- Describes the beliefs of the Indians concerning hunting.
- Discusses the importance of respect in the traditional Indian lifestyle.

Imbert: Yes, well, let's know how... Just about yourself, did you grow up, which side of the border did you, yourself, grow up?

Joe: Well, my people was... You see, this here was divided into sections. You take Matsqui, Kilgard, and Cultus Lake was practically all one family, the Nooksacks here. You see they was all, their leaders was all the same peoples. They didn't have any boundaries them days, you see, they just recognized as their next neighbor, you see. From here to Cultus Lake was very close, from here to Kilgard was close, and Matsqui was the same. Nooksacks and Matsquis and Kilgards and Cultus Lake was practically one family. They was all head but they had chiefs in every... We had two chiefs here, Nooksacks here, Matsquis I think had one, Kilgards, I believe, had two, and what you call them, Cultus Lake I believe had two at a long time ago, they had two there. So they were practically spoke
pretty near the same language. You see they understood, the Nooksacks, the Fraser River language there, you see, it's (Indian). That's from Hope down to the mouth of the river spoke the Fraser River language, you know.

Imbert: What did you call that Fraser language?
Joe: (Indian).

Imbert: Sorry, I interrupted you. Could you just say it...

Joe: (Indian).

Imbert: I wanted to get it pronounced properly.
Joe: Yeah. Well, that's the Fraser River language, you see. That's the lower Fraser River language.

Imbert: Now that's not the same as the Nooksack?
Joe: Not the Nooksack, genuine Nooksack. Nooksacks and Squamish. Squamish from North Vancouver was practically the same language. They said that some of the Squamish must have drifted in here, and I says, "No, they must have drifted that way." So you can just leave it at this, eh. But they spoke pretty near the same language. Today we've tested it up here just about a year ago -- they understood one another, same language. And that's all to our peoples here. So far away there.

Imbert: Is the Nooksack and the (Indian), is that... Rather the (Indian) and the Nooksack here, is it related in language? I mean is it something the same?

Joe: Not the same language. It's altogether different, you see. But they've been intermarried so much, you see, that right... so close... that they all respected their own peoples. the Indians says that's my people. So they were so close. But the later years from my time, that was seventy -- I'm seventy-three now -- and they have changed and adopted the Fraser River language, and they've left the Nooksack language away.

Imbert: What do they call the people of the Fraser River? What is the name given to them?
Joe: What do you mean?

Imbert: In Indian language, is it (Indian)? Is that the name of the people that used that language?

Joe: Well, that's from Hope down. That's all that came down to Matsqui, you know, down to where that ferry crosses Vancouver Island there, you know, Ladner or... I forgot the name of that.
Imbert: Is that the Langley ferry?

Lady: Tsawwassen.

Imbert: Tsawwassen, yes.

Joe: Yeah, they all talk the (Indian) language. The pronunciation of the words that may sound a little different from the Cultus Lake to (inaudible), and then down to Matsqui, they pronounce it just a little bit different, but it's the same word, the same. It's the sound is a little odd, you know, to them peoples up above. They pronounce the words different but you can understand just the same.

Imbert: I have heard them called (Indian) Indians. Now why would that be?

Joe: The what?

Imbert: (Indian).

Joe: (Indian)? Oh, river. (Indian).

Imbert: Is (Indian) any river or is (Indian) the Fraser River?

Joe: That's the Fraser River, (Indian), yeah. Any flowing river is called a (Indian), you know.

Imbert: Any river is called the (Indian).

Joe: Yeah, (Indian).

Imbert: Has the Fraser River got any special name?

Joe: Yes it has, but I couldn't remember what they called it. They have in every different tribes, or different words, they have a different word.

Imbert: Each one has a different word for river, for that particular river?

Joe: Yeah.

Imbert: Well now, what is... Going back into legend and into, you know, the history as it is remembered. Were these groups, were there always these two groups of people, the (Indian) and the Nooksack, so to speak, were they, or, and did they... Were they always here or did one group come from somewhere else? What is the story back of them and how things almost began, going back to the legends of the beginning of people here in the valley?

