HIGHLIGHTS:

- Discusses how the Indians acquired their songs.
- Tells a creation myth of her people.
- Tells a flood legend of her people.

Annie: Sing one of the spiritual songs out there.

Imbert: I think so.

Annie: Yeah, that was on the table. It was, you just, it wasn't recorded, you and I, we were just talking.

Imbert: That's right.

Annie: Yeah.

Imbert: Yes, we hadn't got a machine yet. But it would be nice, from time to time. Perhaps you could think of somebody who could sing some of these things for us too, anything that you wanted to, because now we have a good machine and we can record it.
Annie: Yes.

Imbert: And then you could have it too, you see. We could make a copy of it.

Annie: Yes. Well, the songs that people sang were their own. They had gotten it through, well, like spiritual prayers. And they'd have, like, somebody coming to them, you know, like in, like say that their prayers were heard and somebody started talking to them and gave them these songs. Therefore the songs that the Indians sing, used to sing before in prayers and in blessing and so on... They had all these songs. Especially when they were going out. Like, on my own part, what my grandfather and my father told me, they had these spiritual songs for safety. They were more or less a prayer in song. And when they went out, they sang these songs. Especially in stormy weathers. And it usually calmed down. It was just like as if somebody poured oil on the waters and calmed it, you know. They were in canoes, remember, and there were big storms coming up. I remember what my father told me about a whaling trip they made. This was way out from Sichard(?), off those islands there, Diana Island, not Diana Island, one of those islands anyway where the people used to stay, where their territory was just past Ucluelet there. And I remember my father saying that they used to have eight men aboard, paddlers. They didn't use oars, they just paddled. And each man had his paddle and when they had these paddles made, they usually spoke to it, like when they were making it. They spoke and they said their prayers and asked for protection, that through these paddles they were going to come home safe. So each man kept his paddle. Like Margaret's aunt, she still has the paddle she used to go out sealing with -- was it sealing? I don't know where Margaret has it now; she still had it a few years back. It was treasured, you know. They made it out of yew wood, and polished it and kept it. Well, Margaret still had one of these after her auntie died. Her auntie died quite a... She did quite a lot of sealing herself. She had no children therefore she went out herself. She went out sealing.

Imbert: Did she go out by herself or...?

Annie: No, no, she went out with someone. Somebody had to be with you because... Like my mother, see, my father went out with her. She could spear these seals, women could do it. They had to go through a lot of these rituals, you know. They prayed, they bathed, they cleansed themselves and each new moon, like, they used to take four days, up to eight days, and the hunter, more -- a month or so -- to cleanse themselves and prepare themselves so they will come home with something. Because it was a disgrace in those days when you went out, well, people just naturally thought that you didn't purify yourself. And they had all these songs.
Imbert: It was a disgrace if...?

Annie: If you came home empty-handed. And then people would say that, "Oh, he wasn't prepared or she wasn't prepared."

Naturally it was mostly men that went out. It was very seldom a woman went but then there were these women that had stronger stamina in them to go through with a lot of these things, because they bathed at night and they prepared themselves, prayed in the woods, beside the pools or wherever their bathing places were. Most of these people had their own bathing places and nobody intruded because they thought it was bad luck or it would bring them bad luck; usually it did. So they were out there by themselves. They knew when to go and what to do. And when they were bathing, they'd talk. They didn't talk like I'm talking to you now. They more or less spoke a hidden language. If you went and eavesdropped, you know, you couldn't understand what they were saying because it was their own language in spirit talking and usually they started singing these songs.

Imbert: Did each person then have his own spirit language for this?

Annie: Yes, yes, each person had them. Because a lot of times people going out into the woods, with white people, they heard these. Like a gold miner that went up to the Clayoquot River, up... and he had a couple of men with him. This man just died recently, about eight years ago. He was the one, his name was George Simon. And one of her uncles went along. And during the nighttime, when they built their fire... This was way up high, this was where the Ucluelets used to go out and pray. It's on the highway now, you know that high mountain just about... You can see it, it's a peaked mountain like this. And there's a little lake above there. They climbed that in order... A lot of them believed the closer they got to the skies, the better chance that the Great Spirit would hear them. And the people long ago believed so much in the gift from the Great Spirit, which is God in your language now. So they prayed. Well, these men were up there then and that night when they had a fire going -- they were just going to bed and they had to keep the fire going -- and this man, the one they were working for, he called George and he said, "George, do you hear what I hear?" And George -- both of them were George -- and the old man said, "Yes, I hear." And this white man asked him if he understood and he said, "No, this is from, it's beyond us to understand but I know what it is," he said. Because this is what he was, this person they heard was Osimch(?). It was probably just a spirit of somebody's ancestor, see. And this man got up to listen. He used to just hear a kind of a hooting sound, like, and then jumbled words. He couldn't, they couldn't understand him.

