HIGHLIGHTS:

- Mr. Chief is the grandson of Misihew and great-grandson of Seekaskootch. Attended Anglican residential school on the reserve. Interviewed at the age of 47.
- Cree encounters with Blackfoot. Story of escape by changing into a snake.
- Intertribal wars and leadership qualities.
- Dreams: defeat of evil in dreams; power from dreams.
- Flood myth.
- "Cannibals" - their powers, their destruction.
- Northern lights: significance of; fear of.
- Frog Lake massacre.

M: Mary Mountain, granddaughter of Seeskakootch, "Towards a New Past" employee.

I: Iris Baker, teacher at Onion Lake.

L. Lloyd Chief, grandson of Misihew (Robert Chief) born July
I:  Lloyd Chief, Onion Lake, June 17. Lloyd, you're the
great-grandson of Seeskakootch?

L:  Yes, that's right.

I:  You have some stories to tell us. Do you want to start
with the one about the (Frog Lake) massacre?

L:  Which one? Frog Lake?

I:  Yes.

L:  Well, I don't really know too much about it because - I
heard a lot of it you know.

I:  Who told you?

L:  Uh, John Horse used to tell me about it.

I:  Who was he?

L:  He's from Frog Lake. He died about four or five years
ago.

I:  Was he there?

L:  Yes.

I:  Oh, so what did he tell you?

L:  Well, he - he told us a long story about how it started and
how - the damage they made, and the capturing this Cameron.

I:  How did they capture Cameron?

L:  I don't know, I guess he tried to run away. I heard that
he was supposed to try and run away but they caught him and
they hid him. You know, one of these Indians, I guess, was...you know (illegible)...and they protect him.

I:  You don't know that Indian's name?

L:  No.

I:  Was he Yellow Bear?

L:  I just couldn't tell you. I don't know too much about it.
And they hid him, and this man, this Indian that kept him, put
him in a tent someplace, I guess...and they told him they were
(an) escort.

I:  Can you tell me what Cameron's role was? Was he an agent,
or...?
L: I don't know. He must be a young man...
I: Yes. He was working with the Hudson's Bay.
M: Oh, yes.
L: Yes.

I: And I think this was Yellow Bear who had... was working with him, or helped him. So it was the women that took him then.
L: No, the Indian took him.
I: The man took him?
L: Yes, and he protect... he protect Cameron, you know. The only way... he couldn't... he couldn't shout... he's wearing this strip. But the Indians were watching on him, (in case) they tried to get him. And that's the only way...'cause he was really scared, I think, that time they got him. That's how John Horse used to tell us about it.
I: Well John Horse would have have been quite young then or was he...?
L: He was quite young, I think. I think he was, well, he was pretty young, around sixteen, maybe.
I: So, would he have been with the women, or would he have been with the warriors?
L: No, he wouldn't be with the warriors. He was just... he was just there.

I: Did he tell you what he did the night before the massacre?
L: No. They had the biggest dance ever. That's what they say (chuckles). And we had a powwow, like a war dance. I guess they'd been talking about it, and they were trying to get something, I don't know, something anyway. But this agent, he was really bull-headed I guess, and they wanted to get something out of it.
I: That was Quinn?
L: Yes.
I: So, was it because of him that they started the massacre?
L: Yes. And what do you call that Indian who shot him...?
M: Wandering Spirit?
L: Wandering Spirit.
I: So, did this Horse... was it John Horse? Was he there when
he shot him?

L: He was there. I don't think they were allowed to go up there. It was only a group of Indians that went up there.

I: Where did the rest stay?

L: In the camp. They had a camp there. Inside the reserve (illegible), they had a camp there.

I: Which people would be in that camp?

L: Well, they say they were mostly all likely Frog Lake Indians.

I: Anybody from Seeskakootch's tribe?

L: I don't know, I couldn't tell you. No, we never heard anything about it. There's another thing...after they came up here and they want (illegible) that's how...I think that's how Seeskakootch was involved. Because he went along with it.

I: And was John Horse there when they came up to Fort Pitt?

L: Um hum, he told me more stories (but) I couldn't tell you that thing, because I wasn't interested in learning about it, you know, because it was just a story and one or two times I heard it. You know, it was just a past thing I didn't understand. I didn't know about it.

I: You don't remember any other things about it? What was it you were saying there about the Blackfoot people, that you were telling...

L: Oh, yes. My old grandfather, what you call him (Misihew) Anthony (sounds like) Old Grass, he's my grandfather...

I: What was his name?

L: Old Grass. He's from Leask, that's in Mistawasis Reserve. They had him in the army and this old man was in the First Great War in England.

I: Is that how he lost his arm?

L: Yes, that's how he lost his arm. And he was married to my grandmother. That's my uncle, my dad, his mother. This old man married to my old grandmother. That's how we came to know him. He used to stay here. We used to work at Medicine Lake. That's just across the (Saskatchewan) river here. And we used to sit by the campfire and he used to tell us about these things. That's the first time I ever heard it and he said it didn't happen too long ago. We heard a lot of things about it but I don't know too much about it. But the way he used to tell us, he says that this man, I guess they were white, you
know, they just generally moving about south for trapping or
were camping on this side of Medicine Lake. They had - I don't
know how many - there wasn't too many anyway. But this
Muscowsay (?) used to get up around four o'clock in the morning
before the sun gets up and they wished to go out south because
they knew there were Blackfoot Indians used to come out there.

I: Where were they hunting out from?
L: From south.

I: They were? Quite a bit south, or still in Saskatchewan?

L: Well, I don't know this country before that...before there
was any Saskatchewan or Alberta. And this man went south. He
tied his horse on this side, on the hill there in the bush, and
he climbed up on that big hill from the north side where
there's bush. And he was climbing up on this hill early in the
morning, and then on the land below there, he said, "There's a
whole bunch of those tents." And he said they were Blackfoot

Indians. Early in the morning when they go on a warpath, you
know, what they call it is...they're getting ready. The horses
were there and some, a few Indians, were going on a horse, and
they were practising up. They have to practise. So I guess he
seen these Blackfoot Indians just down below there. So before
they seen him he crawled back. So he came and he told his
family, and there was I don't know how many families. He said,
"Let's go." So then before the sun was up, he came down. And
he said that they crossed the river (unintelligible). That's how
they used to cross it, with a saddle horse and you let the
horse go, the women higher with the kids on top of the horse,
and swam across.

I: And they hang onto their tails?
L: Yes.

I: Is it shallow there?
L: Well, I think that's the best spot. They used to cross
there. It's just around the bend there.

I: Did the river used to be much higher than it is now?
L: I don't think so.

I: Is it right by where the fort was?
L: Yes. That's the old crossing. That's where they used to
cross. I guess it's kind of shallow.

I: So did the Blackfoot people come up here this far ever?
L: Well, we were up across the river here, you know.

I: Did they (the Blackfoot) ever cross the river?
L: No. Once they crossed the river, they're safe.  
(Unintelligible)  
I: But other times did the Blackfoot ever come up in this area?  

L: No. I heard when they...I heard sometimes they come up and they got the horses. You see, that's what they were after. They were after horses. And they steal them horses and if they can kill you, they will kill anybody.  

I: Well, then how - this was the land before treaty, eh?  

L: It must be, yes.  

I: Well, how would the people be organized? This was a small group, just of warriors, that was going out...  

L: Yes.  

I: And where would the rest - where would the women be?  

L: The warriors - like the Blackfoot?  

I: No, the Crees that were going out, the ones that saw the Blackfoot.  

L: Oh, they just go out.  

I: The whole tribe was out there?  

L: No. Just a few of them go out.  

M: But they had their families with them.  

I: Where would everybody else be? Like, did most of the people stay in a large group and then go out in small groups?  

L: I guess that that's the way. They used to go in small groups, you know. Like, I guess they were all over. You know, they were hunting - they had to get something. And they don't stay in one place all the time. They didn't gather together all the time unless they're on the war. If they know there is a war they have to get together.  

I: Could they get together for happy powwows too?  

L: Oh, sometimes, yes.  

I: When they got together who would - would each small group have its own leader?  

L: Yes.  

M: How was the leader chosen?  

L: Well it's...because you know who's going to be the leader.
If one's decided that he's going this way and he gathers these ...maybe, his brother or brother-in-law, anybody who wants to go along, he gets and forms a group and they go.

M: He's not appointed? It just his personality?

L: No.

I: So anybody who wants to go with him can go?

