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KATE ASSINEWE

Kate Assinewe was born in South Bay in 1910. She attended day school and residential school. She married and raised a family and has fought for the rights of Indian children to high school education.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The adoption of her mother by a white family.
- Schooling. Day school and residential. Describes how she won first prize in an essay contest.
- Typhoid fever contracted when she went to residential school.
- Various arguments with Indian Affairs over ability of Indian children to attend high school.
- Religion on the reserve at Wikwemikong.

Kate: I went to school one day only, in South Bay. We were up in the country and we were a way out of town. And the only time we went down to the village was when we'd go to church. Back up again right after church. So we never mingled with the... I never knew how to talk Indian. None of us knew.

Christine: What did you speak then?

Kate: Well, we spoke English. And my grandmother, that is supposed to be my grandmother, this one here, Rosalie Proulx, they talked only French. And she'd come and stay at our place for, say, six months of the year, and the other six months in Killarney, and then another six months with my mother. But they talked only French and none of us, I never, I don't know. I know a lot of French to hear it but - I know what it means -

but I cannot talk it. I can say a few words but I mean, I just never. My older sisters learned and my brother could talk French real good. But not us younger ones. Like Rosie, Mary Lou's mother, and myself, and I have a sister in Toronto, and we didn't know any French at all. But yet we heard it all the time.

Christine: What did your father speak then?

Kate: He spoke English and Indian. My mother couldn't talk Indian at all. She only learned when she married my father and she began mingling with - but she was very strict with us. She layed the law down that she doesn't want any Indian spoken in the house. That's why I never learned until I went to school and I was seven years old. And I started to learn Indian when I came to Wikki (Wikwemikong). And I've been rattling it off ever since.

(laughter)

Christine: Oh I see, so you just learned from the other kids then?

Kate: Yes.

Tony: Did your mother identify herself as an Indian?

Kate: Oh yes, she thought she was French, French and Indian. She didn't know where the Indian came in there. Because the Proulx and the Lamorandieres and the, when she was only a baby, I guess she - I think they knew all right. They knew, they must have known because she told something one time to my sisters and she said to them, "I was put out of my home. I was

told you cannot live here anymore." And that was the home in Killarney where she was raised. "You go out to work now. You're big enough, you're a big girl." And so apparently she left. But I heard her telling my sisters that she would never put anybody out. We are her family. So the last couple of years, I've been thinking and I've been thinking and thinking and now I'm coming to the conclusion that that's why she was put out, because she didn't belong. She wasn't flesh and blood in that family. But the rest were. All these others were; this is flesh and blood. So this little child here was taken off a reserve, taken away and brought into this family and raised. And she thought she was French. She was real dark and she didn't look like those people in Killarney either. I have a picture of her somewhere. But she didn't look like them. And I've been talking to my sister quite a bit, eh, Mary Lou's mother. And then she says to me, "Well, what about our aunt over there in Killarney and what about our grandmother?" I said, "They're not, they weren't apparently."

Christine: Yeah, they were just adopted.

Kate: "My mother was taken in," I said. "Do you see any one of your children or your grandchildren that even have a slight

resemblance to that Proulx family in Killarney? Is there anyone?" She started thinking. There were her daughters. She's only got three daughters eh, Bessie and Mary Lou and then their children. They don't have a big family. Like, Bessie's got three children, two girls and a boy. And there is nobody. I said, "I can't see anyone in my family either." I said, "I married a Fox," I said, "Wilfred Fox and that's Melvina's grandfather, Melvina Corbiere. Well, her family, there is a lot of them that look like the Fox family."

Ernest: Her husband was my dad's first cousin.

Christine: Ahhh.

Kate: Yeah, see there's a resemblance there. In the great-grandchild now, my great-grandchild is the spitting image of the great-great-grandmother. So this is where I see where there's resemblance. This is relationship, this is what you call flesh and blood. But I don't see that in us. There is none of us and I raised eight children. Junior and his children, they don't look like the Killarney people. None of them, none of us. But over there in Killarney, like this Franklin Proulx is supposed to be a close relative, eh. Well, my mother was raised by Proulx. He was in, he used to go to all the hockey games. So he said to me... well, I knew his wife because he had brought her here. And he says, "The lady

sitting next to my wife there, that's my daughter." I said, "Oh,". So, I met her anyway. This is supposed to be my cousin. So I met her. And she's the spitting image of the aunt that we thought was our aunt in Killarney, see. You'd think it was that same aunt sitting there. She's a big woman and...

Ernest: Loretta could tell you a lot about this because her grandmother was a Lamorandiere.

Kate: Yeah, but like I'm trying to say we were not De Lamorandieres.

Ernest: According to the events which Loretta has done a lot of research on, one of the people evicted from Manitoulin after the treaty was a Proulx. A brother of the priest. A brother of Father Proulx. He was evicted, him and another fellow. They moved to Lonely Island. They were chased out of there.

Kate: Yeah, they were at Lonely Island.

Ernest: They went there, that's where they ended up.

Kate: One of them, they had the lighthouse there at Lonely Island. But these were the Lamorandieres. And who was this Adelle Lamorandieres now? Who did she marry? He was the one that kept the lighthouse anyway. But there is resemblance in that family. Like Loretta, her mother, her father, they're descended from the Lamorandieres. And it shows up in them, you know, you can see it.

Christine: Yes.

Kate: Yeah, and she's got an aunt in the nursing home in Sudbury, eh. And this woman is the spitting image of those people that used to keep that Lonely Island. So then that was her cousin, eh. But this woman has no resemblance from the Lamorandieres or the Proulx's. There is no resemblance at all.