Joe: Well, I could tell you the same story that I believe maybe Mamie(?) told you. I would say it was around six, seven hundred years ago, you know, they had a dry spell up in this
here upper part, you see. And all the trees died, rivers dried up, everything just dried up and died away. Well, there was one Nooksack man that was living. He was down Lake (Indian) down here -- that never goes dry there. He was living there and all his people here in Nooksack -- he was a Nooksack -- and he came home after everything kind of straightened up, got a little rain. He came to Nooksack and nothing here and he kept travelling to Kilgard and nothing. After he went to Kilgard he was going to his people up there at Cultus Lake. And on the way there, down Sumas Flat there, he seen signs of a living soul there. So he looked around -- little bits of puddles was in there. The only thing that was there was some little red pinfish, you know, little red things and they got pins all over, and that she was living on that there. All the roots and everything was dead. That's all she had was just them little pin... so she got together and that's where the foundation of the Fraser River came back. Whenever you hear of a speaker from down below, (Indian), or anyplace along the Fraser River, you'll hear them speak on my people from Cultus Lake. You see, they brought the life back, the hills -- them peoples was all killed off. That was the two that brought this here Fraser River back to life, Nooksacks.

Imbert: And they brought the people back, the river back to life.

Joe: You see, yeah. They brought life, you see, and living to the Fraser River. Take the (name) there, they all stayed there and... I know I studied at that myself down as far as I could go. But every speaker that I hear -- we have some wonderful speakers from over there, we hear them speak there and my peoples -- they'll always refer to Cultus Lake. That is where that woman was from and that's where the man lived there, and then that's where the life came back to the Fraser River there. All the peoples in the salt water didn't feel that, but our peoples up here all died away and it didn't take long after it got... They couldn't live because they wasn't used to that, died away. So I think our peoples, they're origin from one man from Nooksack and one from Cultus Lake, and they lived in Cultus Lake and that's where they all came back there. So our relations there, all the relations of Fraser River always put it right back to Cultus Lake, the Cultus Lake is known there. Whenever you hear a speaker, you know, all over this here place, the first thing they mention is the Cultus Lake peoples there. And that's where our peoples all come from. We always call ourself the relative. You'll find them peoples down below, they're a relative. But, you go ahead.

Imbert: This is very interesting. This is what, this is the kind of thing... Now they started a family then. Now was that at the lake itself or was it down below where the river is, where the present settlement is? Or was that right up at the lake?

Joe: It was at the lake where they first met, but they went back to Cultus Lake. That's where they... You see, they
come down there to gather food and so forth, down to the lake. That was a big lake down there, you know, where they're drained out there, they used to... Cultus Lake used to come down there and gather up their sturgeon and steelheads in the spring of the year.

Imbert: Oh, you mean the big Sumas?

Joe: Yes. That's before they drained that.

Imbert: That's where they met down...

Joe: That's where they met, down on the other side of Kilgard, between Kilgard and Battle River, you see. They met in there. You see deep holes in there, you see, that left some water in the bottom, you see. And that's where she was found, you know, by this man there. But they automatically went back there, back to Cultus Lake to dwell.

Imbert: Was that called, what was that called? It wasn't called Cultus Lake in those early days, was it?

Joe: (Indian). That's the Indian name of it. Why it's always call it Cultus Lake, it was a story, you know, a legend, you know. An Indian told a story about that bad sea serpent was living in that lake, you know. Well, the Chinook word came there and called it Cultus. That's a Chinook, that's an English word, Cultus Lake, you see. They go there and if the Indian tips over or something they never find him. I guess it's so deep and cold they just stay down at the bottom. But this, they claim that there's some kind of a sea serpent or something that lived in there -- the Indians believed that. I don't know nothing about it but I just heard, you know. I heard the Indians, the old people, tell me, "Don't go that lake. It's not right." Well, I never went there, you know, but I wasn't going to criticize their talk. That's one thing that we Indians actually believe and we're trained. I was trained and I trained my children -- never criticize anybody, it's not nice. The Indian people always say, "Respect that person. Whatever he says, right or wrong, always respect it." I says, in order to live a good life you have to respect everything. So that old peoples, in order to abide and live by the laws of our people, the Indian people, we got to respect that. But if we don't, and criticize and things like that, you're not living a good life. That was the teaching of our old peoples, you know. You just want me to talk or...?

Imbert: Yes, this is very interesting. This is the kind of thing and so we'll explore it gradually. Just before we leave Cultus Lake, this name that you gave, the other name for it, the real name for it, what does that mean?

Joe: Well now, I wouldn't know anything about that there, that part of it there, but it was the name of the lake. That's the Indian name of it there. It was just like naming a
Imbert: Then the main places that grew up in the valley, were they actually villages? Were the Indians living in these, actually at these places where they built their houses and so on? Or were they travelling around more in the early days, so that the only occasion they would go to one place to fish and perhaps another place to hunt and so on? How was it before the white man came? How was the organization of the life that the people that lived in the valley?