L: Yes.

I: If they got all together, how would they be organized?

L: Well, when they get together, then, they knew who is...they recognize who is the...who is the brave, you know. One of those has more... They generally have one leader, anyway.

I: What did they look for in a leader, like, what kind of person would they respect in those days?

L: It's a...it's a very important man. What I said the other night here, when a man feels that he's very...he's elected from the band, you know, from the Indians, and they...he tries to make a name for himself. And they form...sometimes they form into a group and maybe eight of them and ten of them young fellows, or young men, will go and they say then, "Let's go," you know. They go out and they take (Unintelligible) horses and they show what they...that they have done something that, you know, that they bring some kind of a something to show that there is something that they...what they done. Stealing horses or kill men. That's why they used to scalp the people, you know. Just to prove that they...that they done something, and they're brave enough to do it.

I: This is just - like the Blackfoot they would scalp?

L: Yes. And they bring it home and they show it and then as soon as he gets there, well, he is a man, you see. He's taken life, you know. Now he shows that he's a man now.

I: So you have to become a brave man and a strong...?

L: Yes.

I: Well, what about - how would he act towards the people, or would that matter? As long as he has been...

L: No, no, as long as he's recognized as a brave, you know, because they don't - they don't go after their own people. The thing that they want to be a chief, you know, they want to be recognized to be as...a brave. That's the most important thing, I guess. Because sometimes it's...a squaw...a woman, you know, or something like that. No man likes to be called a woman because you couldn't live. That's the thing an Indian didn't like is to be called a woman.
I: Was it a big insult?

L: Yes. (Unintelligible) That's how - that's how it starts, you know. He got to prove himself so that he be recognized as one of the leaders.

I: So would he be a leader only in that area, in charge of war or going hunting? Or would he also be a person who people would go to for advice and - kind of counsel?

L: He must be, yes.

I: And did different people have different jobs, sort of? You know, would you have different leaders for different things, or would one leader be in charge of everything?

L: Well, I don't think so. I guess it's just the foreman (Unintelligible) that the group like that...a group of Indians...I think that...that's one thing I couldn't answer, 'cause there's a lot of ways, you know. I don't know about them things.

M: Tell us about when the leader, how the leader was chosen when they made the big snake and snuck out.

L: (Laughs) That's quite a story. Because a lot of times, you know, it's not only that they want to be a brave, but there's a lot of spiritual things happening today. That's why they have to know something, because it's not only that they're fighting with their natural ways, but they...a lot of times they have to depend on their spiritual things like...

I: They had special powers.

L: Yes.

I: Would they usually get these through dreams, or...?

L: Oh yes, yes. They don't practise them but the way that they get them is sometimes they go out and they dream about this thing and it's just like they say, it's a spirit. Well, really, they say it's the power of the devil, you know. And they form into a dream and he comes...comes up to him and he said...well, I'll tell you a little story about it because it's the only way you can understand. Right in here we're sitting on the reserve. I noticed when I was young I used to learn a lot about these things. Like there's certain springs found here; you don't see them, but there's certain springs. There's a spring down just north here. In that valley where that creek's coming down, there's a sort of a spring. Just north on the lake here, alongside the hills, there's, I believe, two springs there. Well, there's more springs, more springs over here in the lake.

the lake. Now these things we are taught about in the Bible. The Bible states that it's true. People don't recognize these
things. But the way it works, all these holes up here in the spring, there's a certain thing that...in it. It could be, it could be a big (sounds like) cougar, could be anything. Well it comes to a form as a man in the nighttime and gives a dream. And it comes out when you're dreaming. He comes up to you and he will give you something. He says - "If you come, I'll give you certain things." Maybe he'll give you - he'll give you certain power. You might give him - well, give you some kind of a deal that if you can get this power you can give him one of your children.

I: Oh, I see. You would give up a child to get the power?

L: Yes.

I: Well, these things you're saying, would they be alive things always?

L: In a spiritual way. You've got to think that what I said, we're talking about spiritual things. The young devil can make these things come true.

I: I see. It wouldn't have to be animals or anything.

L: No.

I: It could just be anything?

L: Anything at all. And so that's how they - they're witchcraft people - how they come to have this kind of power.

I: Like, what kind of power could they have? Would each person just have the power to do one kind of thing, or would you just have, you know, power in general to do anything?

L: No, there's a lot of this. They have to practice. They don't practice them but they get this power, the power of something, maybe your life.

I: Is it just one special power, though?

L: No.

I: How would they use this power?

L: Well, there's certain ways, maybe a medicine man. A medicine man is a guy that knows heresy, and forms spiritual evil things.

I: Always evil?

L: Yes. Sometimes my old grandfather, he was a nice man, and he used to tell me about these things. It is a long story. He said there's certain men that used to do good, and that's because they said God gave us the medicine. The Bible states that God put these things, these certain things, to use as medicine in the right way. But there's certain people who come
up to this medicine and they turn it a different way. They just twist it, medicine, around so they can hurt the people.

I: Oh, so that some people could get the powers from God -- it wasn't always the devil?

L: No. See, that's the way it used to work.

M: What did they used to do that was evil to the people?

L: Well, they would turn this medicine and they, they'll maybe... There's certain people right now are having a lot of troubles. They don't know. They feel sick and they don't know what. A lot of times they go to this witchcraft people here, there in form right now, some of them are on the reserve here. I can name a few of them. And they're doing it. And...

I: Doing witchcraft?

L: Yes. They're practicing on it. You see these medicine... And sometimes if they're going to hurt somebody, well they can do anything. Maybe they will take some of your hair, hair off you, you know, when you are sleeping and put it, wrapped it in a medicine, you know, keep it. And you go crazy or every once in a while you lose your mind. That's the way they are doing it. That's why so many doctors couldn't do nothing about the people. And I know this man now, and that's, that's the power they get.

I: Well, is there anybody now who is using the same kind of power to do good?

L: Oh, there's a lot of... yes, there's certain people...

I: Right now? There are people who use the power to heal people?

L: Yes, that's right.

I: Well, like, there are people who practice witchcraft. Are there people who, you know, if you have a stronger power you could overcome the evil power of the...?

L: There are certain ways. And there are certain ways that you can depend on. There's certain people that practice on this witchcraft, on this evil medicine and they'll put it..., and this fellow will turn around and go back to him and he will give him something, maybe his money or anything at all. He said, "I will give this thing if I get well." He will accept it. But you got to give something. It's worth something. And then they will tell you to come to them and they will fix you up. And then they will turn the medicine, the same kind of medicine, but they will add something different. So that they will defeat this medicine that they done, this good medicine will defeat this, then you will get well.

I: Would it be the same guy who did the evil medicine or get a
different one for good medicine?

I: Well, sometimes they can do that. Sometimes, they can go back.

I: Yes. Do you know any stories or things that have happened?

L: Oh, there's a lot of stories about... these braves... when they grow old a lot of times they tell me the stories about these things... they used to hear a lot of them. Just like that, the other night I told you about these braves, these men that went out but I told it a little bit different. These men that went out and there was one that they didn't want. So when they get together, maybe ten of them, and this one guy (and this may be a young fellow) has dreamed something about trying, trying to get this stuff. You know, maybe he knows how and thinks about it, through dreams, and he gets them...(breaks off)

You know, if I can really tell you about things the way they should be, I think that it could help. There was a young man and he wanted to be something, he goes off trying to get a dream and maybe he's a guy that's not available to do things. Well, he really wanted to go along with these (braves) and maybe he would tell the leader, he said, "I will go along all the time if you will take me." And that's the way we used to hear their stories, and they used to go along with them. And the time when they talk about that snake, he went along. And they took this young man along with these other brave men. He's new. And they were in trouble. Blackfoots are around there. And they were in a bush and they cut a hole there. That's where they stayed. And so they had this peace pipe, I don't know what they smoked, but they had this peace pipe and they started. The leader said, "Now, who is going to - who is brave enough? Who is going to do something about this thing?"

So they sat down together and they got this peace pipe out and they smoked. It has to be the peace pipe. Has to do something with, say, spiritual matters. And that peace pipe has to go according to the sun. The sun goes this way (gesticulates).

So when they are holding it this way, the peace pipe has to turn this way, comes back this way. So when they're holding it this way it comes back and the first guy here, you have to give it to him, and if he doesn't want to take it, well, he turns around and gives it to the other guy.

I: So each person before he smokes it points it in the direction of the sun.