Christine: Well, you're probably right then.

Kate: So she was just taken in.

Christine: You're probably right about that then.

Kate: So this is what I want to find out about her.

Christine: That'll be hard to do.

Kate: Yeah.

Christine: It'll be hard to find out.

Kate: And she never told us anything.

Christine: Well, she probably didn't know either, eh.

Kate: Well, I think she knew too, but she may have been told a little about who she was.

Christine: Yeah.

Kate: But the thing is about two years ago, I dreamt of her. Now, she died in 1942 and just a couple of years ago I dreamt of her, that she was taking me to B.C. I said, "Where are we going?" We were in a boat and it's nice and calm. So I'm paddling this boat and she's sitting in the back. And I said, "Where are we going?" "Oh, I'm taking you to B.C. I'm guiding you." That's what she told me, "I'm your guide. I'm guiding you so you'll go to the right place." So when we came to land there was lots of big steamships there. They were all over this big dock and there was people. Oh, there was a mingling of a lot of voices and everything. And she pointed towards the land where there was pebbles on the shore and little shrubs growing there and that's where she told me to land that boat. So I rowed it towards there and I got off and I never saw her again. She just pointed in a direction, she never spoke again but that's all she spoke was, "I'm guiding you. And we're going to B.C." So she pointed over there on that land and I landed the boat there and I got off. I started to walk and there was a little path and I looked back and she was still sitting in the back of the boat and she just went like that. She never spoke. And then I kept on going and I took another look back before I turned behind the bush. This was getting thick, eh, thick bush. So I looked back again and she had disappeared, she wasn't there anymore. And then, that was last summer, the summer before Albert Pelletier and I don't know

who all went to Ann Arbor. They took Kelly Roy and I don't know who else went there.

Ernest: Maybe he went before us.

Kate: Yeah, oh yeah. They went straight to Ann Arbor. We went to find out about these people that had come from Wisconsin.

Ernest: That's the only place we couldn't get into, eh.

Kate: That's the only place we couldn't get into. It wasn't open that day. And my daughter-in-law has access, she used to work at the band office, so she got access to books. So I said to her, I said, "I heard Albert Pelletier is going to Ann Arbor?" Because when I got this book I was told that's where everything is, eh.

Ernest: I'm sorry we didn't get in.

Kate: In Ann Arbor. So I said to her, "I heard this group are going. I wonder why they didn't ask us to go?" And she says, "Why?" Well, I said, "My mother came from a little reserve in Wisconsin and I've been told that that's where all the research, all the names of the reserve, the name of it and all the names of the people that were there, are all in Ann Arbor." And she says, "Oh, yeah. Well you know, it's written in one of the books there. In the band office, they've got a lot of those. Some of those people went to B.C."

Ernest: Like you were saying, Tony.

Christine: That's your dream.

Kate: That's my dream. And yet, nobody ever told us. And I have a niece over there, out in B.C. She's a registered nurse, Honoreen. You know Honoreen. And she told me when I went to B.C. there - I was there about four years ago, that was before I knew anything about this - she said to me.... I had a son that passed away. I have his picture in there. He wasn't quite, he was forty I think. He had a heart attack. There's a reserve over there where she's friendly with some people, eh, in B.C. So she said these people came to her and they said to her, "We were having a feast for deceased people." They have it usually on the, like, that's a tradition, eh. They have a feast for the deceased people on the first of November. This is a tradition from all over, United States and Canada and apparently it goes on. In the States I think they have it in October. But in Canada it is the first of November. And she told me, "These people called me," she says. "They shocked me," she said, "with what they said to me." And they told her, "One of your family has joined us in our feast." That's what they told her. And she said, "Did somebody pass away in your family?" Those people are away over there. I don't know how they make their contacts or whatever it is. And she said, "Yeah, my aunt, a cousin of mine passed away." So they told

her, "We've got number eighteen, at the eighteenth one on your side of the family that has passed away." So she started to figure out. She says, "I was counting everybody that had

died." Like her mother and her, and my side of the family and my, she began counting everybody, all the relatives. So she come out with the figure eighteen. After David passed away, he was the eighteenth one.

Christine: Hm, that's amazing.

Kate: Yeah, and they told her that over there. She says, "I was so shocked," she says, "with the way... how they knew this, I'll never know." So now I have that foremost in my mind, eh.

Christine: Yeah.

Kate: I will go there. I don't know if it'll be this coming summer. My sister Rose said to me last year, she said, "Oh, we'll go to Ann Arbor. We'll go and find out." And these people that went over there, like Albert Pelletier and all these, they said if you can go there and trace and really prove that you are a descendant from that, you can claim. So, even if I don't claim very much, I'd like to know where my mother's roots were, who she was.

Ernest: You know, that professor there was waiting for us but we got lost. That campus is so huge and driving around, asking. By the time we found out and found the building, the place was closed. He was waiting for us too because we were on the, on the list for him. We just saw Mrs. Tanner.

Kate: And Loretta's grandmother, that's her father's mother. My mother used to call her Auntie because she was a Lamorandiere. And she used to always call her Aunt. Her name is in here too somewhere. Sophie Lamorandiere. And she always said, "Aunt Sophie." So we all thought it was our Auntie. The grandmother died, Sophie died and then, well, her grandfather was left alone. The mother, her aunt was trying to look after him and he got to the point where she just didn't want him around. He was all over the place here. And he was placed from one house to another. People looked after him and they'd go and tell the Indian agent, "Oh, we can't look after him anymore. He's running away all the time and he won't stay at home." So the agent was going to put him in a home in Blind River or somewhere. And he said, "Would you consider taking him for a couple of weeks until I find a home?" he said to me. I said, "I'll try for two weeks." So he was 94. He was very, very old. And he'd sit and talk, make whistles. He had a little cane and his cane would go, you know.