Well, that's the way they spoke. That's the way it was done. It was done as recently as thirty years ago, about there. A lot of them went through the same thing. Even if they were educated, they believed so much in the teaching of their
ancestors. And I myself really do believe too. I believe that how the Indians prayed or spoke from their spirits, they believed in the Great Spirit and the spirit world. And they believed in what we call God today. They called him the Great Spirit. (Indian) That's the way they said it (Indian). That's the way they started off with and then they'd start asking. It was pretty tough for the Indians, eh, and they really believed, they really accomplished what they asked for. Like going out whale hunting. What I was telling you now, they didn't go back when it got stormy. They dared not because they had set a date to go out and catch those whales and the whales were everything to the Indian; it was their survival. That's how the Indian lived. That's how they fed the people, especially the chiefs. He had his warriors, like, and he had his hunters. And when they went out they... Each individual, each hunter, they had their own sacred songs and these spiritual songs, they sang. And nothing happened to them. I've never heard of one whale hunter that didn't come back, even in the worst of storms. Like this, when my father's grandfather went out and they were... You know, remember the paintings George makes now with those Thunderbirds and whales? Well, they claim it actually happened and there are songs to those paintings he has now.

Imbert: What was the...? Could you describe one of these things that happened?

Annie: Well, the one I was telling about, they got into a storm just as soon as they left Village Island out here, outside of Effingham Island. And it got so stormy they couldn't see; it was hailing. And still they went on and the hunter, his name was (name) -- that was our great-great-grandfather then -- he started singing one of these spiritual songs. And just like as if somebody poured oil on the waters, it calmed around the canoe. They kept going and it got darker then and the thunder started thuddering and they believed this was the Thunderbird because it got so dark on top the canoe. And finally they saw the wings come over them and the man started singing and just then they saw the whale.

It was still, it was on top of the water because that's what they prayed for. They always pray that they will see the whale as if dead. And they would come within just a few feet of it and then put their spears out, their harpoons, and they'd start singing to the whale and the whale would turn around. And then what they called (Indian), that was calling out. Well, I'd say calling out to the spirit of the whale or for understanding, asking their Great Spirit to lead their prey home, not killing it outright.

Well, that's what happened. See, this whale started moving and just then the great cloud came down and they saw the talons of something big. They were just a few feet away from the whale and it struck the whale. It started hailing so much that every
paddler put his paddle on top of his head because the hailstones were as big as golf balls probably. That's the way my father described. They were so big that it would just crack their heads if it hit.

And then when they were sitting like this, the Thunderbird started rising up with the whale. It grasped the whale by its back and then, just then (Indian), he heard a song being sung real softly. And he started singing, he stood up in the prow of the canoe and started singing it. And these songs we have preserved. There are many of them, four or five of them from that same one whale hunt they had. Therefore our emblem is the Thunderbird, our clan, see, George's and mine.

And when he had sung this four times, the whale -- I mean the Thunderbird dropped the whale into the water. That whale didn't struggle or anything, it just landed, splashed in the water. And then the darkness went away and they claimed that it was the Thunderbird that flew and flew on top of Sichard(?) Mountain, I don't know what you call that mountain, it's around Sichard(?), there's the mountain behind there. And then they started singing again to this whale, the way they used to say. They'd say, (Indian) and they'd start singing and then the whale started moving in a slow motion, started towing these hunters home. And then when they got into the place where they started out from, the whale just went to the beach and that's where they killed it. That's the way the Indian, well, that's the way he lived, see. He believed so much in prayer and these spiritual songs that he actually lived it, you know. He got what he was asking for. So...

Imbert: This singing, the songs then, were really to... like the prayers, I suppose, just as they sang a language that was their own.

Annie: Yeah.

Imbert: So the songs came in the same way, out of the same inner spiritual...

Annie: Yes, all the spiritual songs or songs, whatever they were because they are different, see. There were different songs for each occasion like that because they got these songs through going through these... They thought they got from the spirit world or they got from God, in other words. Now today, after having this education, they think that the Indian... A lot of us believe that the Indian had more faith then through talking to somebody beyond, see, and calling him the Great Spirit and calling... They didn't, I have never heard in my day that any person ever prayed to the moon or whatsoever, see.