L: Yes. Before it can be smoked, that peace pipe, somebody has to take that peace pipe and then he has to say a prayer or something and then smoke it.

I: Do they take it...?

L: That's the one that's going to leap the...he's going to do
something. It's not all of them that's going to...

I: It's a promise or an oath type of thing?

L: Yes. You know, he's going to try it. So that's why he took that peace pipe. First round, nobody might take it. Well, next round the other will take it. Then when he smokes it, well, he goes on. And then he speaks. You know, a prayer, or maybe something. That's how they got out anyway.

I: Yes. Tell about how they got out.

L: They don't know how they got out, but...

I: Didn't they go out like a snake?

L: Yes. They don't know, really know, but they said that this guy that smoked this peace pipe, he said, "Okay," and, put the way the people here used to tell it, they formed in a snake, because there were Blackfoots all around camping, and they had to hit one of the camps, to go through it. And they said that the leader said, "Okay, every one of you, as soon as you crawl out from this hole shut your eyes and don't lift up our heads, just follow." I guess they were holding each other, you know, and they came out. And as soon as they passed quite a ways the camp and he said, "Okay" and they opened their eyes and they were out. And the Blackfoots are circling. And that's the time they steal these horses. They went around now because the Blackfoot figured the Indians were in there.

I: They had them surrounded? Well, would all these people have changed into snakes for that time?

L: I couldn't tell you. But that's the way it seems.

I: Well, there's all these stories about people who had the power to change into animals, but could one person have the power to change all of them, or would they each have the power?

L: No, there's only one.

I: So just that man?

L: Yes.

I: Who smoked the pipe would do it?

M: And where was the leader - he was the one with his eyes open, the others had their eyes shut like that, so they would be like the tail of the snake.

I: So they would form into one snake?

L: It could be. That's the only way because the Blackfoots were there.
I: Do you know, when they're smoking the pipe and turning it in the direction of the sun, would it be one continuous circle, or would they stop in each direction? You know, just like when you're making a medicine and dropping it to the wall, you know how you stop at each...?

L: Yes.

I: Do you know what the significance of the directions are? Like, what do you get from the north and the south?

(End of Side A, Tape IH-032)

(Side B)

L: Well, that's the way they do it. Before I came out the religion didn't mean anything to me, because I was brought up as Anglican, but that's all. It was just a school and a church, that's all. I didn't know anything about it. But when I came out, my mother used to tell me about these things. When I was young, my mother used to tell me about it and she said, "Son, if you done any dreams that you're wondering about, tell it." And I used to tell it.

I: To her?

L: To her.

I: And she knew what they meant?

L: Yes. And she told me. You see that's the way they got these powers, these things that beat them, because they come to them in the form as a man. Well, they used to have a lot of dreams.

I: Do you remember some of them?

L: Some of them I can tell you. Right in Frog Lake one night I was dreaming. And in Frog Lake there is the big holes underneath in that lake there, and there's houses up there. And at nighttime I went up there. We were playing in a little creek. Especially when you are dreaming about playing on a side of a lake, then you have to watch out 'cause that's the time they get ahold of you. We were playing. It was Gordon Thunderchild, my cousin; he was a little boy there. And we were playing there and all of a sudden there was an old man came up alongside. All this time I noticed it was on a side of a lake.

I: This is what you were dreaming?

L: Yes, I was dreaming. Then this old man came and got my little cousin, Gordon. I run after him, and I ran, and he ran. And I noticed that we were in this little thing, it was a real small thing. I figured it's...it is more like a mouse...little mouse, you know, they make a little nest around a little
hole. I figured that's what we went in. As soon as we went in there...this is a small thing...but as soon as we went in, there was a big hollow. And I dropped this old man, and I wrestled with him, and as soon as I wrestled with him well, boy, I was kind of tired but I beat him. And I brought my cousin out. And we came home then. Then that morning I told my mother about it. And I said, "Say I had quite a dream last night." And I told her. And she said, "That's alright," she said, "soon as you tell it, you defeat it."

I: Really? Oh, I see! What would have happened if you wouldn't have told it?

L: Yes, if I didn't told it, you know, something could...if I didn't defeat that old man he would catch me, he would promise me something, then I would have that power.

I: You mean you would have to give up something?

L: Yes.

I: How old were you when you had this dream?

L: Oh, I must be around eleven...ten or eleven years old. Then I had another dream that wasn't too long. Oh, it's quite a while ago, when I was young. It was side of a hill; I figured it was on that lake there, (sounds like) Long Lake. That's what I figured. And this lake was a really nice place. There was people there, playing all over. And we went in there and we were playing. There was a white man there, really two of them came along, and they came to me. We were playing there and they came up to me and they said something to do with if I said yes or no, he came to promise me something anyway. And I stood there and these two white men are, three of them, two on both sides. This man that came up to me, he dressed, you know, really nice clothes. And he came up there and he put his hand this way (gesticulates) and I was standing right in there and he told me, he said, "Well, I don't know," he said, "I don't think I like you." Soon as I didn't say yes then he put his hands this way (gesticulates), put them this way. As soon as I went this way, I seen his nails sticking out this way.

I: Oh! (laughs)

Others: Sticking out this way? Outside? Oh! My goodness! Like claws?

L: Yes. And then I realized that he was the devil. And he turned around and disappeared.

M: So, can you remember what he asked you?

L: Well, I don't really know, what he asked me. I said no anyway. So I told my mother in the morning. "That's good," she said, "It's nice to tell."
I: So, when you told her again, nothing could happen.

L: No.

I: And if you hadn't told it, is there something in particular would happen, or just some kind of...?

L: Maybe he would - if I wouldn't see him, if I didn't defeat him - maybe he would give me, promise me something, that I can do.

I: Yes.

L: Maybe heal the sick, maybe use some kind of medicine to heal, or maybe...or do something like a Sundance, or anything at all that's...that doesn't look good, you know, on the good side.

I: Oh. And you would also owe him something then. Are there any dreams that you might have that would bring something good?

L: No, not really, 'cause, you know, that's how they got these medicine, some of these guys that do all kinds of things that they promise. They've been defeated. Then they had to promise something, maybe, so they have to do it, like certain religion types or something what they...what's going on now. It's a thing that we don't really understand about it because they're spiritual matters.

I: Yes, but why do you say it's always evil? Like you said before, it could be God's Spirit coming to the people or, you know, like I've heard that if God helps people then they might make a vow to make a Sundance. Now wouldn't that be a Good Spirit? Or is it always the devil spirit that's...?

L: No, it's... there's a good spirit and there's a bad spirit. And God give us this medicine to use. It states in the Bible that certain trees, certain flowers and certain roots that do good. God give them, gave it to the people to use it. But this... the only way it is...it's just the same as when God and Abraham came to this garden and the devil twist his word. He twisted it. He used the same words; that's what God said. He twisted it. Well this medicine that God gave us, to the people, it could be used in the right way. But the devil himself can twist it. And...

I: Yes, okay, if you're going to get the medicine to use the right way, would it come to you in a dream also?

L: No, you...we don't get...in a dream like that, we...what I suggest is when a man is defeat... I defeat that Satan all the time when I have these dreams. Well I defeat him. He couldn't do nothing about it now. Well, I can turn now and use that medicine what God gave to me if I want it, if I wanted to practice it. And I ask God to help me to do right, you know, to help the people, to (sounds like) defend the people.
I: Well, the medicine is already there.
L: Yes.

I: But the dream would - whether you turned down the dream or not would mean whether you were using it for good or bad?
L: Yes.

M: I don't understand that.

I: Could an angel ever come to you in a dream? Well, not an angel, but somebody good come to you in a dream and offer you this power for good? And you would say yes or no?

L: Well, there's certain, certain ways. I think that there's a lot of times that God can visit us in a dream too, same as the devil.

I: Yes, and how are you going to know which is which, eh?
L: Well you're - well you know, you know when it's good. When the angel, God, when God speaks to you in that kind of way, you know it.

I: Yes.

L: Because you're not going to do evil to your people.

I: So, say if different braves preparing for battle, then God's spirit could come in a dream and tell them what to do to win, or - you know, those kind of powers they use in battle, would they - could be either evil or good too?

L: It could be, because there's certain, certain guys that used to know about these certain ways, but these guys... these Indians you know, they weren't told. There was no Bible at that time, which is good and evil, but they know these... they use, they use the medicine the right way and... that's the only way they know who is a good guy. Who will do good to the people.