Ernest: (Inaudible)

Kate: No, Shoman. Yeah, I looked after him.

Ernest: That's my grandfather.

Kate: Yeah.

Christine: Ahh.

Kate: So, he stayed with us for two years. He died at our place.

Ernest: Yes.

Christine: So he never went to a home?

Kate: No, he never went to a home.

Ernest: I'll tell you a litte story about her aunt. Her niece was a nurse, Honoreen.

Kate: Yeah, Honoreen.

Ernest: And my grandaunt, Mrs. Oshkawbisense, she was taken to Sudbury for a cataract operation. She had never left the island. And then she told me her experiences in the hospital. When she went up in the elevator, they wouldn't let her walk, she thought she was going to heaven.

Kate: (chuckles)

Ernest: It was so funny. And then when she came out, I guess when she woke up, she was sleeping. I guess they were making a big fuss over the sister and when she woke up I guess all the sisters were looking at her and when she woke up, "I saw all these nuns. I thought I had died. So I grabbed a crucifix and I kissed it." And the funny part of it, Honoreen took care of her because she spoke Indian. She couldn't say Honoreen, she called her Gangrene.

(all laugh)

Christine: Oh dear.

Kate: Yeah, she's in B.C. She's the one I'm talking about that associates with these people. Well, they get together. It's all small reserves over there, all little wee reserves.

This one place where we went, this woman herself was the chief. And she gave us some nice fish. It was smoked sockeye.

Christine: Oh yeah.

Kate: Boy, that was something.

Christine: Yeah, that's good. Can you tell us something about what it was like living here on the island when you were a little girl or when you lived down at South Bay? You said there was a little village but you lived in the country. How far away did you live from the village?

Kate: Well, we lived about two miles or a mile and a half or

something like that, from the village. From the village church. And oh, I don't remember too much about it. I remember a lot of things when I was small, eh. I remember helping my dad to plant, running behind him when he was plowing the land and going around, you know. Helping him to plant the corn and the potatoes.

Christine: You had a little farm?

Kate: Yeah, we had a farm. And we used to make maple sugar too on that farm, but I don't remember ever going to the maple sugar bush myself. We stayed home most of the time. They'd go in the bush and they'd bring the sap or they'd bring the syrup and we'd make maple sugar there, too. So we'd make it just at the house. Finish boiling the sap. And it was just like, it was just the farm life. We had chickens, we had pigs, we had cattle, we had cows. We used to milk every day. But I was too small then to... maybe I did start to milk the cow but I know I used to feed chickens anyway. I know that. I used to go to the barn and feed chickens and go and feed the pigs, you know. Carry some grain over to them. But I never went to school there. I went to school only one day and I guess I was pretty small. But when I went home that night they told my mother, they said, "Don't send this little girl. It's too far," you know, for...

Christine: Did you have to walk?

Kate: Yeah, yeah, we had to walk. There was no, like nowadays they have school buses, but in those days you just had a rough road. That's still all there is over there. I know the spot where we lived, eh. There is just a hole now in the ground where the house was and the barns are not there anymore. We had two big barns. We worked the land. And I don't know, I

think I worked like a man because we had only one brother and the rest of us were all girls so I think I was the one that helped my dad all the time. I used to help him butchering. He used to hang these up and (chuckles) I'd be there holding the pot for the blood.

Christine: To catch the blood.

Kate: Yeah.

Christine: Did he sell the stuff from the farm?

Kate: Yeah, yeah, he sold.

Christine: Where would he sell it?

Kate: Over there he used to sell it just around to the people, the local people. And they'd take something to Manitowaning, too. They used to butcher in the fall, and after the freeze up, he'd go straight across the bay there and go right into Manitowaning. He used to take some....



Tony: How big was the farm?

Kate: I would say it was around forty acres or maybe sixty, I don't know of cleared land. There was a lot of other land too, you know. A lot of bushland.

Tony: Just raised beef cattle on it then, eh?

Kate: Yeah, that's all he had was, they were milking cows. I don't think they were the beef cattle because we didn't sell no beef. We sold hogs and he sold eggs and butter because we used to take the cream and make butter. My mother used to do that. And we always had our own. We never bought butter. We never bought meat either.

Tony: So he ran milk cows and pigs?

Kate: Yeah, and pigs.

Tony: And some chickens.

Kate: And chickens, yeah.

Tony: Any grain farming?

Kate: Yeah, that's where he fed all his cattle from, eh, was he used to plant oats and barley and wheat. We had our own flour from the farm. There used to be a mill in Manitowaning,

a flour mill. And he'd take the wheat over there in the fall and have it ground into three different grains - the white flour, the bran, and the shorts. And this would go for pigs feed, this other. And even calfmeal they call it. We used to, as the calves began to get a little bit big and they needed more, so they'd put the skim milk with that and mix this up and feed that to the calves.

Tony: When was this? What period of time?