Imbert: Well how...? Could you perhaps give me an idea of how this spirit was thought of? As you know, everybody throughout the world often has a different idea of God or the spirit and we... It's because it's something that we can't
really think about so we always put a picture around it. No matter who we are, we do this, different ways. But how would the people in those days, can you yourself sort of imagine, tell me how it was that they saw this spirit or thought of this spirit? Certainly, as you say, it wasn't the moon and it wasn't the sun necessarily, it wasn't, but in what way would it seem to work...

Annie: Well, the Indian has a legend that the... we were created by somebody. Therefore they called him the Creator in our language. They believed that up in Kyuquot there, that somebody created, the Creator created a man by the name of (name). That was the first name given to anyone and the person that created him was, what was his name now? (name)

Imbert: What does that mean?

Annie: Gee, I couldn't explain what (name) means but that, they believe he was the Creator and when he created this (name), this man he created was shaped like a man but he had nothing but mouths all over his body. Hundreds of mouths and they were all talking. And he was singing. It was dark, he couldn't see. But the man that created him was (name). This man said so himself, "I am (name) so I have made you." See, and then when this man looked up he saw how perfect (name) was and he started lamenting, complaining, "Why am I like this? I want to be like you." So (name) said, "You are not satisfied with what you see." He couldn't actually see, I think the only place I think it was light where this (name) was because there was darkness, there was nothing. This is the story of the creation of man in the Indian tongue.

Therefore what they prayed to was the spirit who called himself (name) in the first place when he created the one man, which was (name). And this man started singing, this (name), and this was a song of dividing, it was called the Song of Dividing. And in the Indian tongue, it's (Indian). That's what they called this song. And he started singing it and the daylight and the darkness, it lifted, it separated. Therefore, this man got light, see, this (name). And then he saw all the mouths on him. He was shaped like a man, all right, but he was nothing but a mass of mouths. And they were all talking, singing, and what not. And this (name) said, "You are not satisfied what you have seen of yourself." You see, the day and night had divided when he was singing his song and to this day, this song exists.

A lot of them, a lot of the tribes along the coast, are descendants of that one man because (name) took this man and stood him up, the one that was complaining. Therefore, jealousy was in the heart of man in the beginning. He wasn't satisfied and (name) took this man from his head right down and took his head and scraped him off until all the mouths fell off him. And they were created into human beings. Every mouth stood up as a man, a woman, and they all spoke different
tongues. And the ones that spoke the same language, it was a man and a woman. And they all moved out to what we term as the tribes or the clans along here. That's the legend.

Therefore they did not pick up God as an imaginary thing. They knew, and a lot of these people are still descendants of that one man, (name). Her parents were, on her father's side, and a lot of us keep track of where we come from and who come from there. Generations back we have to remember but not anymore today. They can't because they have picked up the white man's way of living, they have picked up the white man's way of talking. Therefore they have just let the traditions go. They don't care anymore for their heritage. And it's sad because I've read so much in my lifetime about the Indians springing up or walking over, over from Asia and so on. But myself, I don't believe that. I believe that the people were created where they are today. Where we are brought up now, where the white man found us. I think more, I think that what these people claimed and the songs they had and their beliefs, which were really a high, you know, according to our thinking today, what we see today didn't exist long ago. So I'm not saying that education hasn't brought us anything, it has. But it's letting the Indian people go over, see. They have gone right over. Farther than they have got from education. They think they can just... Well, they know all the answers then. Like... As us, long ago I wasn't educated, you know, four years of education didn't do me any good. I had nothing when I quit school and it was quite a...

Imbert: Education takes these things away, doesn't it?

Annie: Yes.

Imbert: The mental things and, whereas these things are often beyond that...

Annie: Yes, that's it, yes.

Imbert: This Creator, was he felt to be everywhere?

Annie: Yes.

Imbert: Or was he felt to be in one place only?

Annie: No, no, he was felt everywhere. Each clan as they went or each couple that went and settled somewhere, he carried the Creator with him because he knew where they come from, who created them. And it's just like years later, many centuries probably, we have the story of the flood too. I suppose George has told you that.

Imbert: I seem to remember that.

Annie: Yes, we have the story of the flood and they claim it happened everywhere and these people have these songs too.
They have the songs of gladness, of survival and we sing that today. And a lot of them for thanksgiving mostly.

Imbert: Can you sing me the Song of the Division? Can that be sung now?

Annie: Right now I can't remember it.

Imbert: No. It would be so interesting to preserve all these. Perhaps somebody will...

Annie: Probably I will remember it some other time. It's hard to remember. There's a few things I could remember, see, like...

Imbert: Anything connected with the songs of the flood can you remember?