I: They knew, they still - they believed in a heaven and a hell?
L: Yes. (pause) There's certain things, too. All these powers. God give us powers, too. In a dream they can give a power to a man. Like, I will tell you one thing. When my grandfather used to tell me about these things, these - what you call these people that eat the men?

I: Cannibals?
L: Yes. I will tell you a little story about it, and might, you might get something out of it. These people are demon
possessed. And they form...inside of them they're ice, inside the stomach. And this ice grows. And as it grows the body form, the body itself grows. And then it works. When his mouth is about that wide (indicates) and he eats the lips.

M: He eats his own lips?

L: Yes. And then, when the time comes that nobody could do anything about this thing, well, he'll get up. All this time, when he's in form...this ice is in form inside him, it grows but he will stay sick.

I: Yes. And will he know it's there?

L: He, he'll know, because...

M: Is he the one that's the cannibal then? He...

L: Yes. He's the one. And then he grows. And then people start to fear, and they gather from all different directions, you know. Maybe someone there will defeat this cannibal. But this thing has to be a spiritual battle. It's not a form, it's not a flesh battle.

I: So he can't be killed?

L: No. You couldn't kill him. Any ordinary man couldn't kill him. Couldn't even touch him.

I: You need some special kind of powers like he has? And they have to be good powers?

L: Yes, that's why, when I said a man that knows more power... because, see, all these medicine men, all these men got different powers, good or bad, you know. They come and if they want to get this power they have to know how to use it. And, maybe...or it's all...it states in the Bible...and when this thing comes, my grandfather used to tell it. He said they used to tell about these things, about cannibals, and that's the time it storms, you know. He used to tell it. And they didn't really want to tell it, but they used to tell it. But they said when a man is full-grown and he's ready to get up, it will storm, it will snow. And as soon as he yells, when he yells, and natural man, king or anything will fall out.

I: When the the cannibal yells?

L: Yes. It's the power. That's the power he's got.

I: Yes.

L: Maybe he'll see you about half a mile away. If he yells, well, you just couldn't do nothing, you've got to fall. Then he eats.
I: And then he eats you? Oh, heavens!

L: Yes. And once he gets up...and nobody could beat him, you know. He knows. He knows how the spiritual battle... all the spiritual of a man, this cannibal, because he's full-grown and he knows everything. He's just like a spiritual thing. The way he moves...all the things, all the man he's (sounds like) done. But if he knows that one man's got more power than him, then he...look out! He couldn't defeat that guy.

I: So would this guy, the one more powerful, would then try to kill him?

L: Yes.

I: And there's no hope of ever changing once you start to become a cannibal, that was it?

L: No, no. Unless this man that's got more power can do something about it.

M: But the man himself could never defeat it, when he felt the ice?

L: No.

I: Is there any explanation for why somebody would become a cannibal, or...

L: I couldn't tell you really. Not too long ago, about four or five years ago, six years ago, there was a cannibal here at Little Pine, a woman.

I: Yes?

L: Everybody knows about Little Pine. There was a woman. You know what defeated that woman?

M & I: No, what?

L: The Bible.

I: Really?

L: The Gospel defeated it.

I: Who, uh, who was responsible for it? Or how did it...?

L: John Nighttraveler. They're Christians. Him and his wife defeated that...

I: Where did they go, to her house?

L: Yes.

I: Did they read the Bible to her?

L: No, they told them about the gospel, Jesus Christ.
M: How long did it take, just one shot?
L: No, it took them three hours.
I: And then she was okay after?
L: Yes.
M: She was okay by morning.
L: The ice came out.
I: Is that right!
L: Yes.
M: What! Could you see the ice come out? Could you feel the ice coming out?
L: Yes, yes.
M: Could you see it?
L: Well, if you ask John about it, he will tell you.
I: Where is he from?
L: Little Pine.
I: He's from Little Pine?
L: Yes. It's really true, you know. The ice... And as soon as it comes out, he said he could see it and then, it's just like a foam, and it turns...and as soon as they hit, it turns into foam and disappears.
M: It would come out through the mouth?
I: Oh! For heaven's sakes!
L: See that's what I said. And my grandfather used to tell me, he said as soon as the one camp couldn't defeat this cannibal, this whole camp is wiped out by this cannibal. Then he starts out, and comes out.
I: To another place?
L: To another place.
I: So if there wasn't one man that was stronger than him, he'd destroy everybody?
L: Yes. That's it.
M: Was there ever anybody that did that?
L: Oh, yes. There was quite a few of them years ago.

I: Was there? Harriet or Mary was saying that maybe her grandfather or great-grandfather's brother was a cannibal, is that right?

L: Some... I think so, yes. Because my grandfather used to tell us about it.

And they said they seen it. And this guy said, the cannibal and the other man, he said, he used to have a little axe, you know, these little... not an axe but these hammers what they... and he said... the way they fight, they don't wrestle... they sit there.... And they said, "Have you been up there?" Now that means did you see that in a spiritual... up there in a different place. Did you go up there? Maybe, did you go up in that lake inside, in the bottom of that lake, in that little deal. Did you know that? See, now that's how they fight. Maybe there's a little deal around that lake that's very important to this man. And this man had been up there and seen this little deal - he knows about it. Well, then, when they get up there and they say they go up. They said, way up there. You know, you don't hear them on the ground there, you hear them way up in the air.

M: Oh, for heaven's sakes! Are their bodies down on the ground still or...?

L: Yes.

M: And their voices are coming from above?

L: Yes. Now, they...I think they said a natural thing.... The spirit, you know, the body itself went up.

I: The body went up too?

L: Yes. And that's where they talk. And soon as they, as soon as they defeat the cannibal they come down. And they start...

I: Yes, but they can't...

L: And they said, "Another thing is, did you see that, did you? Were you up in that stars? Way up there, did you see that net?" And they go up again, you know. And this cannibal, this man, said, "Yes they seen it," and they come down. That's the way they fight, you know.

I: If he's seen it then he defeats the cannibal. What if he hasn't seen it?

L: Well, the cannibal defeats him. He will kill him.

M: So is that what they did in Little Pine then too?

L: That? No, that's really different. A little bit different. See, they used to fight in a spiritual way. So that's why the
Indians are going back to this religion, you know, because they know there was something in it. Spiritual, spiritual ways.

I: Well, it's basic religion isn't it? God and the Devil...

L: Yes, that's right. That's the way they... they knew God, every one of them.

I: And would you say they learned most of it from dreams?

L: Yes.

I: Would most people, then, be involved in dreams and spiritual things, or would there only be a few people who would teach the rest?

L: I think this whole world is ruled by Satan himself, according to the Bible. And so the people naturally don't understand the ways of God.

I: You don't think God can speak to them too?

L: Well, he will come and speak to them.

I: Yes, just like he came to the prophets in the Bible?

L: Oh yes, he will come and speak to them. In 1950, 1949 or 1948 I was a little ways down there. They had a...in the nighttime, they had a little, a peace-pipe, what they call it, smoke all night, you know. I don't know what they call it. It's not a dance, it's a form of worship.

I: Yes.

L: They got this certain Johnny (sounds like) Etin used to put this kind of thing on. They showed new people how to put certain kinds of things, like Round Dance and Sundance. It's not all the same then. But this old man, Johnny Etin, was the guy that used to get together. And they put this little round thing with leaves and they stay there all night, and they smoke this peace pipe thing. But they sing and smoke, and sing and smoke. It wasn't a dance but it's a form of a religion. And I was there that night when I used to be one of these. You worked, you used to handle all these stuff, the peace pipe and all the things there. The sweet smell that they burned, you know. I was one of the leaders to work on this because I wasn't drinking. And they used to come and get me, and I used to be part of the work because I was doing good, you know. I considered myself as all right because I was going. They used to come and get me. And I was working that night, especially one night, and I went up there. This Johnny Etin was there, and I had to get everything ready. The ground must be spotless. The ground where the people are, where we were planning, has to be clean. All this material that was checked, and the food, has to be clean and everything. And these men, the men have to be sit (seated), you know, something has to be around for them to sit. And the women would sit on the south
side. And the food there...and when they start.... The other thing is that the things they put there, you would be quite amazed. And I used to put everything in its place.

I: Like, what things?

L: Oh, there's peace pipes and, oh, I couldn't tell you all the things they use. And before I touch anything in this smoke, in the sweetgrass smell, I used to put my hands in there this way (gesticulates), this way.

I: Like the sun.

