The people being interviewed discuss their life at the Mission Indian Residential School.

NOTE: This interview was conducted in a room full of people, and they are frequently all talking at the same time. As a result the dialogue is often impossible to follow.

Man: Across the creek. That might have been, that might have been the station. I tried that, I rode up there last weekend to see if I could find that station and see if I could find the graveyard, you know, and it wasn't the same or anything. I know where it is now. Oh yeah. They all remember where that was. Like we were trying to find the old graveyard that used to be over the side of the creek from down behind the corrals. Remember that?

David: Yeah.

Lady: Behind the armory.

Man: No, not the armory, it wasn't the armory.

David: The Mission?
Man: It was the Mission.

Lady: Was it really?

Man: The train stop is there today. You can see, it says "Indian Residential," no, "Caribou Indian School." "Caribou Indian School" was the sign and there's nothing, there's no sign of any building. Remember there was a train, a little house there?

Lady: Yeah.

Man: Was there?

Lady: Up on the railroad?

Man: Yeah.

Lady: Yeah, there was.

Man: And do you remember where the graveyard was? Across there or in there somewhere, there was supposed to be an Indian graveyard? Bud says, he says, "It's up there in that clearing, Father. You can see where those trees were kind of not big as the rest of them." Of course I went up there and I never saw anything, you know.

Lady: Never heard. I guess years back, not in our time, because I never saw anything like it around.

Margaret: Well, that's really strange because Father Thomas mentions an Indian girl who drowned in the creek being buried there, near the railway station.

Lady: Never heard.

Margaret: So you were nineteen when you left the school?

Lady: Right, ten years.

Margaret: Well, how old were you when you started? Ten?

Lady: I was, I went to school about ten.

Margaret: Were you ten when you started?

Lady 2: I don't know, you mean really? I don't know how old she was.

Lady: About nine.

Lady 2: Nine.

Margaret: What about...? Was it like that when you went to school, still nine or ten?
Lady: Seven, I think, when he went to school. He was seven. Because I remember a little bit, looked after since he was small.

Margaret: Who? Celina?

Lady: Celina. Her mother died, her father died. That's the reason why I had to leave the Mission because my mother had Dora and she was small too. So my mom couldn't handle both of them. I had to leave to school so I looked after...

Man: I got a picture of her too when she was small.

Lady 2: I had little pictures of her. (laughs)

Man: Looks just like (name).

Lady: Yeah, I always look at it. I never did look at the pictures for a long time. I was nine when I went to school.

Margaret: How long were you there?

Lady: Eight years, I think. I went as far as sixth grade, that's all. Grade six. We weren't allowed any more. I was supposed to leave two years before but I asked for another two years in school.

Margaret: Why?

Lady: To stay in. I didn't want to leave so quick.

Margaret: Why didn't you want to leave?

Lady: Because I like that over there. I asked for two years extra.

Margaret: They kept you?

Lady: Yeah.

Margaret: Even though you were always causing trouble?

Lady: They told me I was a good worker. They didn't care, they keep me.

Margaret: What year did you go?

Lady: 1929, February. That's the year I went to school. (laughs)

Margaret: One leaves and one starts. (laughs) Did you used to work for the Sisters during the summertime there?

Lady: Oh yeah, we used to.

Margaret: Doing what?
Lady: Help with everything they want us to do, do it. Some (inaudible) were (inaudible). They do this and they wouldn't if they don't want to. Just stand there and that's all. (laughs) Used to do a lot of jarring, jarring fruit and vegetables.

Margaret: Well, you did some canning in the summer months?

Lady: Yeah. And then make butter. Used to make their own butter, you know, make butter and put them in little old pails. They had a churn. They have them in a dish, them (inaudible). Some kids must have get some out, some cream out (laughs) once, you know why. (laughs)

Margaret: Well, when you stayed at the school in the summertime did the Sisters pay you?

Lady: No, they don't pay us.

Margaret: What about the boys? Did the boys get paid?

Man: No, not get paid. I was quite young yet when the paying system came in.

Margaret: Oh I see.

Lady 2: When I stayed there they got me clothes, dressed me up. Whatever they wanted, she bring those big materials, twenty-five cents a yard.

Lady: Now at seven, eight dollars a yard, ten, more.

Lady 2: Good shoes, leather shoes, two and a half.

