've talked a bit in our council about telling the teachers to teach the Indian language in schools, in the public school. Not only to the Indians but also to the non-Indians.

Because of the integration now that's happening across the country, that our children are mingling with the non-Indian children, which I believe is a good idea. Because our children aren't always going to be on a reservation. There is not always going to be work here for them. My daughter works here but that doesn't mean my children growing up are going to work here. My boy works in Port Huron and I have another boy who's out looking for work. There is no work here on the reserve for them unless it's some type of program, summer program or student program that gives them work. But as of the present time people have to get off the reserve to work. There is not that kind of work here unless you want to live on welfare. And just stay here and survive, I guess that's the lifestyle if you want it that way. But people, some folk want to get ahead. They want to buy a new car or they want to buy stuff for their home. Well, you've got to get out to work in order to do something like this.

But the Indian language, I believe... We have discussed this with the school system and I think they're planning on trying

to get something going, maybe not this year but probably next year of teaching the children in the school, not only on the reserve but off the reserve, the Indian language.

The lifestyles of Indians have changed over the years because, I guess you might say the, depending on the way you want to live. Whether you want to stay on a reserve and just survive or you want to get off the reserve and try to get ahead. But they don't have socials any more, they don't have what they call dances any more. They don't have these, as they call them bees. Years ago they had bees, you know, and they helped each other but this is not the case any more. Nowadays it's more or less just dog eat dog. You help yourself and I'll help myself. This is the lifestyle of the present day. I can't say for all reserves or every place where there are Indians, but I can say this for Kettle Point because I live here. I don't know what you're doing in Saugeen or Cape Croker, Oneida, Walpole, Sarnia, or Moraviantown. I don't know what this lifestyle is there. But I've been up in Moraviantown and it seemed like they have a leisure time. They're not a people who is in a great race. Well, we have people here also in the same state of mind. They're satisfied just to live. But like I said they don't have socials or bees any more to help each other out in doing anything.

Well, in them times they had bees in order to cut wood to keep themselves warm or pile up a bunch of wood in case of storm. That's what they did years ago. But nowadays we don't cut wood nor do they have, very few people here on Kettle Point now has a wood stove. I'd say approximately about five or six people that still burns wood. You say, "How do you know this?" Well, I've been selling wood to the people that does burn wood all during this past winter. I didn't make anything on it, more or less, I just got paid for my time. And according to your wage, how much wages a man makes in an hour, how about your hourly scale is, why I didn't make anything. I just got paid for my time but the people thinks well, you sell wood for ten dollars a cord, you're making money. You're not. I just gave the wood away and just got paid for my time. And they think ten dollars a cord is a lot of money. Well, if you got a cord of wood over in a little town called Thedford, well they'd charge fifteen, sixteen dollars a cord. And just down here in, down the highway, one day I seen a sign up there 'Wood for Sale.' So I stopped and asked him, "How much a cord?" They said, "Twenty dollars a cord." And that's only five or six miles from here and here I'm selling it here for ten dollars a cord. So you can see I'm not making any money, I'm just putting in time and getting exercise and helping other people out that maybe can't get the wood out like I do.

Put a little bit of effort into it. Things have changed and it's a different day. We have tractors, we have road graders. Years ago we didn't have those. The snowplow open up the roads here in the spring I'd say round about the end of April. So not only the lifestyle of life has changed from the time that I was a boy but I wouldn't say that the nature's lifestyle, but the change in this day in which we live is quite different. We

have snowbanks used to be piled up on the road as high as the house -- depending on the height of a house.

And as we could talk about religion, Christianity, well religion, everybody has religion, some type of religion. But speaking of religion and Christianity is two different phrases. Christianity as the Bible says, the word of God says, that the disciples in one particular place were called Christians. They didn't say they were religious people, you know. Communists has religion and the devils, demons has religion, everybody has some type of religion. But it's knowing what you know, and as I said in the beginning, I never went to Sunday School when I was growing up. But I've been in Bible class, Bible study for approximately fifteen years now and there's a lot to know, there's a lot to learn. If we don't have a teachable spirit, we'll never learn.