Annie: Yeah, I remember a lot of those. I remember the time when (name) first time he saw the tops of the trees coming up he stood up. He had big canoe see, and they were all tied to the elder root. They were told in spirit. Like when they prayed their prayers were answered and they knew when the flood was coming. And there were people, like unbelievers, you know. A lot of them didn't believe and a lot of them perished. And the ones that believed, they made cedar ropes, a lot of cedar and tied their big canoes to the root of the elder tree and when the tide was receding, he saw the tops of the trees coming and he stood up in his canoe and started singing.

Imbert: Can you sing this song?

Annie: I could sing one of them. Well, I could sing a lot of them according to... Well, the first one he sang was (sings). He sang this, see, "Behold, I am the first one to see that light. Behold, I am the first one to stand on top of the waters." That's the way this is sung, see, because he was so glad from the heart that he was alive. And he heard this song coming to him and then he stood up and started singing. He had his wife and his children with him, the clan with him. And they all thanked God then. And then when they were, when the waters had receded right on, they sat on top the mountain then. And they heard a wolf call, a howl -- I think was just spiritually. Therefore, they always use these wolf sounds in potlatches. And when he was listening to this wolf howling, he started singing. It was a symbol that they all lived, see. They lived through the flood and that song he sang was that he... the first time the dawn was breaking, he heard the wolf howling. That's the way this song goes.

Imbert: That's another song, yeah.

Annie: That's another song. It's quite interesting, you know, and a lot of them don't know it.
Imbert: What is interesting too is that what happened in the stories of these things, that what happened are all interrelated with the songs that were sung at the same time.

Annie: It is, yes.

Imbert: So that if one thing belongs right in with the other, this is interesting. There are some things I'd like to ask you about the whale hunt. Do you, can you sing me the song that was sung when he was in the prow of the boat and the Thunderbird had come there?

Annie: I could sing you the first one and that one because he sang four songs when he was there, see. The first one he sang was a prayer so the waters could be calmed.

Imbert: Could you sing that for me?

Annie: I could sing that.

Imbert: Would you find it easier to stand up singing or is it easier from right there? How is it?

Annie: I don't know. I think it's just as well, I'm not...

Imbert: Sit down just to, in other words, be as comfortable as you feel like. I mean you can move around, you see, because this doesn't go...

Annie: Yes. And what was I going to sing now?

Imbert: You were going to sing two of the songs when he was on the whale hunt there.

Annie: Oh yes, I'll sing the prayer song, the one he sang when the storm came up and that was to calm the waters. (Sings) This is what he sang when he was asking the Maker to calm the waters. And he was pleading, praying that he wasn't out there for himself, that he was out there to preserve his people. That he was out there, whether it was calm, "I am out here when it's stormy." That's what this song says, so he could go home safely. And then when he was singing to the Thunderbird, he started... Well, he was glad that he dropped the whale so he started singing. (Sings) That's the one he was singing. It's a long one, you know, but it's...

Imbert: Yes, that's just a part of it, yes.

Annie: This is telling the whale that he had his opportunity to take the whale away. And to lift it away from them but, "I am on the upper hand now. You have given it back to me." That is what this song says. And when he was going home he got...

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)
Annie: That was meant to tell the people what happened out there. It was told in a song and they used to use it at potlatches. George, this is just our clan see, just our, it's just ours, George's and mine. Because it was our great-great-grandfather, (name) his name was. This is what happened to him and this is where he got his songs from.

Imbert: So these songs would be sung at the potlatch by your family.

Annie: Yes.

Imbert: Because they belonged to...

Annie: Yes, it belongs, yes.

Imbert: I see.

Annie: Yes. So when he got home, when the whale towed them in, he was singing these songs. And the people on land listened and they knew that something must have happened out there. It was really stormy then. And they were surprised that these people came back in a short time. They didn't realize that it was the whale that had towed them back home.

(Break in tape)

Imbert: And about your parents and...

Annie: Well, I grew up in Alberni and I was brought up by my parents until my mother died. My mother died when I was at the age of eleven or twelve. Usually we didn't keep our birthdates, we didn't know when we were born. So it fell on me to raise George -- he was just about two years old when our mother died. And it was a pretty tough life for us. I left school so I could take care of him. I went to school at first for a couple of years. Probably I was in the second grade when I left school. I stayed home with my little brother and the rest of my young sisters went to school when they were little. They were about four and oh, six maybe. I didn't, they were big enough to have someone take care of them then. And they went to this Presbyterian school in Alberni. That's where I attended years later, when George was big enough to go with me to the school. He must have been around five or six when I took him to school with me. Because I was... Well, I was a big girl when I went to school. I was almost sixteen, I think, when I went to school with him. And in between George and I stayed in the house almost all by ourselves at all times, because my father was out on the road all the time. He used to go out surveying with government crew, the first time they surveyed these Vancouver Island countries, you know. They trekked the land, walked, carried their packs with them. He was away months at a time, looked like, when you're small. Well, I know it used to be over a month. At one time he was gone four months. And he hired a woman to come and stayed with
us, a couple, old couple, and he used to pay them thirty
dollars a month. Well, they didn't stay, you know; they had a
home of their own. It was just a quarter of a mile away or so.
It was on the first reserve in Alberni where I was brought up.