Lady: Now these ones $27.95.

Margaret: Yeah, I know it. Did you take, were you allowed to take your clothes home with you when you left the school?

Lady: Oh yeah.

Margaret: Keep them.

Lady 2: Yeah.

Lady: Like, (inaudible) he must have went to school, he must have been gone little older, because he was just in school for five years. And then when he was sixteen he had to leave school. They let him out when he was sixteen, when he was just grade five. It wasn't like now. Now you can go to school all you want if you want to graduate. But him they said he had to leave when he was sixteen.

Lady 2: (Inaudible).

Lady: And they said he stayed in for that summer and he
just worked for the summer, worked at the Mission. They weren't getting paid either. When he left from there, when the kids were going back, they just handed him clothes. And he thought it was great, you know, getting gift clothes at least.

Man: When was it the Alkali kids stopped going to Mission? What year would that be?
Margaret: Long time ago?
Lady: Not too long.
David: You mean as a whole crew?
Man: Yeah, as, you know, everybody going.
David: Probably when the integration started.
Man: I guess maybe that's what it was, eh?
David: Probably in '61, '62.
Lady: Must be about that because our niece was never attend Mission.
David: Yeah, but I stayed in the Mission for nine years.
Margaret: Must have seen quite a few changes then, between you?
Lady: Yeah.
Margaret: When you were there and things were a little different when you went. Did you keep in touch with the school after you left? Did you go back?
Lady: No. Never went over there. I guess there are kids going to school, you know. Irene was the one went through high school. I remember what year it was. But she had to go down Los Angeles to finish her high school down there, and she trained for nursing.
Margaret: Why did she have to go so far?
Lady: Well, this guy wanted them to go down there and wanted to mark for a book down there. So she went and took Irene along and she had to finish her school down there.
Margaret: By the time you left school were you able to, you know, speak English and write English really well?
Lady: Yeah. We learned enough to write a letter anyway. As far as (inaudible) words so... (laughs) Like everybody else now talking, you can't understand.
Lady 2: No hard words though. (laughs) Now they want to
talk so high we have to guess what they mean, you know.

(laughs)

Lady: (Inaudible) and why some of them really envy those that really can graduate now and they wouldn't do it.

David: I was fortunate to graduate. I wanted to quit when I was in grade eight, wanted to quit when I was in grade nine. Matter of fact nine, ten, eleven, twelve -- I wanted to quit every... (laughs) Like my teacher said, "Nobody likes a quitter." See, that stuck in my mind. (laughs)

Margaret: What did you do for recreation, Ann?

Lady: You mean playing?

Margaret: Yeah.

Lady: Well, we have a swing, and iron bar there we could turn around, everything. Make a frog out of ourselves and... (laughs) We used to play baseball.

Margaret: Oh, you played baseball?

Lady: Yeah. Everything like that, football.

Margaret: Football too? But you had girls, you didn't play against the boys?

Lady: No, just girls. Later on they played with the boys. We had picnics and going out in the woods. When Father Aurore was there, he mixed the girls and the boys...

Margaret: Father Aurore?

Lady: Yeah. Yeah, I was thinking about Tracy and Brenda. They wouldn't go back from old lady's house if I don't go looking for them.

Man: Is that (inaudible)? Oh David, I guess David could speak on it. He might have something to say, eh?

Lady: Once he starts sometimes you can't, you have to sit around and listen to him. And, "I'm sorry that I told you to tell me stories." (laughs) Sometime he makes me laugh, he says, "Wait, wait. I never finished the story yet." (laughs)

Margaret: Whose is David anyway?

Lady: That guy that was sitting behind you in the dirt.

Margaret: Oh yeah. Oh, so was he at the school the same time?

Lady: No, it was him -- that old guy. That's her dad. You mean old David Johnson?

Margaret: Yeah. How old is he?
Lady: He's in his eighties. Eighty-three maybe. Must be. He's eighty-four or eighty-five.

Lady 2: I don't even know how old he is.

Man: He's in that picture, that picture that you see with Father. Old Inez is in that too. Remember that picture I had, was it Father Aurore or Father Benny?

Lady 2: Father Benny.

Man: He was in that picture back in... Well, he was before Alice (name). He was in the school before Alice, wasn't he? He was with Inez because Inez is in that picture too.