Kate: Oh, this was in, I was six years old when we left there so this must have been, I was born in 1910, 1916 I guess. But I remember a lot of things that, you know, as being raised as a child, as being this high. And we used to have a swing in the house. I guess we had that there in the wintertime because maybe they couldn't put it outside, I don't know. But I remember this swing in the house, and I remember all washing dishes and things like that. Put the dishpan on a chair and one would wash and the other one would dry and I was drying dishes. And we just had two rooms and an upstairs in a little house. And there was a little kitchen on to it we couldn't use in the wintertime. The front part we'd use for, it was our living room and kitchen. And my mother was an organist. We had an old organ here that that's where we got a lot of amusement from. She'd play the organ, we'd sing. And our family gradually went away, like they went away to school, Spanish residential school. So as they began to move away, there was less of us left there. I think I was the oldest one

there when we left the farm and moved to Wikki (Wikwemikong).

Christine: When the ones, when the older one went away to Spanish residential school, did they have to do that or was that a choice?

Kate: I don't know. I think they had to.

Ernest: A lot of them that I know in West Bay, anybody that had a great distance to go to school or maybe they were kind of orphan or broken home. Like that's why we didn't go, we lived right next door to the school.

Kate: Yeah, well I think that's why we were. But when I was brought here to Wikki (Wikwemikong) my sisters were all in Spanish, and we didn't have to go because we had a school right here in Wikwemikong.

Ernest: You should see the picture that they have at the Jesuit Archives. Did we ever laugh when we saw that. It's a

picture of an old boat that they towed, no motor. It was a tug that towed it and it's a picture of these Wikki (Wikwemikong) kids going back and being towed to Spanish and they're all standing up and Kelly Roy says, "Look at the boat people."

(all laugh)

Ernest: And I guess they just came and got them there.

Kate: Yeah, I went on that boat here from Wikki (Wikwemikong).

Ernest: They towed them right around through the channel, they must have had to stop someplace.

Kate: We stopped in Little Current.

Ernest: Overnight.

Kate: No, we didn't stop overnight. We left here in the morning and it took all day to get to Spanish. It was a motor boat. This big boat was attached with ropes and....

Ernest: It was so funny. It was just little heads like this. So I told that to Adam Roy and he said, "The remains of that is still around in Spanish because they used that to haul stove wood." They used to make the boys go and cut wood on one of those islands and they would go and stay a couple of weeks and they would use that big boat to haul lumber or wood, stove wood. That was a working school, eh.

Kate: Yeah, that was an industrial school.

Ernest: Everybody paying their board off, working it off.

Kate: Yeah.

Ernest: They got a grant from the government but the kids were working there. They farmed they had there...

Kate: That's beautiful land there, oh it's rich.

Ernest: They had farmers and shoemakers and made their own clothes.

Christine: They did, eh?

Kate: Yeah, made their own shoes.

Christine: When you went up there on that boat, why were you going there?

Kate: I was going there for my grade eight.

Christine: Oh, I see.

Kate: I think I mentioned that over there when we were in Sudbury that I went away to residential school for grade eight and in these schools here, day schools, you didn't get an entrance into high school. If you passed your grade eight here, that didn't bring you into high school. You had to have a governmental test. Like grade eight at that time was divided into two parts. You had your, half of your grade eight one year and the other half the next year and they called it part three and part four. And part four was the finishing of your grade eight. So, I didn't have my part four here. I had my part three here. Then they said, well, they sent me to Spanish. There's where I get my certificate of entrance into high school.

And so I took sick the first few months I was there. I don't know, I was sick when I got there, I think. I knew there was something wrong with me and I couldn't talk. I was just like sort of suffering internally and I'd go and complain that I was sick. And they'd look at me and they'd give me something in a spoon and send me back to play again. But that didn't work, eh. This disease was, it's got to develop and I guess I had it. Well, I had it, I know that. I was very sick. But they call it typhoid. And we used to leave early. You'd start school in August. So I never went to school at all. I think I went to school about three or four days, that's about all. And then I was sick so they sent me to an infirmary.

And then they'd let me go out of there again. I'd go back to class and I was, it came to the point where I was shaking and I wanted to black out, eh. And I was just looking at everybody and it seemed to me everything was going. After a while I couldn't stand up at all, I was just like this, see. So I went again to the... I said, "I don't know, I'm really sick. I can't stand up." So only then when I came to that part where I was really getting down, that's when they called a doctor. And that's when they started examining me and taking all kinds of tests and everything. And they called a doctor from Blind

River and he come in and checking me all over and my back and putting something in my mouth. And I could hardly sit up and I was just falling back. And he said, "This girl has pneumonia and a touch of bronchitis." He told the nurse in charge. So he gave the orders there, what they're supposed to do with me.

So they isolated me. I was in a little room by myself and they had the windows open and they covered me all up. I had blankets on me. I even had a cap on my head. And I guess they nearly killed me. I didn't have pneumonia, eh. And the nurse herself, she changed all those orders that the doctor had left. And she told me a long time after I got better, she said, "I changed everything." I know it. The next day they pulled all those blankets off of me and I was just covered with a sheet. And oh, that felt good. And so they treated me. And every time she came and give me something to drink she'd tell me what it was, eh. And they gave me epsom salts and brandy for a period of about 21 days.

Christine: That's all?

Kate: I couldn't eat. And I was cooked, eh. All my skin came off, all my hair came off. I don't know how I ever lived. I was just like, this came off just like coils of dried black stuff, black as a stove. And this was all on my sheet after I was getting better. And I grew all new skin and then I grew all new hair. I had long black hair. You should have seen my hair. It was black, jet black and thick.

Christine: And you lost it all?

Kate: And the little bit that grew, that's what I have now.