L: Like a sun, yes, right. Then I start to work and...

I: Is that to clean your hands off then?

L: Yes. That's to clean. On that special night, when this old man start this up he prayed to God and he talked to God. And something hit me. And something that...spoke to me that night. And then he cried, he cried to God. Then soon as he cried, he heard. And he was just like something with such a lot of light came up to me and it says, told me: "Thou shalt not worship anything." It's...the whole...the whole scripture of that commandment that God gave to Moses came... came to me. It just hits me (drives fist into his palm). And that was the last time I went up in that kind of meeting. And I finished my work and I kept thinking about it, and so that night was the last night I went to that kind of stuff. Because Bible says we not supposed to worship any.... The thing is, when this man talked to God, then he turned around and start talking to the thunder, the thunder. And then there's certain types of things, like there's a certain stone. They call it (Cree name sounds like Chinadwasne). They think it means anger stone. And there's things they call, like four-legged beasts. That's bear, and then there's the cougar, and all these animals, you know, what are mentioned. That's where they're, where they're.... And that's the power of God. He told me about the scripture, and I turned. And that night was the last night I ever.... There wasn't...it's not the thing that I don't like, but it's a thing that when God talks to you, He talks to you. It's not a form of a religion. When God talks to a man, He talks to a man.

M: Yes. But were they not worshiping God too, then. They weren't worshiping other stuff, were they?

L: No, no, they weren't.

I: But they were talking to God.

L: They were talking to God but God himself wants men to know that God loves men before the beasts.

I: Now, were they worshiping the beasts, or God's spirits in the beast?
L: They were worshiping...that's why they put that horse, you know, and all these animals, and they talked to these animals. That's why they formed all this stuff.

I: Well, then, were the spirits of these animals supposed to be just their own spirits and not God's spirit in an animal?

L: They're not, they're not God. 'Cause God doesn't like that. That's why He talked to me about it. God said, "Do'st thou not worship any graven image." See, that's why God wants to talk to a man. Instead of us talking to these four-legged beasts, or thunder, or lightning, or anything, or the sun, or the moon. That's what they, the Indians themselves, know there was God. That's why when they come to worship they will take it to God. But they don't know that God loved them through Jesus Christ. That's the gospel. See, that's the thing they...it's all covered but the thing is they don't, they don't see.

(End of Side B, Tape IH-032)

(Side A, Tape IH-033)

L: ...go back. More Indians are going to turn back to this old religion. The Sundances and all these things.

I: Is there any way that you could be a Christian and still have the Sundances?

L: No.

I: Since it is still worshiping God, because nature is God.

L: I know nature is God, but the thing is that they have to look on God himself as their...he is a spiritual being.

I: You think we lose sight of God when we start realizing that God is nature as well and we forget the spiritual and think of things that we can touch and feel and see?

L: Now, you got me that time. I better think about it.

I: So then, you wouldn't have anything to do now with any of the Indian songs of worship?

L: No. It is not like I don't like it but the thing is I seen it enough.

I: As long as God is still in there, it still can be good though.

L: There are certain ways but that is where man started to lose his own mind. "Well, if I do that, well, God will be
pleased." But God said that we should watch these things, not to wear it. Because the Devil himself can twist everything out, you know. That is why I don't go to these things because when I go in there, there is nothing bad about it itself, but how about the things that are going on in there. That is the things that man sees in our own natural thing.

I: Like what do you mean?

L: Well, there is all the stuff. There is drinking and there is women going after men and they are not...all the stuff now that these young people are doing, they don't care for these things. They figure it is just a matter of enjoyment for themselves, you know. They don't realize.

I: Yes, but these people aren't following the old ways of worship either are they?

L: No, it is all - to tell the truth, they are all misused, you know. That is not the way they used to do it. The older men...I am not criticizing these old men but these old men that are grandfathers and great-grandfathers, they are the ones that... I don't know where they got this Sundance out of, but according to the Bible, the Bible said (in the Old Testament) that they cut the tree off and they figure that there is going to be light there. I think that is where all these things came out from, from the Old Testament. And the Bible says that, in one part, they were going to cut the tree and set it and they figure that is the tree of life. Well, that is the way the Indian is doing it right now. Sundances, that is the main one. They call it the Kin Tree. It is the right way to say it. Komawat, it means he is a king. It means he is a tree. Certainly, they are going to see everything in there. See, the Bible states about it if you go back to the Old Testament. So all the things that you have read in the Bible, a person could study it, well, you would see it, all these things.

M: Well, actually the Indian religion is just like the Old Testament really isn't it, except that it doesn't have the New Testament with it?

L: Yes. But now it is the...this thing is driving you know. To tell the truth, they are not doing the right way. These men that are doing it right now, they are doing it halfways and I have been telling some of these older men about it and they said he couldn't do good. The next thing you would turn around and be bad. God is not going to be pleased about that. I'll tell you one thing, this Jim Kanipitetew you heard about, he is going to do the the Sundance here. But I told one guy here, one older man from Sweetgrass and he came up to me and he said, "I couldn't understand." And I told him, I said, "You couldn't even understand yourself because this man that is going to put a Sundance, he is supposed to do good there for the benefit of the people. The people on the reserve figure that is where they are going to, that is just like a form of worship you
know. They come once a year and they promise this if they get well and they put something there and help this thing going. But the man that is going to do it has to move something and he has to know everything. But this is my uncle, Kanipiteteew this is my uncle. I am going to tell you, he gambles. He can beat people any way he likes. He doesn't care. If he can take a hundred dollars away from you, stealing or anything, he will do it.

Both: Oh.

L: And now this guy is putting a Sundance on.

I: You think it is wrong for him to put the Sundance on?

L: How do you look at that? Is it good or is it bad?

I: Well, you know, it still might have some good effect. It is just like ministers and priests, they may not be good men but yet they might do good. That is hard to say. I mean we all have our vices, eh. We can't all be good.

L: I know, yeah. In a certain way you know, they figure that he is doing good. But that is what hurts the people.

I: Yeah, I can see that.

L: When a man loses what is good but the man doesn't figure that he can get something out of it, see what they have done now is, these people, some of them are getting paid now.

I: To do a Sundance?

L: Yeah.

I: Ahhh.

L: See, that is not the right way that the old Indians used to do it.

I: The old way, no.

L: See, all this stuff that you see is turning in a different form because, I will tell you, the FSI, the Federated Saskatchewan Indians, is really for it. They can get money and they will put men that practice medicine at Saskatoon. That is what they are doing, you know, putting these things. People don't know what they are going on. Maybe they can turn into... I am not trying to say anything about it but that is the way... It looks to us that sooner or later in the long run that they are going to turn the Gospel out from reserves.

I: Is that right?

L: Yeah, because I am not going to say it in front of them but that is what it looks like to us.
I: Do you think that is because they are trying to get rid of all the white man's ideas?

L: Yeah.

I: And that represents white man's ideas.

M: If they, you know it wouldn't be so bad if they went back to the true old Indian religion because I still think there is a lot of good in that.

L: Right.

M: But if they go back to this half-baked...

I: They have their own stories of how the earth was created and things like that. Do you know how it was supposed to have been created?

L: Well, according to my mother here, she told me about this Weesagata. Weesagata is man that is supposed to be God. And every time they...the medicine name a Weesagata, it is the one that created the earth. And my mother used to tell me about the time when it flooded. Now, where did she get that story from because my mother never read no English. She didn't know anything about the Bible but my mother used to tell me about the flood. She said the Weesagata had a boat and he had all kinds of little animals in there and all they needed was a little piece of earth to form the earth. And every once in awhile he used to take one of these little things and put it in the water and let it float.

I: So there was just water then, that was all?

L: Yes, there was just water. As my mother used to tell me about this Weesagata, he is the one that formed the earth, she said.

I: Go on and finish it. We would like to hear this story. And he put the little animals in...

L: Everyone said some of them could hardly come up and drowned. And finally this one rat was put in the water and he tried his best and he went down. I guess he just grabbed a piece of the earth and just made it. He just about drown but he went up anyway and his little hand was set.

I: Where did he get the earth from? Was there earth under this water then?

L: I don't know. There must have been the way they tell it. We don't know anything about it but that is the way they used to tell us. When he opened his little hand there was a little piece of earth. That is all he wanted so he could form it into earth and said that is how the earth was formed. My mother...I
used to tell her when I came out of school and I told them, I said, "My mother told me that the earth couldn't be round." And I told them...a lot of times me and my sister, my other sister... Eva was two years old; she died. And I used to argue with my mother and I told her, "They say the earth is round." My mother said, "No, it couldn't be. How could it be round when," they said, "if we are on top, we would fall. If we were on the bottom, we would fall down. How it could be round? It couldn't be."