Joe: That's very important. That's one of the most important laws of the Indians. Our peoples, the Nooksack, had a boundary between Matsqui, Kilgard and that there. A family will say, "A family from Matsqui lived over here. This is part of their place." Just the same, if they came to Nooksack they lived here. All right, they had boundaries to hunt, to trap, to gather fish, gather roots, gather berries and so forth, and they hunt too. They had certain places there. When anybody comes in they're welcome, but they're just welcome for a certain time. That's outside of this here three places. They are not supposed to live there. Like say, for instance, the (name). They come there and ask, "I'd like to get up here and get some beaver meat." They ate beaver meat. "Okay. You just help yourself. How long you going to stay?" "Well, one week." "Well, that's good. One week is, we'll let you know, but that's all." If he stayed over that time he's notified. "You went your one week there. You're not supposed to stay here any more." If he came back and stayed there without asking, that's death is his punishment. I believe the Nooksack done the last killing at (name) Lake. Trapping beaver, a (name) came there and trapped beaver. And they gave him permission for two weeks. And he stayed over there, he just made a practice to try and get in there all the time. They got rid of him. So that's the law of the places wherever they had, the Nooksack had trapping beaver. They had places where they hunted bear, they had places where they dried fish. Well, these places was welcome to any of the Matsqui, Kilgards or Cultus Lake. They can come in there, but they had to just stay so long. The Nooksack could go there anytime. You see this family, Nooksack, can go there, but the outsiders go there and just stay so long until they got and they go back. And they had to abide by it very strict. They could not invade that place any more than what they gave him permission on. There's a death sentence if they went beyond that.

And same with us going over there, going to the other place. We had to abide by that there. And that's very, very strict, because our people had to depend on that for their livelihood, you know. They had so much and they wanted to preserve. That's one thing that the Indians did, actually do long time, trying to preserve every article because that's part of their living. They didn't want to invade entirely. Well, I believe that the resources of the country is practically exhausted now,
pretty near. I know the timber, the fish, and things like that there. But the Indian laws with their... would think that terrible. I know it's terrible, any man knows.

Imbert: They didn't waste food in those days.

Joe: Oh no, they didn't. They made use of it entirely, you know, for the benefit of their peoples, you know. And they preserved it, they had laws to respect that. I'd like to tell you a story about... while we're in that hunting, fishing thing. I was raised by my father -- he was raised in Matsqui in the Fraser River. He was, you would call him a Matsqui Indian, below Mission. He was a man known to lot of the people along the Fraser Valley and all in through this part there, is a great honor. A man that they figured that had this wild wolf for his gathering, for whatever he's hunting for bear, deer, or elk, or anything there. They figured that he had control of the wolves, you see, that he went there and he wanted to get it and he always got his meat -- he was a good hunter. All them people respected him. I was, my brothers -- I had two other brothers there -- we were taught by him. Not by him but you take that old man from Kilgard, he was an old chief there, you know. What's them boys' names there, Danny's uncle? Dennis (name). You know the time we had that funeral for that boy down there and I introduced Danny as... Well, he was half-brother to our chief in Lindon(?). Anyway...

Well anyway, he teached me, he respect a lot of things there, to respect the woods, respect the trees, respect the things that you're going to... Say, for instance, I'm going out there to hunt for a funeral. Yeah, that's Ned, Chief Ned. Anyway he says, "You respect everything. Don't, at least don't go to work getting your mind that you're just doing that just for the fun of it. You go out there." So that was the thing that we hunters had in our minds. So we went out there. And you wouldn't believe it, or anybody that wouldn't believe it, but it seemed like a funeral hunt for me is about the easiest thing that I could get. I could go out there and seem like the deer sacrifice and offers himself to me for a benefit, you know, for this here.

It wasn't here just a year ago my boy that I raised here -- I put him through high school -- went up there and he... There was a death in (name) so he goes up there to hills and he says, "You know, I went up there and just got out of the car and walked up there and there was a deer come right there and was charging at me. Come running right towards me," he says. "It looked like he was after me so I shot and he dropped right there." He just got out of the car. So he says, "I got him, put it on and took it home." About there I says, "What was you hunting for, a funeral?" "Yes." Well, I says, "The deer sacrificed himself." "I never thought of that," he says. I says, "Yeah, that's what we were taught. I thought I told you that before." "No," he says, "I guess if you did I forgot it."
But that's one thing you could say, the white man could say, we prayed for this here, for a good cause that God gave it to us.