Imbert: Right down by the river there.

Annie: Right by where George's old house used to be, you
know, that stucco building. We had a big house there then.

Imbert: I don't remember that.

Annie: Well, that's just in the middle of the reserve, you
know. That's where I grew up and I grew to love that place.

Imbert: That was the reserve nearest to Alberni. Not the one
up in the...?

Annie: No.

Imbert: Well then, what year was it that your mother died?

Annie: I think it was 1911 or 1910, I'm not sure. I think
it was 1911, between there.

Imbert: So you were born just before the turn of the century?

Annie: I think I was born in 1899 or so. But they, when they fixed my date they put it down
to 1900, so I could get my papers as a district nurse or
something. It was years later then when I picked up myself for
a little more education, I guess. (laughs)

This woman that my father hired to stay with us, she'd come
every day and she'd fix up lunches for us. And outside of that
we just shifted for ourselves, my little brother and I. There
were many a time I cried at night. I heard my little brother
calling for his mother, you know. He was such a tiny little
thing, I think he was two years old. And I'd cry with him.
And during the day, to entertain him, I used to have one of my
cousins come down and stay with me. She was the daughter of
Chief (name), Tom (name)'s sister. She'd come and stay with
me. That was during weekends, she'd go home from the school
and she'd come and stay. We'd entertain George with songs and
Indian dancing. He was all right in the daytime, he didn't
fuss or anything. He was a good little chap. He learned to go
without mother love. And any love we gave him, well, that was
just the best way we could to keep him from crying. But during
the night, in the evenings, he'd start fretting and crying for
his mother. That's when it was hardest, you see. And there
were times when I couldn't do much sewing or anything and
probably I didn't do enough washing because a lot of times I
couldn't get anything to put on my little brother. So I'd sit
down and look at -- there were dolls then, see. I'd look at
them and make something for him to wear, usually just little
dresses, like. He didn't care, he was such a little fellow then.

Well, that's the way we grew up until he was big enough, I think he was five or six. We went to school in 1914 and they signed me back in again. And during those years it was a hard struggle. It was just the same as today. In school children, you know, they make fun of you, and go back to school a big girl of sixteen or so starting at grade three. In between I had a cousin, his name was Charles Ross -- Allan Ross's father there -- he was a cousin of mine and he used to teach me at home. So when I got back to school I started from grade three then. I think I knew well enough to start from there then.

And they put my age down so I could put in a few years schooling. Like, they used to let us out when we reached the age of eighteen then, in those days. Well, they signed me up so I could have four years schooling and they put me down as fourteen then. And during those years we had a school teacher by the name of Lucia Becker. She was Norwegian. She felt sorry for me, have to getting back to school after bringing up my little brother. We used to sleep with him then, I think he was quite tiny, I think he was about five then. Because us girls took turns sleeping with him so he wouldn't cry at night. And in those years I studied from nine o'clock till four, nine o'clock till twelve, you know, and one till four. And then after supper I'd, this teacher, Lucia Becker, she'd call me into her teacher's quarters and she'd teach me some more until half past nine. Well, that's where I got most of my education. A lot of those people, the staff of the school, were pretty good. Especially this second matron we had, her name was Mrs. Stephens. I used to think she was one of the crankiest women I ever saw. I had no love for that woman then, because she'd make me stay in the house when the girls were out playing. And she'd teach me sewing and she taught me how to nurse because I had a little brother -- when we got home in the summertime, I had to take care of him. So she taught me first aid. Oh, how I hated that woman. (laughs) She taught me how to write. I was her secretary in the last two years I was there. I picked up English then pretty well. I picked up, in fact, I think I used to finish two grades in one year. But it was a hard struggle. In the summertime I used to get up at five o'clock or so in the morning, get my books out, stand by the windows and do my lessons so I could put that much in before schooltime. And in between then I think I was too high strung then from too much work. I used to be so sickly all the time. I think that's more or less from worrying because I worried a lot as a little girl. I wondered where we'd go for the summer with no mother, and father away all the time. But my father in that time, he was pretty good. He was pretty good.