Ernest: I was just reading an article last night, going through my papers. An insert in the Toronto Star called Living. It's an article all about lice. That's what you read. This article, it doesn't exist in Canada anymore. They claimed they were the carriers of this typhoid, all through the lice. And they...

Kate: Maybe. I don't even remember having lice. I don't know how I got that.

Ernest: They say they are one of the carriers. They said it is non-existent now, the disease.

Christine: Were there many people that had that typhoid?

Kate: No, I was the only one.

Christine: Oh.

Kate: But about several years after that, in Wikki (Wikwemikong) there was three cases of it. There was, one

woman died and her two sons had it. And they both survived but the mother died. And that was, oh, about ten years or more

after I left Spanish. But that was another case of where there was typhoid down there. And you see, people didn't know, they didn't know what - anyway I got over that.

Christine: That was quite a way to start residential school.

Kate: That was my first, yeah, and I never went into classroom until the 19th of January. That must've been, maybe that was 1925 or 1926. It was somewhere there anyways. Because I was already thirteen years old and I had been born in 1910 so this could have been 1923 or 1924, somewhere there. And I passed my entrance. I had honours. I don't know how I did that. But when I was convalescing, they called it convalescing, it took me a long time. They wouldn't allow me to get up; I wasn't allowed to get up alone. Although I felt so good. I thought, "Oh, I could just get up out of here and walk," but no. There'd have to be two people on each side of me. One holding me and I had no hair at all, it was just like bald. I was bald. So, it took about six months and then my hair started to grow. And they said, "Your hair is gonna grow."

Because I seen a man, he's about my age. I worked with him in Little Current when I worked there. He was bald, eh. So one time I asked him, "How come you're bald?" Just bald, eh. And he said, "When I was fifteen years old, I had typhoid." That's what he told me. And I said, "Oh, I must be one of the lucky ones that came out of it and grew my hair again." But it never grew in thick like....

Christine: Like before.

Kate: No, no, it was long. I had long black hair, flowing down, eh. Beautiful.

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

Kate: Because I was told, "Oh, I think you're going to have to go and work. You can't go to high school." I didn't know why. Oh, it's only in the past few years, maybe about ten, fifteen years ago that I'm beginning to realize that that was DIA that were doing that, eh. They always said, up till now they're still saying the same thing. There was never any money for anything. "We have no money for that." There was never any money for to send somebody to high school. My older sister was in high school and then I was in between there. So it took her three years, four years, three years. Like grade nine, ten, eleven, and twelve, that was four years. And then her teacher's college was another year. She went to North Bay for that. So this is five years. So by this time, I'm already out working. And then I had a younger sister that went and that's Mary Lou's mother. So she then went to Pembroke. By that time, she's fitting in there eh, into the picture of being able

to....

Christine: So why do you think they wouldn't send you?

Kate: Because they had no money. That's what they told our parents, apparently. "We pay for one at a time." So they paid for my older sister.

Tony: But, one from each family.

Kate: One from each family at a time, yeah. So then that's where I missed out. But you know, if I had been smart enough in those days, I would've gone there into Indian Affairs and demanded that, "I want to go to high school." I would have gone in spite of them saying, but I never talked to any one of them. It was our parents that did. And I never talked to an Indian Affairs guy till Alec was going to high school and Grace, you know Grace Fox eh, from West Bay? Joe Fox's...?

Christine: I don't think we've met her.

Kate: Oh, I don't think you've met her. Well, anyways, she's my stepdaughter, so they were going to go. And I had an awful time with Indian Affairs. Those girls, they ran away from St. Joseph's College in North Bay. They were only over there about a week and there was four of them. They didn't have the uniforms. You had to have your full uniform, two sets, plus two pair of shoes for a change, eh. And if you didn't have that to start school, you couldn't start at that college, St.

Joseph's College. So there was four of those girls from Wikki (Wikwemikong) here, and Grace was one of them.

And Alec, I had a hard time getting him in. I don't know why. He went over there for grade eleven, twelve and thirteen. Like, he done his grade nine and ten here. So, I applied for him to go to North Bay, Scollard Hall for grade eleven, twelve and thirteen. So, I go into the Indian office here in Manitowaning. "Oh, no we didn't get no approval yet." So I kept going there all summer. Every two weeks I'd go and see that agent and so, after a while, he says, "This boy is not ready for grade eleven," he says to me. I said, "He is." "Well," he says, "there was a man in here that has got a son, Alec Fox, and he said that his son was only in grade eight." I said, "It must be another one," I said, "can't be." So all this time, he didn't even apply. He didn't even put that application through that I had signed for to go to Ottawa. Just goes through and then they get their grants, their tuition and their... everything is approved. So I never got it. Then, here I was and it's almost time for him to leave, eh. And there was still no approval and I had already sent in to the school, the Scollard Hall. You had to put a down payment for their entry to have a reserved place there. So I'd already sent that in myself. Then I phoned to them to the head priest and I said, "He didn't get his tuition, he didn't get his grant. It hasn't been approved yet." "Oh," he says to me, "that's all right." He says, "Don't worry, just send him and

we'll give him his books. We can wait for that grant." That's what he told me. So Alec went and we took him to Espanola and he went on to Scollard.

(Break in tape)

Kate: So then, the Indian Affairs guy, his name was Whitney... I don't know what his first name was but his name was Whitney... he come over to see me down here. And he says, "You had no business phoning over there to North Bay." I said, "What are you talking about? Who's business is it if it's not mine?" I said. I said, "I've been going to your office all summer. I've been going there every two weeks to get that approval to see if it's come in, and you said no. You told me he wasn't ready for that, you told me he was only a grade eight student. And, I had sent in his registration over there for to get a room. So, that's why I phoned and," I said, "he's there. And he's going to stay there." So then he had to right away

put the application through. So, it came through fine. So Alec went through.