I: She doesn't believe...?

L: They didn't believe the earth was round. They said it was flat.

M: Did she ever believe the earth was round before she died?

L: No.

M: She never did?

L: No, they never did. They always said...

M: At that time, was there planes flying at that time?

L: No.

I: When did she die?

L: I don't know. It must be around 1956 or 1957.

I: Did she think there was an edge?

L: No, 1953, somewhere around there.

I: Did she think there was an edge and you would come and you would fall off or what?

L: Oh, she didn't know.

I: She didn't think it was round. It was completely flat and would go forever and ever.

L: Yeah.

M: I have a hard time figuring that out myself.

(laughter)

I: Well, what about the creation of the animals then? So he had these animals in the boat, where did they come from?

L: Well, she didn't...

I: There was no story for that?

L: Well, she said there was animals.
I: There was animals and this Weesagata.
L: Yeah.
M: Did they have any stories about animals and their spirits?
L: Well, there is a lot of stories about it but I haven't got time to...
M: You are getting tired. Would you like to have another time then?
L: Yeah.
I: Is there any story about creating man?
L: No.
I: There was never any stories about that.
L: No, we didn't...
M: There was always man?
L: Well, we sang a song from I guess, somehow. Always...
I: Well, he took the form of a man, eh, Weesagata.
L: Must be.
I: Then he would be the first man on the earth.
M: Interesting.
L: There is a lot of stories about it.
I: Do you know any?
L: (laughs)
I: Or can we get you another evening.
M: Where did what's-his-name get a wife?
L: Weesagata? Oh, there is a lot of stories about him.
M: Well... (laughs)
L: No, there is a lot of stories. Funny ones too.
I: Did he make his own woman?
L: I couldn't tell you. I think there was different ways to what I heard. (laughs)
I: Sounds quite funny. (laughter)

M: That sounds like an interesting little story. Maybe it shouldn't be on the tape recorder. (laughs)

L: Yeah. Well, I hope you understand a little bit anyway.

I will talk about these northern lights. You don't believe, northern lights are the things that man doesn't really know what they are. The northern lights, according to Indians, they are the spirits, they are the souls that went out after death. But the white man figured it is the light from the north. My father used to tell me when I was young, "These northern lights you are seeing up north here, they won't come up here in the center." But the old people used to tell us, "Any time when you start to see these northern lights going south this way, it is going to be something happen."

I: Like what?

L: Something.

I: Good, bad?

L: Bad.

M: To everybody or...?

L: Change, there is going to... and they said later on as the years came out we seen them around here, in the middle. Now the northern lights are south.

M: Yes, they are.

L: Yes.

M: And everything has changed has it?

L: Everything has changed. And they said there will be a time coming that they are going to be red every once in a while. They said that is the time, my dad used to tell me, that is the time you have got to watch. Something is going to take place but they don't know what.

I: Is there any way you can stop it?

L: No. Northern lights are not what I said. A man doesn't believe, doesn't know what it is. He has only got news about it. An Indian doesn't believe, it is not the light shining on the ice that affects this. But the white man...you know, what you call these big...that studied about these things?

M: Scientists I think.

L: They figure it is all a light but there are certain people that the Indians know. They don't whistle at night when they
see these northern lights. They are scared.

M: I have heard that you whistle to make them dance.

L: They will.

M: If you whistle, then they dance down.

L: There is one fellow here, Dave Mesentom, he said that. He said, "I don't believe that. It doesn't scare me." But every once in a while when you are walking or I used to...at nighttime, we used to walk and see them, you know, very close, we just tried whistling. Well, especially one guy told me he said, this Dave Mesentom said, "I tried walking one time and I whistled." He didn't believe. He said, "Boy, I didn't whistle long and I went back in the house."

(laughter)

M: Oh, for heaven's sakes.

I: Is that right?

L: It was just like he was going crazy. He figured he wasn't thinking. So he said he went threshing across the railway, this white fellow, a young man, he said he looked up and he seen these northern lights and he said, "There are northern lights. Well, the Indians say it is not the northern lights, it is the souls of man. The Indians are crazy." "Well, you are crazy." "Well, try. I will stay inside and you will try. You stand here and start whistling." So he whistled. They said the next thing you know, the next half hour, the next ten minutes he said he was in the house. His face was just white.

M: Oh, for heaven's sakes!

L: You see, that is the stories. There is a lot of stories about men that around here told us about it. They were scared about it. The old Indian sayings, that is why they call them dancers. That means they are dancing, they are talking about their souls. They are the ones that are dancing. There are certain ways, you know, certain times too that I heard people. They said every once in a while they used to put some kind of food, and the next morning it was gone. Especially if there was grease. And I never tried it but that is what I heard.

I: You just put it outside?

L: Yes.

M: And it would be gone?

L: Yeah. That is the stories of an Indian you know. That is what they believe.

I: Are there any stories about the sun and the stars and moon?
L: No. There is hardly any.

M: When your father was telling you about the northern lights coming south, did you see them much then? Were they south then or were they...?

L: No. They said they were down here in the middle. But a few years now, say, that was quite a while when he told me about it. It was around the fifties when he seen them start coming out this way.

M: And that was the first time he had seen them?

L: Yes.

I: There are no southern lights, eh? Like further north and stuff are there?

M: There are.

I: Well, when the white people first came, did the Indian people tell them their beliefs or did they keep it to themselves?

L: I think they kept it for themselves.

I: So how would the old people feel, like when the first kids started going to school? Would they be teaching them that the old ways were not true or was there a lot of problems involved there?

L: When they, the first time I went to school, it was just like if I had a kitten. Well, take that kitten to a house and maybe I can bring him up here. Okay, then you have to do your best and that is the way it looks like. When we went to school it was up to the teachers to teach me, not my father or mother. That is what they didn't understand but they figured that - they depend on the teachers to teach their children.

M: To teach you everything or just how to speak English or read and write?

L: To read and write.

M: Religion too?

L: Well, if they figured they can do it, you know. They didn't care. That is everything, I guess.

I: So it was fine with them, whatever they got taught.

L: Yes. That is the way they used to tell us. And now, it is different now.

I: It is different anywhere.
M: So, how is it different now?

L: You know that Cook boy there, one of the Cooks, Hubert Cook is older. His dad didn't believe in education but he said they didn't used to go to school. Well, finally this older boy, he said...that is the time they had the first day school here, they went up to see him and he said, "Okay, I will send that boy." So he sent that boy and the bus went up there and picked up this boy. So he came to school one day. So, this old man, this Cook, when this boy got home, he asked this boy, he said, "How are you making out?" and he said this boy didn't know anything. Well, at the school, that boy should learn something that day.

I: In one day?

L: In one day. When he found out his boy didn't learn nothing, he kept him home.

Both: Oh no.

L: So that is the way they used to do it. You find out then what they tell, the stories about school.

I: In one day, eh?

M: He should have let him have more of a chance than that.

I: They used to tell us on the very first day of school when teaching any kid, in methodology you know, that you are supposed to teach them something the very first day. Because in grade one and kindergarten they are going to go home and their moms and dads are going to say, "Well, what did you learn in school today?" and they should learn at least one thing so that they don't go away disappointed.

L: The time I went to school, I didn't learn anything. They couldn't, didn't understand yes or no. But it took me two years, maybe three years to get grade one.

M: You couldn't speak English as just a language?

L: No.

M: Were your teachers all English speaking then?

L: Yes.

I: Where did you go to school?

L: Anglican.

I: And did your parents go to school?

L: No.
I: So you were the first one?

L: I didn't even understand yes or no, you know. That is why when I think of it now, the old teacher used to have patience. Patience...

I: Well how did they try to teach you the language?

L: Well, they didn't teach us. We went just to the school and we sat there and they couldn't... we couldn't understand them. They couldn't understand us. And so, what they would do, you see, we would start at grade A. He classes us in A and B for two years, maybe three years. Maybe two years in B before we come into grade one. And then we started. But A and B, they used to give us a boy or a girl, you know, to come and teach us A, B, C, D, 1, 2, 3 or maybe yes or no.

I: From the older classes like?

L: Yes.

M: I wonder how they started the original one?