Lady 2: That would be very early 1900s.

Man: Yeah. Well Molly (name), how old is she?

Lady 2: I don't know. She's about the same age as us.

Man: Yes. Well, was Molly, did she go to school too there?

Lady: Yes, she went to school. But old Josephine, you call her, told us there on her way from school with old Nelson, they kicked her out. (laughs)

Man: You mean her and old Joseph?

Lady: Yes. Nelson.

Man: Oh, Nelson.

Lady: Yeah, Nelson. Jealousy, I guess, or whatever. Said (inaudible). (laughs) I told Josephine, told that. (laughs) Molly was mad at them, you know, because they used to train her and (inaudible) together. And you must never talk to them. I say a word when they come out of church. She said she was mad, she never look at other doctor. (Inaudible). (laughs) So we know. (laughs) Yeah, they used to throw out, I hear they used to throw out people from school before. They never done it when I was in school. They run away if they put you back in there, but dress you up in a gunny sack...

Lady 2: I guess boys used to run away, they used to dress them up.

Lady: Yeah, I remember, put on the dress, you know, on them. They'd be sewing (inaudible). (laughs) Yeah, then we left but (inaudible). Gunny sack on the bottom, old gunny sack and cut it here and they used that on Prosper Murphy a few times. And I see Prosper in town one time, I reminded him about when he ran away from school and he had on this gunny
sack for a dress and he had to eat with the girls. And this
girl Mary was teasing him and he was with the older girls and
she stood behind him and she was teasing him. I don't know
what -- he had on the girl's hat. (laughs) Boy he was
(inaudible). Just grabbed his rice pudding and just swung it
back and... (laughs) I asked him if he remembered when he
done that to Mary. He said, "Don't think about it." (laughs)
He doesn't like to think about when he was wearing a gunny sack
for a dress. (laughs) And boys used to really (inaudible).
They said they had dresses on one day. There was three or four
of them that run away from the boys, and she (inaudible). "If
you girls run away we going to put their pants on you." And
none of us (inaudible). (laughs) Oh no, I guess we can't do
that thing. (laughs) That was her, I told you used to...

Margaret: Who used to bring you back when you run away?

Lady 2: Yes, they used to take us back.

Margaret: But who? Did your parents have to return you to the
school?

Lady: Or if they phone over, they phone over at the
Mission.

Margaret: But some of those children that run away from the
school they wasn't so good in the wintertime. There was some
of them really sick from being outside in the wintertime?

Lady 2: I remember my dad telling me when he run away. I
don't know what (inaudible).

Lady: We had shoes too, and our feet were froze that night.

Margaret: Yeah. This is what I mean, it must have been...

Lady: And we had no matches at all to make fire. Was cold,
went anywhere. Had to (inaudible) in our shoes to put it on.
We took it off, our feet pretty near froze.

Lady 2: Yeah, that old man was telling a story about when he
ran away and they went somewhere when they found some dry
bread, or whatever. I don't know what and they had to eat that
bread. Moldy bread and they had to eat it, but he was hungry.
(laughs) And my dad was just a little boy.

Lady: And when he said they come around they were at the
(inaudible). And then when my mom was... I guess my
grandmother found out that they run away and they heard that
they were (inaudible) because he was out there with a long
stick. (laughs) Well, I asked her if he did (inaudible). He
said one of them had warm moccasins and they, if anybody got
cold feet they exchanged their... Keep going, that's the way
they kept warm. Boy, that's one thing I never thought of
running away, because I didn't want to...
Lady 2: We used to threaten her and scare her about the bears and all that. Of course, he goes back... (laughs) I never did feel a stick or a leather from her. And that's one thing I used to think, if I do run away I'll get the stick maybe. (laughs) Because they never had whipped me. My aunt knew I run away she'd be down to whip me. She never had children, you know, make me work like a grown up person when I was small. Slave you. Yeah, her skirt right to the ground and she make me wash them. And I used to clean it. You'd look at this white, you know, sleep (inaudible). (laughs) Never know what washing machine. (laughs)

Lady: You wash everything by hand.

Lady 2: Some says Indian are dirty, but they never go to school yet. They used to get clean them old people, swim all the time, sweathouse.

Man: (Inaudible) these sweathouses?