Imbert: What was your father's name?

Annie: His name was Charles Clutesi.

Imbert: Clutesi means a whale, doesn't it?
Annie: Yeah, Clutesi means, well, thunder, I'd say. Yeah, thunder.

Imbert: Tell me about the country, when you were living down in Alberni, what was or how was the town of Alberni in those days and around the reserve and so on? Was there much settlement down there? Many people at all?

Annie: Well, there was just the Indian reserve there. We called Alberni "Old Town" and there was a few stores there in my days. Quite a lot of stores and a hotel and blacksmith's shops and so on. It was...

Imbert: You really, of course, were not brought up, brought up really, yes, it was... There were people around and there was a town there and you weren't far away and remote...

Annie: Well, it was. The last of the houses was a little church at the end of the reserve there, the Presbyterian church. And right along there it was, there were no houses whatsoever, except another one near the Catholic cemetary -- there was a Chinaman living there and he farmed there. His name was Mr. Bing. And he was another one I detested, (laughs) that Chinaman. He used to come around to the reserve, you know. He was quite friendly and he'd bring carrots and so on, little pieces of pork and probably a chicken. He was pretty good that way and he always carried a black umbrella. And every time we children, when we saw an umbrella coming, we'd all run for shelter. (laughs)

Imbert: Why, you were frightened of him, I suppose, were you? Or what was it that you didn't like about him?

Annie: Well, I think he was too friendly. In fact, we didn't like Chinese then. We thought they were quite different and we thought they were not friends of ours. Well, at that time it was so remote, so wild I'd say. We used to heard wolves howling, especially in the wintertime. It seemed that we had more snow than I ever see around these parts. It's a long time since I ever really saw snow piles so high. Way back in 1912 I think we had about, see, we had six feet of snow, I think it was. In 1916 it was just as bad. We had to dig ourselves out from the school building. We had a little schoolhouse, oh, so many, about five hundred yards away from the main building. And we dug ourselves out. The boys shoveled snow so we could go to school. And during those winter months, when the Indians held their potlatches, you know, they used these make believe wolf sounds. We call them mouth organs today, Indian mouth organs. The different sound, some bass and some real low.

Imbert: Are they kind of...? You blow into them.

Annie: Yeah, you blow into them. They are different sizes too, from about three inches to around about eighteen inches long. And they make all sorts of sounds, you know. And they,
these are just for potlatches. Well, when they made these noises during the winter months, at night the wolves would come around, just like as if they knew the meaning of this and we'd hear the wolves howling at night all along the river bank, across from the school. Well, just along the way, right up to the bridge there. And when you went out, we used sleighs then, sleigh bells and all. It was a tough winter all the time up there. We had snow all winter long until late in April, in May the snow would melt away. And at times the wolves attacked the horses. There were a lot of wolves. Even when I was a big girl. And there was a woman -- she was the grandmother of Mrs. George Clutesi now -- she had a couple of horses, several horses and she lived right in the middle of the reserve there where I grew up. She used to tie her horses to the apple trees because that's where they could pick up a few grass or so when it was snowing. Well, one night she heard the horses. Well, they were troubled so she went out and she saw a pack of wolves coming out from the back there. That woman could shoot too. She shot two of those wolves to get them away from her horses. That's how numerous wolves were until, well, the other towns sprang up, Port Alberni.

Imbert: Where was this school? Was it, in those days, the Presbyterian school?

Annie: It was just where this United Church school is now, right across the road, right past that bridge where you cross, the big bridge. And then you turn down again towards, down on the other bank.

Imbert: The same place where it is now.

Annie: Yes, the same place where it is now.

Imbert: And when you went to school, you had some way to go then, didn't you, to walk to school?

Annie: We didn't. That was a residential school.

Imbert: I see. And so when you went to school, you went and lived there?

Annie: Yeah, I went and lived there eleven months in the year. We only had one month vacation during July. And it was pretty lonesome, you know. There was a lot of those children that cried to go home when they were small. Of course, none of them were forced to go to school until they were at the age of eight or nine, when they were pretty well grown, so they wouldn't cry. But today they send little children to school at the age of six now. So naturally today's children are far removed from their parents. Therefore they, the discipline from their parents doesn't mean anything to them because they really don't know their parents.

Imbert: The children that go there today, they go because
their parents live in remote areas or their parents are no longer living or something like that?

Annie: No, the children there now, they all come from remote places now because all the Alberni Indians send their children to the public schools. They intermingle with the white people then. But the orphans are taken in though, or people that can't afford to bring up their children, like a mother losing her husband. Well, the school takes them in. So...