I: The first teachers spoke Cree. Like, Matheson spoke Cree, eh?

L: Must be.

I: So they didn't take the time...like, didn't they have somebody teaching you to speak English in that first year so that you could start grade one quicker?

L: No. I guess they tried but we didn't learn nothing.

M: How did they try to teach you the language? Do you remember how they did it?

L: Well, the first thing they told us was A, B, C, D, and then finally, maybe 1, 2, 3, just the numbers.

M: Would they point to something like this and say chair and get you to say what that is?

L: No, and we didn't know nothing about it. (laughs)

I: You mean they didn't try anything like that?

L: No.

M: So, they didn't work on the language?

L: No, it was just like babysitting.

M: How old would you be when you started?
L: Oh, I was around eight or nine.
M: Really? Before you even started?
L: Yeah.
M: Oh, my.
I: Were you required to go to school?
L: Well, they came and told my mother and dad and they told them, "He is old enough to go to school." So I went to school.
M: How did your mother feel about it?
L: Oh, it was okay.
I: Are you glad you went?
L: I didn't like it.
I: No, I guess you wouldn't.
M: How many years did you stay in school?
L: About eight years maybe. Let's see, to tell the truth, I was only in grade five when I left. I stayed in grade four for four years.
M: It would be awfully boring to sit and listen to someone when you didn't understand.
L: So that is why when I said the teachers used to have a lot of patience.
I: Well, it was either patience or poor methods.
L: Yeah, because it takes heart to take something that doesn't understand anything, to take it and try and learn it what you want him to learn. It is just an animal, it takes years to teach an animal to do something.
M: Well, you would be more than an animal.
L: I know, but that is the way it looks.
I: Don't you think that if they had spent the first year teaching you to understand English, they would have helped you much faster to get through the other grades? Like just the words?
M: What would A,B,C, mean to you? Nothing?
L: No, nothing.
M: Until you learned to speak first.
L: Nothing. It is just like you trying to learn, trying to get you to learn Cree. The Cree to me is something but to you, it is nothing.

M: So, before you could teach me anything about Cree you know, and beliefs in Cree, you would have to teach me the language first. But they didn't teach the language first, eh?

L: No, it was just A, B, C, D, and numbers.

M: It would be meaningless for you to sit down and show us some symbols.

L: Part of it, we had to spend it in you know, if they couldn't teach us, they would give us a pillow and we would go to sleep.

(laughter)

I: Did you live right at the school or did you come to school by a bus or something?

L: No, we just lived in there. It was a boarding school.

I: Did you go home on weekends?

L: No.

M: When did you go home then?

L: Once a year.

All: Oh no!

M: Was it really, really lonely?

L: Finally they had to give us one in New Years. All the time, when you go in there September 1st, you don't get out until May 28 or June 1st or...

M: And you were, you were so close, you were within walking distance just about.

I: Did you try and run away?

L: Oh, a lot of times, yeah.

M: Did you?

L: It was a good place. In a way it looks bad but in a way it was good you know.

M: Did the parents have anything to do at all with what was being taught or how it was being handled?

L: Well, they didn't know enough about education to know what they wanted their kids to learn. All they wanted was their
kids to be treated right and to see that they got good food and clothing and that they get the proper care for medical ways and they would be taught the right things.

M: Did they come to see you then?
L: Oh, every once in a while they would come out.

M: What did the parents expect the schools to teach the children?
L: Well, I don't think they thought too much about it because they didn't realize what education is you know.

I: They expected them to teach you maybe the language and nothing else?
L: Yeah. I guess that is the way. It was quite a thing. It is not like now. You see, our kids can understand quite a bit before they come to school now.

I: Most of them can, yeah.
L: Because on TV, and we listen...

(End of Side A, Tape IH-033)

(Side B)

L: One row and then seven, eight, and nine. Up to grade twelve in one classroom.

I: It went all the way up to grade twelve here, eh?

M: Did they have many people in grade twelve?

L: Well, there was quite a few of them. Ivan went right up to grade eleven.

M: Ivan McDonald?
L: Yeah.

M: Oh really?

L: George, grade eight, Harriet grade eight.

M: All taken right here?
L: Yeah.

M: I wonder what kind of things they taught when they got to the higher grades.

L: I don't know. I couldn't tell you because I have never been up there because I wasn't smart enough.
M: Did they try science and things like that?

L: Oh yes.

M: I wonder what kind of history they would have taught.

I: At that time the whole province was using the same program, eh.

L: Yes, I think so.

I: Do you remember what kind of teachers you had? Were they mostly old maids, like teachers or...?

L: No, not really.

I: That always strikes me as the type that would have been.

L: No, there were some young. I don't think they accepted the young, the very young. I think they liked...

I: You always hear in little prairie schools of very, very young teachers coming. Only maybe seventeen, eighteen coming to teach you know.

L: But not here.

M: Did any of them speak Cree?

L: No, no.

M: Did any of them ever try to find out about the background of the kids or were they just...?

L: No, no.

M: They never bothered eh?

L: No, they never bothered. We wouldn't, Mr. Ellis, he was the principal, he didn't even let us talk Cree.

M: Oh, for heaven sakes. Well, how did you talk then?

L: Well, it wasn't - the older persons like, the ones that had been there for quite a while, eh. But these small kids, they didn't care.

M: Are there any things from the past you would like to see taught now in the schools?

L: The only thing I sure miss was the, now when I come to school here, it is quite a different set-up now. When I went to school here you made no noise in the classrooms, you know, nobody speaking. Everybody was doing his work. And that was very strict. And that is what I say was good in part. And anything we would do on that school like in a meal, go to
meals, there was about three hundred kids, boys on one side and girls on the one side. The teachers had to be very strict. And there was no noise when we were having meals.

M: Would you prefer to see that now?

L: I think so. It would be a lot better.

M: But you didn't like school, did you?

L: Oh, school was okay.

I: Like, don't you think the kids would learn more when they are happy at school or when they don't like it?

L: Well, I think, in a certain way kids like to be quiet. There are certain kids that are very high, spiritual-minded. They are pretty, they are high-minded kids you know. They like to do everything. They like to be on top all the time. I met a girl there, Marilyn there, she was quite a girl. And she doesn't like to be quiet you know. But then, Gloria is a different girl. She is the type of girl that will get along with the quiet, she likes to be quiet. But I think the school itself should be proper, should quiet down, should be more strict.

I: Disciplined?

L: Discipline the kids.

M: How were you disciplined in school then?

L: The principal was given authority to straighten out all the kids in the school there, Mr. Ellis. And he would give orders but my grandfather, Misihew, he was the one that run that school. He didn't run it, but he is the one that tell Mr. Ellis off and Mr. Ellis was afraid of my grandfather. But my grandfather liked it the way Mr. Ellis ran the school because he wanted the kids to be taught you know. Like, in a way you know, if you couldn't handle a kid like that in school, it is pretty hard. Because I know if that was me, a lot of times when I was bus driving, when I used to bus drive here...the bus drivers now...the way I see it, the kids don't sit down in one place. But when I was a bus driver here, I used to tell all the kids to sit down and behave themselves and I was pretty strict. But that is the way schools should be run. A school should be run that way so when they come to school, they will know there is one guy that they had to depend on. What he said, they had to do it. That is why the parents themselves you know, when they send their kids to school, they are not depending on themselves, they are depending on you guys, on the teachers and I told Mr. Humble about it and he said, "I don't like to strap them." Well, a strapping is a very important thing, especially in the home. If you couldn't correct your kid in the house, how can he correct when he is grown up. And I seen that, because I got some kids grown up and they are
expecting it and they know how they should listen to me. But a kid like that...there is a lot of kids that go on the highways here at nighttime, they hang around here. How they...what they are talking in their home, well that is what they are doing. Their mothers don't say anything, they just walk out. That is why you see too many kids on the road.

I: I hear a lot of people say that their kids are fine until they start school and then they can't control them. What do you think about that?

L: Well, that is the thing they missed you know. They figured when they send their kids to school, that is where they should be corrected.

I: But they are only in school for this much of the day. The whole rest of the day they are at home you know. There has to be a little bit of friction on both ends.

L: You see, that is why a kid can do anything at school. What I told you, Mr. Humble said it is all passed now, you couldn't strap a kid in school. Well, I myself figured that it is still good to tell a kid in school that the principal, that it's his business to look after the school. When a kid comes to school, well the teachers are responsible for that kid. Mother and Dad are not responsible until they get home. That is the way I look at it.