But we respected this here, the Great Spirit gave this here for a good cause, and the deer knows that he sacrificed himself and just going... So you see, they're taught to respect everything. You stop to pray, the white people stop to pray -- we stop to respect. It's the same thing, you know. We respect this here, we respect the woods, the living trees in the woods. We drink the water -- it's alive. We breath the air -- that's alive too, that keeps us. We respect it. And it seems that everything that you respect helps you along in life there. It may help you, what you're going to try and accomplish, you see. That was teaching of our old peoples there. We really trained on that there and I think, I find it in my life, it's very successful and I believe that we all should...

Imbert: This is very interesting because I somewhat believe this myself too. It's a sense of where we have lost this respect. We ruthlessly, we get rid of things -- things won't any more be of service to us. But did this mean now, for instance, if someone was going out to hunt in the old days, did they purify themselves in any special way and this kind of...? This, I know, some of the people over on the coast on the other side of Vancouver Island, if they're going for a whale hunt, for instance, would purify themselves, would bathe, and they had great respect for the whale. And there were times when the whale actually came up like the deer did, because it was need of. The whale sacrificed himself for the needs of the people there. I mean, there was a sort of understanding of that. This is something that is very interesting because it means a whole attitude towards nature, which we lost, of course. I mean most of us never had, but the... Was there anything of that in going out to hunt, for instance? Was there a purification prayer or whatever it happened to be?

Joe: Well, that's the same thing, you know. In the evening, you know, when we were asked -- you see, we hunters don't hunt for ourself. We are trained for this benefit of our peoples, you see. Up in the Fraser Valley I've hunted from Langley up to Chehalis and up there. All right, when I was asked there, you know, I myself will get out there. I would say to myself, "Am I good enough to offer my service to them peoples?" I don't say just because I'm a hunter they come to me. I say, "Am I qualified," you know, "to give my service to them people?" So I really respect that there. I don't go out there and... Oh, I've went out there and took bass in these here places and say, "I wish they would clean me up so that I would be qualified to do my task." Whatever I'm asked to do. Yes, I've done that a lot of times there. I've walked in the evening, walked out there and say, "I wish I could be qualified so that I could be like sort of my dad, to get out there and peoples respect him. I wish I could qualify like that." Many times I've went out there, and repeated them words lot of times, yes. I practise it there in my work and I think every hunter, every man that's looking to try and help his peoples
gets out there.

There's very few hunters in the tribe, very few. And when they go out there, like fishermen, like the whale hunters there, you know, goes out there, they have the same thing. They won't do it for themselves, they do it for them peoples. That's one thing that a hunter or a fisherman does, they qualify themselves so that they'll be a benefit to the other peoples, you see. That's one thing that all these peoples trained for. Just the same as building canoe, building houses, they all qualified for the same purpose.

We have some peoples that couldn't do anything for themself. It's the same as it is today, you see. But we have to respect them, we have to try to train them to try and lift themself up. We don't criticize them. The Indians don't criticize them kind of peoples, they try to raise them up even if they couldn't do anything. They have their part of the peoples there so they just push them along. We have to hunt for them, we have to give them, the chief has to see that they're provided for. That's one good thing about the life of the Indians a long time ago -- they didn't criticize, they didn't do anything against them kind of people at all. They try to help them.

Imbert: So did, now would there by any...? In preparing, then, it was more what you did yourself and your attitude towards the life in the woods, the... You didn't have any special ceremony that you went through in order to purify yourself. Was the sense that you were making yourself pure enough or cleansing yourself in order to be a good hunter?

Joe: That's right. Well, just as I said there, you just have to...

Imbert: That's what you did for yourself? You tried to make yourself purified?

Joe: That's right.

Imbert: What sort of things would it be that you would be purifying yourself of, from? Can you give any instances of what -- I'm not thinking that in your own case -- but what people generally would be wanting to...? What would be... would it be a sense of sin or would it be a sense of making themselves worthy? Of getting rid of their own wills or desires, trying to submit to something? What would this, what would be the nature of this?