Imbert: Yes, that's the way it is now.

Annie: Yes, in all schools.

Imbert: That's the same everywhere, I think, where the residential schools still exist.

Annie: Yeah, I think so.

Imbert: They have a special need but it's a different kind of need. Yes. Let me hold it there for a second. Stop it.

(Break in tape)

Imbert: Could you just repeat what you were saying about Mrs. Stephens, was it?

Annie: Yeah, it was Mrs. Stephens and she made me interested in looking after the sick and looking after the maimed, you know. And probably she tried to tell me but she made me do these things because I just wouldn't take anything from her, I didn't like her. So she used to call me when somebody was sick and made me minister to them, look after them. Until this thing grew in me, see. I was in school till I was, oh probably twenty or so, nineteen or twenty. And I took interest in a lot of things and I started loving to care for the sick. And it grew in me so much that when my father came home, I begged him to let me enroll into the Chicago School of Nursing. That was way down in the States. And he just wouldn't hear of it. He asked me what it would cost him. Well, I told him it was $149 and he said, "Oh, no, no, I just can't afford it." So I went on ahead anyway and probably he gave me so much, I think it was $75. That's how I started. I started learning how to nurse the sick. And it grew so much that I went ahead and started buying books and things, started enrolling in correspondence schools until I could pass, get my papers. And during the Second World War, that's when I really fought to get it, see. I had children then.

And the first case that came to me as a midwife, I learned this trade very good. I worked with the doctors, like Doctor Jones, Doctor Monteith, Doctor Robertson, I worked with these and they just watched, see. And probably they picked up a few interesting things what we Indians did. We had nothing to dull pains with, and many cases I had to sit up three or four nights
trying to save the life of a woman in childbirth in remote places where there were no doctors or there was no hospitals. Right here in Tofino, the first... We used to have a country doctor by the name of Doctor Dickson, and he didn't handle these things. We all had our babies at home and I went out and delivered these babies. Well, one thing I could say that I never lost a case in all those years. I started out in 1922 with the first case and that was the only time I was nervous. I had these medical books then which I still have today -- they are all torn up, page after page. But they're there. That's where I learned a lot, from these books. So I pack this book around enough, one of these big medical books, with the first case I went to. Her name was Mrs. Robinson, this woman that I attended.

Imbert: Where was she living?

Annie: In Alberni. So I carried this book around, I had everything ready before the baby arrived. It just went through all right so the second one was a Japanese woman and everything went beautifully. Then I wasn't nervous so I left my medical book at home and I was more, well, I was more sure of myself then. Until the years rolled by, there were difficult cases I attended. Like when this woman had twins and they're, well, medically speaking I'd say they were one of those, a lot of them surgical cases. But they survived. Combined the Indian way because I learned the Indian way too. I had some, what they call Indian quacks today -- they were really Indian doctors to my way of thinking and to my way of knowledge, I've seen it done, I've seen things done. I've seen a tumor removed without surgery. And...

Imbert: The Indian, are there certain different Indian ways in childbirth, I mean assisting the child and so forth...?

Annie: Yeah, there are a lot of ways.

Imbert: That are different from which they use today?

Annie: Yeah, there are a lot of different...

Imbert: What sort of circumstances? Where would they be different and what...?

Annie: Well, two things put together now. The doctor checks the expectant mother every month, I think it is. Whereas the Indian used to, well, they'd fix up the baby, like once in two weeks. See that the baby was the right way so you wouldn't have a breech birth.

Imbert: How could they do that, by maneuvering (inaudible) method?

Annie: You, well, yeah, massage, and you had to, well, you prepared yourself. In other words, those people prayed years before they ever... They went through a lot of these rituals, like washing their hands with something, and calling to the
Most High to give them this gift. And I really believe today that they really got it from on high. I believe they got it from God.

Imbert: These were certain people, special people...

Annie: They were certain people, special people, yes.

Imbert: That had these gifts.

Annie: Yes. And these people I watched, they really had these gifts. I've seen a doctor, a real doctor, a surgeon. He wouldn't put -- this old lady, she died not very long ago, about twenty years ago or so. She was an Indian doctor and she could remove things from out of a person and these, it's what these priests called witchcraft. I don't believe it was witchcraft. I wouldn't say it was. Because I saw this woman -- her name was Mrs. Falice(?) George -- and she used to just let the patient go and start singing these songs and then she'd say, "I'm not doing this to you. It's something else, it's somebody else that is giving me this gift. So you believe with me." That's the way she said it. I've seen that woman perform.

