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INTERVIEWER: MARGARET WHITEHEAD
INTERPRETER:
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RESTRICTIONS: I HEREBY GIVE THIS
TRANSCRIPT NUMBERING 7 PAGES, TO THE AURAL HISTORY
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Very general discussion about potlatches.

Jimmy: When I go to the potlatches with him he makes this speech in his native tongue. He's a wonderful speaker and we always call him anywhere in the west coast. And I listen to him for a long time now and then, but he's always asked me to talk, interpret, so I have to interpret in English all the speech he makes in there to a large crowd. So that's how I learned to talk, making speeches. And I hear him speak in his own language in funeral, funeral services. And then I started that -- that's quite a while back -- and I started making speeches in English in the funeral services. And I remember when Father Philip was here and he was to... served at mass...

Father: (Inaudible).

Jimmy: Chief (name)?

Father: Chief (name), (inaudible), my mother, yeah.
(inaudible).

Jimmy: He says he's got all the Indian songs and how it became about this Chief (name) and the legend of Napoleon, how he became chief, and the songs they used at the potlatch at the time. And he remembers all that song at the time of that ceremony. He says he still has it. I don't know if we should ask him to sing it. (laughs)

Margaret: Maybe. Do you think he would?

Jimmy: You know how to sing it now?

Father: I know how to sing it, but I know how to make them dance one (inaudible).

Jimmy: He wants one of my nephews to dance. He could, let's say he might, he could dance. But I think it's okay, just sing a song. Get the drum. He's got half the mask. He wants my nephew to dance, you know, but...

Father: (Inaudible).

Jimmy: My nephew knows how to dance, oh, he's what they dance in the west coast. But my nephew refused because he hasn't got no costume. He only dances when there's a large crowd. I guess it's different when there's just you.

Margaret: Yeah, it is. Yeah, it's different.

Jimmy: Now what song is this? (Name)?

Father: Yeah. Different kind where (inaudible) my mother's song, you know.

Jimmy: Yes.

Father: (inaudible).

Jimmy: Yeah.

Father: (Sings in Indian and pounding on drum) That song, yeah.

Jimmy: That's your father's song?

Father: Yeah. Yeah, father, my father and my mother they teach me, that's why I never lost everything. Yeah, he tell me, my father, and don't forget it. Keep it (inaudible) everything, totem poles (inaudible).

Jimmy: Well, let's hear (name)'s song then, (name).

Father: I forget the (name) song. Just I know four songs from (name), the potlatch songs.

Jimmy: Yeah, okay.

Father: (Name), he get the all over Indian dance (inaudible).

Jimmy: Ten tribes, he gathered them ten tribes.

Father: (Inaudible). Yeah, now the canoe go up there, all over. Big potlatch, two dance (inaudible) in the potlatch. Yeah. But I lost that song, you know, different, but I know what hard time (inaudible).

Jimmy: Oh, he says he knows the song very well but when you're trying to think spur of the moment it's very difficult to get it.

Father: (Sings song in Indian and pounding drum) (Inaudible)

Jimmy: I heard that but I forgot it too. It's no wonder he forgets but he remember.

Father: (inaudible).

Jimmy: I know that song, that's (name)'s for the big potlatch. I know it and I hear him sing it in potlatches and he's the only one that sings that song, you know. And I heard him sing three songs like that and nobody else sings it but him. I guess he's the only one is allowed to sing it. Oh, oh,

they had (name), his name was Ambrose (name), the one that's the chief now. It's supposed to be for the big potlatch. That's a big potlatch song, eh?

Father: Big potlatch song, oh, big one, yeah.

Margaret: (Inaudible)?

Jimmy: Eh?

Margaret: Would he sing it again for me?

Jimmy: You sing it again, you will sing another song?

Father: Eh?

Jimmy: Sing another song.

Father: (laughs) I think it's getting time. (laughs)

Margaret: Just one more.

Father: I forget it, but I know potlatch song (inaudible).

Jimmy: Okay.

Father: Yeah.

Jimmy: Okay.

Father: (Pounding a drum and singing in Indian)

Jimmy: He's tired. He didn't finish it because he's tired.

Margaret: (Inaudible). Is he going to...?

Father: (Continues the song.) That's a potlatch song. Yeah.

Jimmy: I should tape it myself.

Margaret: (Inaudible).

Jimmy: Yeah. Sometimes he says he forgets it but he has to think for a while.

Margaret: Well, they weren't allowed to potlatch, were they, for a long time?

Jimmy: Yeah, that's right. But potlatch is in -- both Salish have the same ideas as the west coast and the north Indian, Alert Bay, has the same idea. But potlatch is a very certain reason and it's a good reason. Like if someone put up a potlatch -- they still doing it today up the coast and still doing it in Salish -- when they put up a potlatch it's for the respect of the family that's putting that up, for the mother and father who passed away. So they called the people and tell the people why he's putting the potlatch. It's to respect a person that's passed away from the family and everyone goes there. And that's what it's for. It's a reason. Now most of it is that way but now there's certain different kind of potlatch, it's just for parties and that, it's a different kind. There's about two or three different kinds, but I know this, the other one, is for funerals. Funeral, what you call, ceremony, that's what it is.

Margaret: Did, when his family became Catholic did the priest try to stop them from going to the potlatch?

Jimmy: Yes, I remember when he told me that story. Yes, that is, but I suppose the priest didn't understand what it was all about. Yeah, at the time that they do. So this priest left to another reserve according to the story I heard. This priest went to another reserve visiting and then they started putting up the potlatch while he was away. And this is a strange story. While they were all potlatching then the priest walks in the hall where the big house is and seen them there. And they all got scared and stopped, whether they would just imagine it or whether he disappeared at the time, I don't know, but that's the story. And he told me that quite a while ago but whether he told me he disappeared or not I don't know, but it did seem then they all were shocked. (laughs)

Margaret: Yeah, I guess the priest was pretty upset when he came there.

Jimmy: (laughs)

Margaret: But is your father going to be going to Duncan to Brother Terry Macnamara's...?

Jimmy: When is this?

Margaret: July 15, and the Bishop is coming up to ordain Brother Terry. He's going to be ordained in the longhouse at Duncan.

Jimmy: Oh, give me the time and place and so forth.

(END OF SIDE A)

(END OF TAPE)

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