Joe: The way I would interpret that there, you see... I'm a hunter. If I do something that's not just right in life, maybe offend something, maybe I'd take the meat that I had there, you know, and just destroy it or something like that. But if I take this here and respect this thing that sacrificed, you know, for this here one thing, that deer meat there, or fish, or whatever it is there, and use that properly, then if I
don't it will be hard for me to get that again. I may be punished, maybe for a week, two weeks, or something like that there. So I have to respect, I have to take tell my peoples there that this is part of the thing that keeps you alive, you have to respect. So if I don't, I'd be punished there. So all my life, wherever I go, I have to respect not to offend this here person because he may be a part of that...

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Imbert: This is very interesting. We have as many other things I was trying to ask you, but still this is the kind of thing that... Now was this tied up in the minds of the old people or the people in those days? Was there a sense that there were certain laws in nature, the way things worked, the world worked, that kind of way? That if you had this respect there was a kind of interrelationship between man and the nature around him and both helped each other in a sense? The trees would help man, the rock or the fish, the beast and (inaudible) back and forth? And how did this relate to any further spiritual aspects, you know what I mean, and anything of...? Was there any sense of a supreme being and so on like that? Could you give me a little bit about the real sort of feeling of the religion such as it was? And this is all part of it, I can see this is part of it.

Joe: Well, I don't know how to explain that, not unless I had, I... The only thing that I get there, you know, because we people, the old people respected this here life of the, like a deer or a bear, things that... they're a living soul. They know that we're here and we have to help one another. Now this would be going beyond there. Like me, I'm going out there to get some meat, deer meat, for my people. I get out there and it seems like sometimes if it's really a good cause it's something simple. If I'm getting for a graveyard cleaning, you know, something like that there, you know, and a lot of people going to come in there, it's very easy for me to get meat. Just go there and it seem like they're waiting, they're just there. I respect it. I don't criticize it or do anything, because my own people says, "Always respect it because you know that the Great Spirit beyond, and the deer knows that he's going for a good cause and he gives himself," or a bear, or anything like that there. We're trained and it seems like when we go out there my peoples always respect, you know. It seems like I come back with it there, you know. And a lot of peoples are here for a dollar, you know, buy ammunition or something like that. Well, this here don't make me feel that because I'm praying to hunt for the benefit for them. And if I take that it may interfere with my hunting afterward for somebody else there, you see. I might be breaking the law, breaking the law for that there. I would like to give you a little incident there, you know, about the three of us there. I and my brother and another man hunted for a big powwow up there to... just
below Chilliwack there. And people from all over the country came there. Well, I hunted one day and the second day we didn't get anything; we is all good hunters. The second night there we had a lot of old peoples in there. Well this is, "We want to let you fellows know," the head man or the man that hired us, "that something wrong with you guys. The old fellow is going to take that thing away." So they beat the drum and took that away and we kept nudging one another, you know. Got through there and, "You fellows is all right." The third morning, well, we got outside and, you know, just kind of kid around one another. So next morning early, you know, before daylight, we was out. We got up the hill there and we looked there, you know. My brother says, "Isn't that a deer standing there?" It's kind of dark yet. Looked, it's a little too dark under them trees. "Well, shoot it and see." So he raised up and shot and it dropped. And he says, "I think there's another one there." "Shoot it." He shot that and that dropped. But they were two great big bucks, big ones. So we dragged it down. By the time we got it down to the river it's daylight. Load it on the boat and we rowed across the Fraser River over there at Devil's Run. Got there and the old man says, "Didn't you fellows go hunting?" "Yeah." "Well, what did you come back for?" "Well, we got the meat." Dragged it up to the house there, hung it up there. Old man, "Now," he says, "you fellows make fun of that old guy beating the drum last night?" He says, "You fellows done something," he says, "that deer wouldn't give up to yourself. You done something wrong."

Imbert: Was there a sense of the Great Spirit, then, that controlled and ruled this land? I mean, what was that before? It's difficult now to think back because the white man's sense of God and so on has sort of come in between to some extent. But I would be interested to know, you know, how the world seemed to be organized in that sense, of the spiritual world in a sense, as it was thought of. This was all part of it, of course.

Joe: Well, I wouldn't know any too much about how to explain that there. But the Indian highly believed in the Great Spirit. That was their life. In order to believe in the Great Spirit you had -- that word I always use -- is respect. You've got to respect everything. Not only your fellow man but wherever you're walking you've got to practise that there. You've got to teach it to your children, you've got to learn. It's one of the greatest things that our people today has is respect for your fellow man. Not the younger generation but the older peoples, you see. The old people had that respect. That's one thing that I believe that the Great Spirit guided them. And whenever they went out, like these Indian singers that you got there... A lot of people just say, "Oh, anybody can be a powwow dancer." But they had to go out and accomplish that. The real powwow dancers had to go out and gather that up. They had to learn the respect of where they're at, where they go, everything. And then when they're qualified they come back and they sing for their peoples there. It's the same as the hunters, it's the same as anything else there, you know.
But I think the Indian people had to live by that Great Spirit more than the civilized white people in their Jesus and God, because that's their lives. They had to live by it, you know. And I...