I used to go around with an Indian doctor here. He died, oh, some fifteen years ago. His name was (name), that was Paul's uncle. Well he and I used to work together, see. He in his own Indian way and I with what I had learned from being a nurse then. I'd say I was a practical nurse. In other words, I wasn't a registered nurse but I've seen them do a lot of things you'd never believe.

Even Doctor Robertson, this first doctor we had, this surgical doctor, the surgeon we had, or whatever you call him. He was, he didn't like to look at her when she removed this tumor. She didn't actually take it out of you. She just sang this song and then had her hands, oh, about an inch or so away. This tumor was in the womb. And Doctor Robertson and I used to go around together to all the patients on the reserve there. So he wouldn't believe it, you know, he condemned this woman and Father Mulwilhill(?) condemned her. Told her that if she practised like that, he'd have to call the police. But this woman was so sick, there was, it was her wish that this woman come. So I watched her, stood there and watched that woman. She didn't push her around or massage or anything. She did at first and she said that there was a tumor in there. And then she started singing her song and after that I saw her hands. It was shaky like this and she didn't touch that woman's stomach or her abdomen. She just had about a few, one inch away.

(break in tape)

Imbert: Could you just continue where you left off about, she didn't massage...
Annie: No, no, no, she didn't touch her. She, after a while, after she quit singing this, she told this woman to get up. This woman is dead now, she died of rheumatic fever just a few years ago. And this woman got up. She said, "And I want you to sit in that big chamber," she said. And this old lady got off the bed then. And she picked up this and gave to her. Nothing happened and she said, "What's wrong, do you feel anything?" she said. And she said, "I feel something but I can't pass it." So this old lady went back to her again and massaged her stomach just a little bit. She didn't push it or anything, she just massaged it and not very long afterwards this girl said, "I think it came." So when that thing came, it was a tumor. No fooling, there was a lot of us there. There was one lady across there, still living -- she's that lady I was telling you about who's about ninety-six or so. She saw this happen and the other lady, I think it was her mother, I forget if it was her auntie. She picked it up, there was nothing in that bed chamber except this thing, it was about that big, I think, about as big as a big lemon. And they cut it, started looking at it. You saw where it was severed, see, you saw where it was, after that woman was... Every time when that woman started eating some sort of fat stuff, her stomach used to bloat up and she used to suffer very much. She didn't have any ill effects after that, after that tumor came out. Doctor Robertson just wouldn't believe it. He said, "They must have cut it off with something." And I said, "No, they didn't." Because he absolutely refused to see it, you know. And that thing they cut up was just something like a piece of tissue running through it, crisscrosses, I'd say. It looked more like a kidney or something but it was firm, more just like as if blood had congealed in there. It was hard.

Imbert: Any other instances of this that you could recall? Any, or any other experiences that you had as a nurse?

Annie: As a nurse?

Imbert: Yes, that would be interesting.

Annie: Well, I've had so many experiences as a nurse, you know. Like the woman -- her name was Mrs. Charlie Robinson, she lived down in Kildonan -- she was having her baby then. So I went up. It was snowing, we had a blizzard then. And I thought it was just one of those normal cases so I left, oh, about a mile from that big cannery that -- we used to have a big cannery there -- and we travelled by a boat going up and this was in one of the most remotest places, it was way at the head of the inlet. Nobody there, no white people there, just a small Indian village. So I stayed with her and nothing happened that night. She was really in great pain then and I hadn't slept the night before. I was out on a, one of the babies had convulsions and I had to keep that baby in water all night, off and on, repeated heating of water to keep that little baby alive too. And I was so tired that night. But
having a sick woman like this Pauline Robinson was something else. It gave you, well, it gave you something to think about and I forgot how tired I was and I was more concerned about the life of that woman. The next day her baby hadn't arrived yet so I started thinking about Doctor Jones and I went down. She didn't want me to leave then. It was about three hours after that time, I think her baby was born twelve o'clock, and it was about nine o'clock when I wanted to get down to phone Doctor Jones. And then I just couldn't get her afterbirth out, nothing helped. So I knew there was more, she was in a serious condition, she needed surgery. So I went down, I tied her up the way the Indians do. I gave her Indian oil to drink and I had nothing, I had no medical kit or anything then. So I used plain lard. I melted this lard and fixed up the woman the best way I could and tied her abdomen, fixed up the little baby. So I went down to the cannery again, there was a telegraph office there. I phoned up to Doctor Jones and told him about this woman. He phoned back and he said, "We phoned for..." (END OF SIDE B)

(END OF TAPE)

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