Then it was these four girls, they ran away from the, from that college, St. Joe's, because they didn't have their uniforms. We didn't have enough money to get them. There was four girls. So they come back here to Wikki (Wikwemikong) and I didn't know what to do. I made another phone call, I think I made two phone calls that time, too. This time it was to Indian Affairs over there in North Bay. A man by the name of Mr. Madders was the Indian agent over there. So, I said, "There is four girls back here," I said, "in Wikki (Wikwemikong). I want you to hold on to their grants. These girls have all been approved of. Their grants have gone through. Now," I said, "we're going to look for a place here for them to go to school, on the island." So they went to school in Mindemoya. And we went over there to Mindemoya and got in with the principal. And he looked around for a place for two of the girls and he said, "I'll take two myself," he said. So he took two girls in under his wing in their home. So I called back to North Bay and I said, "We've got them in here. Now send their grants over here." He sent that too and I got chased around again by this Indian agent. This is the second time. Whitney.

Ernest: That's the guy Gus got fired.

Kate: Yeah.

Ernest: Gus was the first man to fire an Indian agent.

Christine: Hm.

Ernest: I brought his name up in Sagamok just a month ago.

Kate: Oh.

Ernest: And they denied harassment and then I said, "No, we had a guy. That's your policy then."

Kate: Yeah.

Ernest: And finally Gus got rid of him. But he should have gone to prison for misappropriating federal funds. "You people take care of one another and you just move them to another reserve."

Kate: To another reserve for some more mischief.

Ernest: I said, "I hear he'd dead now, fortunately," I said.

Christine: He was the agent in Manitowaning?

Ernest: Yeah.

Kate: Yeah.

Christine: So the agent in Manitowaning looked after the whole island? Did he?

Ernest: Yeah.

Kate: I think so, yeah.

Christine: All the reserves?

Ernest: Right up to Birch Island.

Christine: Oh.

Kate: Yeah, the Manitoulin district like, the district of Manitoulin.

Ernest: When Gus became chief, they knew Gus was going to start a lot of new things. So they brought in Whitney; he was the trouble shooter. Any new upstart chief, so the very first meeting Gus had, one of the first meetings, we always discussed things in Indian, I think I told you in my...

Christine: Yes.

Ernest: I think it's in...

Christine: Yeah, it was on one of the tapes, yeah.

Ernest: Yeah, they said this. "You don't talk Indian in my presence." Gus cancelled the meeting and phoned the Sudbury Star. It was on national television that night. And he got a formal apology from (inaudible). Not too long and he was on his way out. He come to settle things but he found out.

Christine: You said you only went to school for one day down at South Bay.

Kate: Yeah, one day that's all.



Christine: And then you came here. Why did you...?

Kate: Well, I didn't, I guess, I don't know. We didn't move right away. But my parents were told not to send me down there because I was too young. So we moved out of there and I don't remember if it was in the spring or the fall but it was summer time anyway. And then we moved here to Wikki (Wikwemikong). And this is where I started school then, the school was just below the hill from...

Tony: Why did your parents move from South Bay up to Wikki?

Kate: Because there was no school over there.

Tony: Oh, it was just sort of a....

Kate: There was a school but I mean, we were too far out in the country.

Tony: So they gave up the farm and everything?

Kate: They gave everything up and moved here. They moved their cows here, they moved everything here.

Tony: So they came up here and farmed up here.

Kate: Yeah, they did that, yeah. And then I went to school here, from grade one until I was seven years old, until I was fourteen years old, I guess, when I first went to Spanish.

Christine: And that was a day school here?

Kate: That was a day school, yeah.

Christine: But you didn't speak any Indian when you came here?

Kate: No, I just learned here. I just learned from playing with the kids and oh, did I ever....

Christine: Was that hard, did they treat you badly because you didn't speak Indian?

Kate: No, I just didn't know what they were talking about. If they'd say something, they'd make signs and oh, I'd say, "I guess they want me to go over there," so I'd go, you know. And we played hide and seek and, well, I was only a child, eh. And we played tag and we played skipping rope and so, just by hearing them I just learned so fast. I learned so fast to talk Indian, eh.

Ernest: Kate, maybe you can fill me in on this person. Somebody was telling me there was a school teacher here, I believe, and his daughter played with the kids. And they moved and she spoke perfect Indian. She was here long enough and she

still comes and visits. She is grown up but she comes and she's...

Kate: That must be, yeah, Margaret knows them well. I wasn't living here then. I think that was...

Ernest: I guess it was Margaret that told me.

Kate: It's Margaret, yes. She knew them well. They were personal friends. The girl, Bridget got to speak perfect Indian.

Ernest: Yeah.