Imbert: Was there a sense of submitting to guidance from this Spirit? I mean was everything telling you what to do in a sense of guidance and so on? Would you be told or would you have to understand?

Joe: You just had to get out there, you know. You got to, you got to ask, you know. You got to get out there and ask yourself, you see. That's all I... All I just telling you, am I qualified, am I good enough to qualify for that, to help that certain things. That's the only things that I go out there. That's the only, I really respect that Great Spirit for that there, you know. It's nothing else. Get out there and see...

(Break in tape)

Imbert: ...like the early organization, about the education of the young people, or about the way that various tribes were organized and so on. Anything that you remember along these lines.

Joe: Well, you take... Every tribe it's got, they've got their chief. And they've got their qualified men, like, you know, buildings, they have qualified. And then they had the young peoples that come in there, you know. And if a young man wants to learn the trade in making a canoe, they have these here men there, you know, to teach them the canoe. Well, that's the canoe part of it there, and then they have their building part. They make buildings, you see. They have buildings, you know, all over different places, like where they're gathering berries, where they're gathering the beaver, whatever they're gathering; fish, and things like that, a village.

They got a village there and they got the older peoples there to teach the younger peoples how to preserve this here berries, how to keep it over winter, you see. And a lot of them, the berries, a long time ago was dried. And they did, they did preserve berries, you know. I told that to the teachers here a while back, that they took these here berries, you see, and put them in leaves, like great big... And they covered it over with this here big maple leaves and things like that there. And after they got there they bind it up there and put it under the water until that scum covered that leaves, you see. The brown scum that comes out of these water, no matter water it is there but it comes there. And they preserve that for the winter, sealed tight. They put that away. Well, that's one way that they have. But most of the berries long time ago was dried. Well, all the old people showed these young people how to put this up.

And then when they went out hunting deer, bear, or goat,
whatever it is, they dried their meat. They had people to show
the young people how to, the young peoples was there, you know.
And then they had a fire there and the rack so high and they
stripped that meat and then... A few hours and that was
dry enough so that they could take home, like six or seven
goats. One man can carry that after it's dry, you know. Well,
they preserved that that way; bear meat is the same way. All
these here young peoples was there. They took their family in
there, you know, where they showed that. That's the same as
drying fish. They had the women there skinning, put it up
there and smoked it, and dried it up in the places there.
Well, after it's... You know, they just go to them places
maybe for two weeks then they bring all the things down. Like
us go way up the river there and we come back, and they finish
curing it after they get here.

But I think they really taught their children to listen. Long
time ago they never had any children that went out of bound,
like delinquency. They never had that there. That was
absolutely strict laws. When an Indian kid comes there they
couldn't come around and right through here, no. They have to
excuse themself before they start from that end to go through
here -- that's respect to the older people. See, that's taught
to them from little thing, to respect, excuse yourself, even
before you go there or when you're going behind a person.
Excuse yourself before you go back through there. Today you
never hear that, "Excuse me," or anything, you never hear it.
But a long time ago they taught it, you know, so that the their
children never did... They never did have any delinquency.
After they got old they did break laws, but not children.
Today we have a problem.

Imbert: Of course in those days the whole valley, or a great
deal of the valley, was just thick woods, wasn't it? It was
just tall forest, the valley was, in the early days. And
perhaps... How would you describe the valley? I mean before
the white man came and people were living in there. How did
they get around the valley, and what was the valley like?

Joe: Gee, this here, when I was a kid, about sixty-five
years ago, I know for sure. I can go from here to Matsqui and
it was all forest. When it snowed the snow stayed in them
roads there, you know, them trails and so forth for months, for
three months good. You can use a sled. That was all forest.
It was nothing for an Indian to gather his food. They never
did go hungry. The only thing that they did do is their
clothing. But they had plenty of wood. They had plenty people
gathering wood because they lived in longhouses. It's four,
five families lived in one place, you see, and then the men
gathered up the wood, you see, for the winter there. It was
nothing. The timber was plentiful, the game was plentiful, the
fish were plentiful. There was nothing, no hard times. The
Indians lived good. It was no problem for an Indian to live.
Now it's entirely different.