Lady: Like I was telling my, all my kids. "When you kids are all small we didn't have Pampers then, we used to use old rags on your, wrap around your behind. Today if you guys got kids you want to make sure, you got to go over to the store and buy Pampers. We never saw that." I tell them, "All you kids should be, if you do have children you should get cloth and put it on your kids. Don't be starting to use Pampers, just laziness now." Because they never done any work after we left school, you know, they had the easy times. They don't even cook...

Lady 2: Nothing now, them girls. All they do is play in town, around. Wouldn't even want to wash (inaudible) unless they make them.

Lady: Must be like that (inaudible). No, if I don't tell them they don't do it. Yeah, it's funny they get away with it. They get away with it.

Lady 2: Like way my (inaudible). I bet she doesn't wash dishes any more. She used to all the time, she...

Lady: She says she always refer to Elford, Eileen and Rollie too, to Ann and Jenny because they always, they do work and they do dishes.

Lady 2: That's where they went to school was at the Mission. And you know they don't do like we used to do it.

Lady: Like there these little boys got in there and said, "Could I wash your dishes?" And I said, "If your mother don't say anything about it it will be all right. Do you think your mother wouldn't like it?" "No," she told me, (inaudible). (laughs)

Man: Who was that?
Lady:  (Name)'s boy.

Man:  Oh yeah.

Lady 2:  Oh, back there when they were making money for their trip. I keep him.

Lady:  (laughs) Washing thirty plates.

Man:  Henry used to come over here too. And Henry come over here and he said, "Do you got any jobs you want done, Father?" And I thought this was too good to be true. So he swept the floor and he mopped it. He sounded really enthusiastic, you know, and he said, "Anything else I can do?" I said, "You can bring in the wood." He brought the wood in. "Is there anything else you can do?" So when it was all over I thought, oh, he's a nice little kid so I gave him a few candies. Then he went out and never said what he did it for. Like he should have said that he was trying to raise money for (inaudible) give him some money but he never said anything. (laughs) Never said why he was doing it.

Lady:  He done this thing over the house, over there. He said, "You want anything to be done outside?" And I said, "Gee that's chopped wood out there and the ground is all raked up." And he said, "You want to throw away some of them junk that are around back there?" he said. And I said, "Those aren't my junk. It's some guys automobile outfit. You just can't go throwing something out. Where you going to throw it?" And he said, "Over the hill." And I said, "No, they'll haul it. (laughs) Then he starts chopping wood there. Stayed on about that flock, you know, that hard, hard...

Man:  Is that Henry?

Lady:  Yeah. Those clumps that are just laying around (inaudible).

Lady 2:  Some of our wood is like (inaudible).

Lady:  He stayed on that clump for nearly an hour and Rollie comes in and he said, "Mom, you owe that kid a dollar outside." And I said, "A dollar! Where's the wood what he split?" He said, "He couldn't split up that pile." (laughs)

Man:  That little Henry, boy he's a great little kid.

Lady:  So Ella gave a log and he split up that platform. I gave him a dollar. He went running, he didn't ask for any more work.

Man:  Did they get going?

Lady:  Yeah, they left.
Margaret: Where'd they go?
Lady: In Vancouver.
Man: They even raise money in every conceivable way you can imagine.
Lady: You never know when he was going to go...
Man: Every way.
Margaret: How many of them...
Man: (Inaudible). How many would be in Alex's class?
Lady: Fourteen.
Man: Was it just her class went?
Lady: Yeah. There's eight they didn't go because eight was sick. Mark and Dave didn't go. I said to Mark, "How come? You should go." He said, "No," he said, "I didn't make any money with them kids."
Man: Mark...
Lady: Little Mark.
Man: ...Harry.
Lady: He said, "I didn't make any money with them kids." I said, "Well hell, you could go along." No, they didn't want him along. And he didn't even say, "Lennox doesn't want me to go."
Lady 2: He was telling me that's when he was...
Lady: Oh, there was a guy... We had a big back around here when (inaudible) was going around here. I was at the door looking around and what was going on, and I saw this guy out there walking around. And people come to me and he said, "Did you see my wife around here?" And I said, "Who is your wife?" He said, "Lennox is my wife and she has a yellow car. I come home from Vancouver. I've been working Vancouver and I got sick," he said. So he must have got better when he came out of the hospital because he came this way. And then he waited for him that night and...

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