Kate: We were living in Little Current, then. I've had so many fights with Indian Affairs. After that again, I had another fight. We were living in Little Current. I was working there. So my oldest daughter there, Elizabeth Assinewe, she wanted to go to St. Joseph's College and so I told my husband. I says, "It's your turn. You go over there to Indian Affairs. You go talk to them." I'd been fighting with them already twice. And so I said, "You're turn." I says, "You go over there." And he knew that Indian agent well. This was a different one now. His name was Borden again, the next one, that was. He succeeded Whitney, I guess. So he knew him well because I'd hear him talk about him. He was the bartender there at the Legion Hall in Little Current and he'd talk about this Borden going in there. Well, Don, and he'd mention him as if he was a.... I said, "You talk to that Indian agent. Elizabeth wants to go to North Bay, St. Joe's College." He said, "Okay," and then I waited all summer for him to bring the word that the girl was going to be accepted, eh. So I never got no word. So a week before the school was supposed to start, I says, "What's the matter with that Indian agent? Did you ever talk to him?" I said, "We're waiting. The girl wants to go to, and she keeps asking me, 'When am I going to North Bay?'" "Oh," he says, "yeah, I talked to Don and Don said she cannot go to North Bay when there's a high school right here in your own community." There was a high school in Little Current, eh. Well, she had to go to school there. She went to school there for her grade nine and ten. And that was the end of her schooling.

So then, after that there was this little boy that came in here, Junior. It was his turn to go to high school. He was finishing grade eight and he asks to go to North Bay. He

said, "I'd like to go to North Bay." I said, "Okay, I'm going to go myself. I'll go and talk to him." So I came down here to Manitowaning and there was two women working there. I don't know to this day who they were because I didn't have much to do those days. We were living in the white community. I'd only come down there for, well not too often, eh. I had no business with them at all. Because I was living in the, and I was working. So I come down there for Junior. He wants to go to North Bay. So I told those women; I didn't see the Indian agent. But I told them, I said, "We were refused here two

years ago by the Indian agent because there is a school in our community, that's what he told us. That's what he told my husband. He said, 'There's a school in your community and you go to school wherever the school is and there is one in your community.' But, we are Indian people." I says, "We don't belong to the community of Little Current." So, she writes this all down. I said, "These children want to go to school and you people are working here and you're saying no, you're refusing us. You refused the girl two years ago. Now I don't know what you're going to do," I said. "But, I want that boy to go to where he wants to go. He's the one that's going to school, not you people. You people already have your jobs," I says. "You're working. These children are going to school and they eventually will get to high school and get their jobs but now," I said, "they need to be educated." So, she writes this down.

Three days later, I was working at the dry cleaner's in Little Current. This guy come in. I had never seen him before. He come in with a big book. And he says, "Are you Kate Assinewe?" I said, "Yeah." He says, "You were down at office, eh, in Mantowaning?" I says, "Yeah, I was." He said, "Who refused, who and when?" I said, "It's two years ago. My older girl was refused. She wanted to go to North Bay, St. Joe's College. Now the boy wants to go and he wants to go to North Bay." He said, "Okay," wrote everything down. And I said, "I'd like to have that boy clothed, too," I said, "plus his tuition and grant and for his room and board plus clothing. I haven't finished paying yet for the boy that went that I had to clothe," I said, "Alec." Because that was Whitney's orders. He said, "Oh, he can go but you'll have to clothe him, you'll have to." That's what he said. So I went away to work, I got a job and I worked and I clothed. I said, "I won't be finished paying for that clothing. It'll take me another two years to finish." I said, "Every now and again, they need something and," I said, "it goes on and on." So, alright. So he wrote everything down. I signed it and so Junior got away to school. Everything paid eh, clothing, everything. And he went to Widdifield in North Bay.

Christine: You said your mother was a school teacher?

Kate: Yes, she was a school teacher.

Christine: Where did she teach?

Kate: She taught in South Bay. That's where she married my father.

Christine: So she would have taught all the grades in that, what kind of a school was that?

Kate: I don't, well, that was before we were born. I never, I don't remember that at all. But I know when she first went over there, before she got married, she was teaching. She taught because she was a school teacher.

Christine: Did she continue to teach when you were in Wikki?

Kate: Yes, she taught school when we were living here in Wikki. I was already going to school here and she taught school in Kaboni. And she taught school here in Buzwah I think too, the old school. My sister Rose was just small then. She stayed with my mother anyway but the rest of us stayed here with our Dad and we went to school here. Because I guess she was teaching a lower grade maybe. I guess maybe there was no grade seven and eight or something in that. Maybe they were just one to four or something like that.

Ernest: When I was going there was no grades, period.

Kate: Yeah, they called it part one, part two.

Ernest: They just had a book.

Kate: Primers.

Ernest: You had a primer, then you read a grade one, grade two, no - book one, book two. You know, there was no report card, there was no nothing. You just went and that was it. And it's funny, the inspector.... I went to visit and I stayed with my aunt in Sault Ste. Marie so I went to Holy Angel school. And the same inspector for separate school that came to our reserve, from one of the city schools, he was pretty critical of Mr. Greening. Remember him?

Kate: I think I heard of him, yeah.

Ernest: And then he'd come to West Bay with our teacher. "Oh, the inspector's coming." She'd make sure, when he was coming. She had to know the day, that teacher. But over in the Sault (Sault Ste. Marie) they didn't know, he just dropped in. You know, they didn't expect him. But here he gave warning. So we'd read, they'd read the same lesson for two weeks. Well we could just rhyme if off but we didn't know what we were saying. We didn't know the English. We didn't even know what was in that book. "Oh, how wonderful, these kids are wonderful." I guess that was just a rule. He would say, "Oh, that's good, that's good." This sort of thing, so you didn't learn anything.