I: So then they relied on the strap a lot when you went to school?

L: Yeah.

I: Did they have any other form of punishment?

L: Well, that is the only punishment I got. Another thing is in our school, we weren't let - I am not criticizing you smoking but we didn't, that was one thing that Mr. Ellis didn't like. So we never smoked.

M: Teachers either?

L: No, no teachers, no smoking. And one time there was twenty-one boys stole a package of tobacco.

I: Twenty-one for one package?

L: A can. And I tell you they sure got it. Everyone of them lined up in that hallway and Mr. Ellis has a strap about that long and I don't know how many handles but that strap was just, I don't know how many strings. And every boy that came out had a red ass. That was pretty strict you know but that was good. It was good. It wasn't bad because Mr. Ellis knew that he has to put his foot on it. The parents couldn't do nothing about it, but the parents thought that they send their kids to school, they have to learn something. So that is the way they looked
at it. Every time we talk about it and we tell him, well it is
good for you. Because that is the way they want it. There was
twenty-one of them, I wasn't there. I was there but I didn't,
never smoked. And that is what they got. Now, these kids now,
they are in school and they all smoke. You see, that is not
learning nothing. All you are learning is to pass things
through, passing good. So a fellow on the other side, a fellow
to do his own thinking if he wants to go to high school.

I: I couldn't myself, see giving a strap to Theresa for
instance.

L: You see, what they done in our school the time we went in,
Mondays is the wash day. Tuesdays, certain boys go washing in
the morning to go to school in the afternoon...to go to school
on Tuesday. Certain boys go out. And Wednesday afternoon they
showed, most of us, and Thursdays, Friday. It was only four-and-
a-half days of school really.

I: From what time? From nine to...?

L: From nine to four o'clock.

M: What did you do with your spare time over there?

L: Well, we didn't do too many things. I guess there were a
lot of things that we could do but we didn't care. You know,
all we done was playing ball or maybe they will get us to haul
wood. We had to haul at certain times. All the boys had to
haul wood every evening. And there were certain boys who
looked after the barn, the milking and all the things. There
would be certain boys who would look after the sweeping of the
floor, especially in the mornings. We got all scheduled, two
and two. Maybe two boys would be sweeping the stairs and four
boys would be looking after all that stuff, you know.

I: It sounds like you had a lot of extra work to do?

L: Yeah.

I: Did you have to get up really early in the morning?

L: No, about seven o'clock, no, six-thirty I think.

M: Did you look after the teacher's homes too?

L: No.

M: You didn't work for them at all? You didn't get their wood
or water?

L: No, because they lived all in the same building. All we
done is the boys washed their own clothes. We washed our own
clothes. We ironed our own, no, yeah, I think we ironed our
own clothes. We sewed our own clothes.

I: You sewed them?
L: Yeah.

I: So, you all had kind of a uniform?

L: Yeah. And then we, all the work on the boys' side, we done the work all on our side. There were no girls working on the boys' side and no boys working on the girls' side. That is the way it was done.

I: Do you remember what subjects you were taught in school?

L: Oh, my favorite was drawing. Science, history, all kinds of arithmetic and spelling. Pretty near all the same things.

I: What kind of history? Was it Canadian history or was it...?

L: It was the same history as what they learn right now.

I: Did they have Indian people come in sometimes and tell you history and things like that?

L: No.

I: Never any people were involved in the school.

M: How did they keep the boys and the girls apart?

L: Oh, must be divided in two places. Girls on this side and boys on this side.

I: Did you ever get together for socials or anything?

L: Oh, once in a while but...

I: Were they really, really strict for supervising to keep them apart all the time?

L: Yeah.

M: They were together in the classrooms then, eh?

L: In the classrooms they were together but in the chapel, when we would go in there, boys on one side, girls on one side.

M: What about playing ball and skating and things like that?

L: Well, we didn't do too much skating. The boys used to go down to the lake there and skate, and the girls would play on the other side. They didn't do too much. In the spring time, the boys used to have a softball team, the girls with some of the boys. But that would be really strictly watched. They don't allow us to go and play with the girls just any time. They were really strict. Especially with the big boys and the big girls. That is why they were pretty strict. They had to
do that because otherwise they wouldn't be able to handle them because they were big boys, you know.

M: Well, if you started when you were nine years old, by the time you got in higher grades you would be getting pretty old.

L: No, as soon as you were sixteen, you were out. I was sixteen.

I: You left when you were sixteen?
L: Yeah, they didn't allow us anymore.
I: Oh, for heaven's sakes.
M: If you were going to get any more grades, you had to pack them all in before you were sixteen?
L: Yeah.
I: What about those who were in high school?
L: Well, in high school, they were doing pretty good because they got to be sixteen before they would go to high school.
I: Even when you were in high school, you had to leave when you were sixteen?
L: Yeah. Sometimes there were big boys, you know, hardly any but they wouldn't keep any over sixteen. Maybe they would keep girls over sixteen.
I: Did very many girls go to school?
L: Oh, yes.
I: Could you quit before you were sixteen if you wanted to?
L: Oh, I don't know. I couldn't tell you. If the parents just wanted to take him out, they could take him out. They used to juggle us every once in a while. They were shoving people up. They would go to a Roman Catholic school just to come to an Anglican school and the other guy would take his kids and go and put him in a Roman Catholic school.
M: You said you had movies on Wednesday, is that what you said?
L: No, no movies.
M: Oh, then what did you say?
L: Sewing, all afternoon we had to sit there and sew.
I: Did you get to do things like beadwork and that kind of thing?
L: No, nothing.

I: Do you think there would be any point now to teach the kids, like to develop a Social Studies program of teaching the kids about the old Indian ways?

L: In a certain way, it should be taught because there are a lot of things that the kids don't know anything about here.

I: Well, like you were saying, they would prefer to sit in front of the TV.

L: Yeah, that is right. Even my kids you know, I used to tell them the way I used to live. Although they had been living with me, they would say it is all past now.

I: They weren't interested in it.

L: No, so it was pretty hard. They believe certain parts you know from what we mean, our race.

I: Well, do you think it would make any difference if somebody taught the teachers about these things and then taught it in the schools?

L: I think in certain ways, they should learn because I will tell you these new schools coming up, like, junior highs. These new programs that the FSI wants to put, first kindergarten up to grade two or grade three, they are going to teach them all Cree.

I: Do you think that is good or bad?

L: That is the program they are going to try on. They are working on it.

I: What do you think about that?

L: Well, in a certain way, I think, I am not, I don't know how I can get along with that but that is the way they want to do it because all these kids are losing their Cree language, all of them. Part of the Cree language they use this English mixed. And then what we tell them, maybe at home they will tell them. This morning there was one word that my wife used and this little girl said, "What's that?" and we said, "Go and tell your grandpa. Run and tell your grandma that the bishop is coming," in Cree. And he told him this way. (Speaks Cree) means it is a very important man, a clergyman, a bishop. He go and look at his mom and he said, "What is that?" You going to tell me they don't understand this Cree? He didn't know, she didn't know what this means because he never heard it so they have to tell them. And in English he couldn't hardly understand it too. So in certain ways, they figure that they can - they have tried it in different reserves, you know - and they figure
they can use it.

I: But how would this be when they get into grade four then?

L: What they suggest is they are going to teach them, not all in Cree, but most parts in Cree.

I: Oh, so some English would be in there.

L: Yes, some English will be there up to grade three. Then there will be some extent of English, a little higher, maybe forty percent of English or maybe sixty percent of English and forty percent Cree. The Cree...the first part of the Cree will be a little higher percentage in English. They are going to scale it. And then when they get up to grade three, they are going to turn it. They are going to put the Cree up on the English and that way the Cree will come out naturally but the English will be wider all the time. But on top there, about ten percent all that time they are going to teach in the Cree religion.

I: Do they have enough Cree teachers? Do they have enough teachers to do this now or...?

L: No, they are working on it.

I: So these people in Itec would be doing that?

M: Would they train white people to do that?

L: Yeah, I guess so.

I: You would have to know the language.

L: Yeah, you would have to know it.

M: You would have to train them to speak Cree though.

L: See, that is what they are coming up with. That is what I said when the FSI is playing on this. And all this time the ten percent all the way through it is the Indian religion, that is what they are going to teach. Not the religion stuff.

I: Well, about the Indian religion, have you got time for one more story?

L: Well, I better finish my cake and then I will go home.

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