Imbert: What were the clothes made out of in those days?
Joe: Oh, they made out of buckskin, made out of buckskin and cedar bark. (laughs) Want to tell you about that cedar bark, you know. The mother tree of the forest, cedar. Cedar, you know, you can make snowshoes out of the branches. And when you make your canoe, you make your baskets, you see. You can make your plates out of the cedar, you know, the long plates that the Indians used long time. That is the mother tree of the forest. Whenever you're caught in a storm you get under a cedar tree, it's always dry underneath there because the limbs is there. That's why the old people called it the mother tree of the forest. You make your housing out of the cedar there. It's highly respected amongst the Indians a long time ago, because everything was made from that mother tree, mother tree of the forest. They really respected that tree. Just gradually drifting away today.

Imbert: Were there trails, definite trails, all through the forest?

Joe: That's right. There's a trail from here to Cultus Lake, trail from here to Sumas Lake -- that will be Kilguard today, you know. There's trails there, you know. They had horses, you see. And then from here to Abbotsford -- there was a village on the other side of Abbotsford as you break through that there. That just be the Matsqui, two longhouses. I seen the remains -- one on the left side and one on the right side there. And then there was a trail from here goes clean to Warnick(?), trail to Matsqui entirely, you know, all together, trails there.

Imbert: Was this quite a centre here then? Nooksack was the centre and the trails would go out in different directions?

Joe: That's right. That's right. They come, they hit here and it will go clean to (name) and to the lake here, you see. That lake was a great beaver place there, you know. People, when they come and visit, each tribe welcome them. If they ask them if they wanted to go to the beaver place, where the lake is there, or if they wanted to stay here, or wherever they wanted to, they choose there and they gave them the permission to... they respected that visit there. The visitor was entirely welcome, you know. If he stayed two weeks, it's all right, three weeks, or whatever he wanted there. They're entirely welcome. They appreciate their visit to our place.

Imbert: Could you tell me where the villages were? The Matsqui village was just over the other side of Abbotsford, was it?

Joe: There was two villages there, yes. One was towards that railroad track up there. There was one big longhouse there. One was on the right hand side -- that's when you're facing Mission, you see. And one longhouse was over in that place. You see that's the creek, the creek that comes in there. There's a big creek in there, you know, and there's lot
of fish that comes in there, you see. And there's a lot of bear, deer, good hunting in there, ducks and things. Wherever there's anything to be gathered, say, the Indians made their houses there. Matsqui... two big houses was built there. Actually place was down there where they're at now, right there, the same place. Every tribe of Indians had their hunting places there, berry place, wherever they go to pick berries, you know. They're all industrious, they all got their, they all, they had to gather, they had to gather their meat (inaudible).

Imbert: What was the meaning of Matsqui? Do you know what the meaning of Matsqui was, the name Matsqui?

Joe: No. No, I really don't.

Imbert: How is it pronounced properly?

Lady: Say it in Indian.

Joe: Matsqui.

Imbert: Usually the white man can't pronounce the word and it gets rather far away.

Joe: Matsqui. Yeah, that's...

Imbert: What about Sumas. How would that be pronounced?

Joe: Sumas, yeah, Sumas.

Imbert: Does that have any special meaning?

Joe: Well, I wouldn't know. I believe it's just that lake. See, there was a lake there. The same as (Indian), you see, Cultus Lake. That was a big lake there, you know.

Imbert: The Kilgard Indians, now that's not... Of course, Kilgard is not an Indian name.

Joe: No.

Imbert: What was their proper name be?

Joe: Sumas. That's their real name. That's their... The ones that lived right there.

Imbert: Right where that Kilgard is today?

Joe: Yeah, that's right.

Imbert: Then there was... I'm just interested to seeing the different sort of centres, Matsqui, the Sumas. What about in the Chilliwack area, were there any villages up around there? Was there one where the reserve is now, Chilliwack?
Joe: Yeah. Well, the Indians lived right there, but it's the same families as that other. But, you know, they don't associate with Kilgard, Matsqui, and us. They seem to associate with that Rosedale and that there. It seems like they go the other way. They don't go across the river though. They don't go to Chehalis or Harrison. Seem like they go from there, Rosedale and (name), them places there, that Chilliwack place there. But there's one big longhouse there, the one I hunted for. Let's see, where in the dickens...? There's a big mill there, just as you're going to Chilliwack, before you turn. When you're leaving that prairie and you hit there and then you turn. There was an Indian... I think there's an Indian reservation there yet. There's a great big longhouse there, must have been 120 feet long there, you know.