But like I say, things have changed and it's still changing. Kettle Point has had various types of sports. We had ball teams. Now we have a ball diamond here that's all lit up. We have lights, we have the park which is a vast change from them days past. We've got all, we've got hockey teams, we've got the Pee Wees, we've got the little guys, the Adams, the Bantams, the Midgets and the senior team. We have some of the boys playing in Junior B hockey. We've had a lot of... Well, it's just a big change from when I was a boy. I didn't have this chance when I was growing up. I loved to play hockey. We used to get out on the ice on the lake here. The lake used to freeze up and you could skate for miles. And them times the water was calm but now it's not, it's changed. Life has changed and the times have changed, because the winds years ago never blew like they blow now. I mean, we had a good windstorm once in a while, but nowadays it seems it's blowing just about every day. Well, we had ice on the lake for miles and miles and miles, and a bunch of guys would gather out there on a Sunday afternoon, approximately thirty or forty people out there trying to play hockey. Well, there was no, nobody had really knowledge of what a hockey team existed of. But down through the years we've had hockey teams and I've been a coach, like I said, for approximately seven, eight years. We've taken championships in our league here and also the Southwestern Ontario Hockey tournaments that we have every year. We've taken three or four championships during the times that I was the coach here. So we've, the fellows are getting older now, and the young fellows are growing up and they're still better hockey players. They're being taught and they're understanding what the meaning of hockey is. So we have coaches, we have managers here now, we have a lot of things going on.

So I'd say the lifestyle, the life change of things that has happened is tremendous. It's a big change. Like I say, the houses and the roads, the recreation facilities and the band administration buildings and the housing project. We have subdivisions. Recently we bought a farm up here for approximately \$65,000, around about 87 acres. We have a little house on it, a big house, and this is all going to be subdivided into areas where our people is going to be able to live. Which I

believe is a good thing.

So as I say, times have changed and we've got to live with the change. I don't say we've got to just go back into the wilderness and the woods and live there like we used to. You can't survive like that any more. Everything is just a tremendous, it costs so much to survive. It costs so much to live. So I... Very well, I guess there's much more I could say about the way that we used to survive, but in them times it was really tough.

But there, our language is gradually disappearing in this area, but I can't say this for all areas. I guess maybe people are just kind of lazy or something to talk their own language or they're ashamed to talk their own language, I don't know. But I sure wished I could understand all of my own language because by going up north to maybe around Sudbury and up and through that area there, they all talk their language. And I would so much wish I could speak my language fluently but I can't do this. I believe I could say this for many young people here. But maybe in the years to come they'll have some people educated in order to get out and to teach the Indian language.

So we're living in the park here, I'm the superintendent and it will soon be time when we started taking in the tourists. Quite a busy time. Fishing line now, everybody fishes with nets, any more they don't fish with a spear or a rod like they used to. That's how much change there has been. Nowadays they take a gill net. I have several nets myself and in the fall of the year, well, we go out and get all kinds of trout, and now we're getting a few pickerel, trout, there is a mixture of all kinds of fish. But that's the change that has happened down through the years. They don't spear the fish any more, they catch them with a net. They don't catch them with a pole any more, they use a net.

When I was a boy a lot of times, like I said in the beginning, we had nothing to eat. My dad used to take his fishing pole and stand on the bank of the lake and the water was that high that he would cast out into the lake and catch fish and that's what we ate for breakfast, fish for dinner, fish for supper. Many times we never had nothing to eat. Not a thing. Our house was bare of food and I remember one time my dad, there was nothing to eat in the house so he said he had one shell, one or two shells -- which I don't know where he got them -- but he was going back in the woods to shoot a duck in order to get something to eat. Walked along the road and I was, like a kid, I always looked along to see what I could find and I seen a matchbox and I seen this little green laying beside it. Here it was a ten dollar bill, an American ten dollar bill. So we stopped right there. Went up to the store and got a whole supply of food and we had something to eat. Man, this was a blessing in disguise. Finding a ten dollar bill for somebody who was just... I don't say they just left it there but I guess the good Lord seen that we were people that needed something and he just caused somebody to leave the ten dollar bill there. So maybe some day if you get hard up, just look

around. Maybe you'll find a ten dollar bill, maybe on your jersey, maybe it'll get stuck some place or you got a, maybe you lose your money.

So the years have changed tremendously. When I was a boy the cars you used to see in the papers were Flash Gordon and all this type of thing. Showed the pictures of the car at the present age, I thought this was a dream. But it's not a dream, all things have come true and we're living in a day now where men needs to know who they are. We don't know who we are. Like I've always said in the time of our ministry, "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything that comes along." So I just say maybe your lifestyle is different, maybe your reserve is different. Maybe the place where you live is just a little bit better than we are but we're satisfied the way we are here and we're looking forward to better times. Our reserve at Stoney Point -- it's Camp Ipperwash now -- been taken from us during the time of the War. But we're in the business of trying to get, you know, the rent money from the government for this privilege.

So I'll just sign off now. This is all I have to say. I've got something else. I'm quite busy here so I'll just say good-bye. This is Earl Bressette.

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