Imbert: This side of Chilliwack?

Joe: On this side of Chilliwack, below. There was a big mill right in there.

Imbert: Somebody's mill, now what's that called? I know where you mean. It was between Sumas Mountain and that other mountain.

Joe: That's right, right in there. I hunted for that place there. I don't know, I hunted one time there, you know, I had three deer. We had 150 pounds of sturgeon and I think we had thirty-five steelheads. And the Chehalis peoples brought seven deer, a lot of ducks. You see, whenever anybody invites for them big places like that, we thank them. Like our elders, they say, "We're invited up there." You know, "We appreciate that. You go up there and get something and we'll take it up there." So that's how we happened to have that three deer and 150 pounds of sturgeon and thirty-five steelheads. We got the old man, he got up there and he gave it. We don't get anything because we figure that the old man is doing some good work for the other peoples there, you know.

Imbert: Were there any stories in memory, passed down, of the first white man that came into the country? The impression they made, or what they did, so on like that? Is there anything that you remember that you were ever told about the first white people that came?

Joe: I couldn't tell you anything but what I read, you know. That's just about all...

Imbert: Nothing that you heard through the older people?

Joe: No.

Imbert: Or anything to do with when the white people settled? Any troubles that arose and so on like this? And now in relationship to the land question and the property question and so on, and the white people coming in? Can you say anything of
what happened in those early days? About the settlers, for instance.

Joe: I couldn't say anything to that either, you know, but it's... The only thing that I could tell you, you know, that my Indian peoples was put in a place where there wasn't fit for a human being to live under that conditions, you know. I really think that they deserve a lot more than they're getting, or they're offered today. The resources, I think, really belong to the Indians a long time ago. Of course I take, when I speak them, I say, "Don't you think that God put this on the earth for all the peoples? Well," I says, "I sure wish they gave it to all the peoples and let all the people benefit on this here, without a doubt. But don't deprive one race of peoples who to try to help themself. Let everybody enjoy what we got there." So I, if we along there I'd like to speak on like what I've told you here.

Imbert: Go ahead, just go ahead.

Joe: Like if we were talking for all the resources of this country. Like the white peoples came into this here place, I think the Indian appreciate, because the Indians don't offend that person. That's the law of their place -- don't offend them. Some day she may be your best friend. The white peoples, I think, in British Columbia and Fraser River, they treated them all. But when they came down and says, "You settle on the reservation and we'll take care of you." That's where the big thing came, the Indians, the white people didn't, the government didn't take care of the Indians. And I believe that all the resources of this country had enough to take care of, educate them, qualify them so that they could be the same standard as the other peoples there. Today I could see my people no matter where I go in Chilliwack, Vancouver, New Westminster, Mission, or Abbotsford or anywhere. Whenever an Indian is there, it seem like a policeman is right behind them. All right, the Indians have their weakness, they drink. But why should they go to work and use their supreme penalty, law and things right behind them? Why don't they educate the Indians? "Say, mister, why don't you have somebody to come there? Say, mister, come on over here." Talk to them. The Indians got a good mind. "If you've got drinking, don't drink in the public." Have peoples, you know, instead of having the force, you know. This here, "Come on with me," and take them all like that there. Educate the Indians, have a place where they can go there and tell them. Have this here enforcement so that you could tell Mr. Indian that that's not right to go there. The Indian is just a child to this here rules and ways of the white peoples today. You've got to educate them. Today you can educate the Indians there. But they've still got that weakness because it's just like an animal tied up there and you turn him loose, they don't know where the heck to go. They just run all over. They got to be guided. They've been tied up in the reservation so long that they get free, they get out there and they don't know how to control themself. They got to be helped.
Imbert: What is the difference between the two sides of the border in the treatment of the Indian and so on? Is there a difference or was it much the same? I mean, how was it in the old days?

Joe: I think the treatment in Canada is a lot better than it is over here. But the Indians don't take that advantage. You see, I think in British Columbia the federal government gives them human rights. But to do things... But the only thing I could see, they're building houses, they build lot of things over there, and the Indians don't take advantage of that there. And I think that's why the federal government and white peoples is failing -- to try to encourage, try to help them, try to help them develop that so that they could get to...

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