Kate: No, you didn't. And it's only in the past five years about, I've been told, I've begun to realize, why an inspector came to the schools. We had inspectors that used to come here when we went to school. And our teacher would say, "Oh, the inspector's going to come. I want everybody to have nice clean clothes on and I want them to be all this and that and perfect." And so we'd tell our parents, "We have to be all dressed up, the inspector's coming." Oh, so she'd put us out in our finest, whatever we had, eh. So we'd go to school there and we'd be sitting there all prim and proper. Now I learned later on in the past few years that the inspector... not to see how you're dressed or how you're... he went there to see how

these little Indian children are communicating with the teacher. It's the teacher he came to see, not us. But that's what they make us believe, they said, "Get all dressed up. Tell your parents the inspector's coming." Then we had another inspector. The first one we had was Mr. Bennett, he was there for quite a while. He was a Roman Catholic. Then we had Mr. Cummings. I was already, at that time, that must have been my first year in grade eight, like my part three as I call it.

And so by that time we had fall fair in the schools eh, in Manitowaning. All over the island. So, we're all competing, every school is competing with another school. So there was an award that time, a governmental award for the best essay. And for the highest grade and that was the grade eight. And this is my first year, I'm pretty sure it was. Anyway, I was in the highest grade. And we had to write an essay and this was the only Indian school competing. The rest were all white schools. There were Manitowaning and Clover Valley and Bidwell, or I don't know, schools around there. But this was the only Indian day school competing in that. And so I wrote this essay and I put it in the garbage. And I wrote another one. That went in the garbage. I don't know how many I wrote but I wrote over and over again. Until finally I came to the decision that this sounded all right and it looked all right and so I wrote it

over again. I showed it to the teacher. Well, she's not telling us what we're going to write, eh. We're supposed to do that, that's ours. So, "Well," she said, "it's up to you. You're the one that's competing, you're the one that's...." So I wrote it out. Then I wrote it several times over again because I felt that my writing wasn't, you know, I could still do a little better. So I wrote it over again for I don't know how many pages. Anyway, I got it finished finally, so I had it. It went in. We all competed. We had gardens and everything; there was all kinds of competition, eh. There was for your best garden or your best flowers or your best writing or your best sewing. We used to have Home Economics and we had that here in the schools so we used to crochet and knit and sew. So we had a lot of articles to put in for competition, plus our gardening. And then this writing, this essay. It was judged by your handwriting, I guess. So the day came, I see a big red ribbon on my essay. That was the happiest day of my life. And then from then on I went to Spanish but I never got anywhere after that. But this was, I had the red ribbon. And my name was King, Kate King was written on there. And so the ones that put on this Fall Fair, they said, "We want these two girls to come up here. The one that got first and the one who got second." They wanted us to go and stand up on the platform. That platform is still there over there in Manitowaning. It's not a curling rink now, but it's on this side of the arena. There's a big long building there, at that corner. That's where we used to have our Fall Fairs.

Ernest: That's why I mentioned how many people they ruined, brilliant people. You know, with this policy. Another thing that I'd like to mention, it probably happened here, probably every reserve school. We used to haul stove wood and they had

a big box to heat the big room. And we'd haul in stove wood in them big blocks, fill the cloak room. And that was every other day. And we'd do that on recess. We'd want to play but no, we had to - and then every student, every day there were two people left after school for about half an hour to sweep. And I found out later, besides their salary there was an allowance given to them for all that work.

Kate: Oh yeah, for a janitor.

Ernest: Yeah, and we were doing all that work. They were using those kids. They never did any of it. So they used it, they used us.

Christine: Do you remember what the essay was about?

Kate: No, that's one thing now when I think of it. I thought of it a long time again after that, what did I write in there?

Christine: (chuckles) Yeah.

Kate: And there was this girl, eh, she was a white girl. She came second and they were the big shots over there in Manitowaning, her father owned a plane and their names were McCoy.

Ernest: I remember her.

Kate: Yeah, and her name was Daisy McCoy. And she didn't want to come up and stand next to me because I had the red ribbon and she had a blue one. She was second eh, and I was first. And our Indian agent that time was Mr. Cummings, not the Indian agent, he was our inspector and he was at the Fall Fair. And he came over there and took me by the hand and he stood me up on the platform there and he stood beside me and all these people are there. And he said, "This little Indian girl from Wikwemikong has gotten first prize for her essay." He held my hand up. I got \$30, there was a cheque came. The Fall Fair was the 14th of September. I got the cheque on the first of October. So it came in the mail. This is a government cheque so it came in the mail. So my mother used to have a big purse that used to hang behind the door where we lived and I put that cheque in her purse and it sat there. That's my award, \$30.

Ernest: That would have been quite a bit of money then.

Kate: That was a lot of money in those days, yeah. So I left it there and then I got another letter after. It was almost the end of October. "If you do not cash that cheque within three days it'll be invalid." (all laugh) It's still sitting in my mother's purse behind the door, eh. So I said, "I got a business letter," a great big envelope and "Where's that cheque?" I said, "I put it in your purse." Hurried up and got it out and away I went up to the store. We used to have a store up here and that was Jocko, his name was Jocko. So I took my cheque and brought it up there. He looks at it and he

looks at the date. "Oh," he says, "you're just in time." If I had waited another day, the cheque would have been invalid. But I guess they would have issued another one, yeah. But it was, and oh, that feeling I had if that cheque wasn't - so I got my \$30 and I had a brand new winter coat that year and I got four yards of tartan material and I got a dress made. And that was my, well in those days that was a lot of money.

Christine: Oh, yeah.

Kate: Yeah. And tartan material was, I guess then it was about four dollars a yard. Now, it's worth about twenty dollars a yard. That woolen tartan, eh. So I had a beautiful school dress for to go away with, to Spanish.

Christine: To go to Spanish.

Ernest: Do you know tartans?

Tony: Yeah, well I don't know, I can't tell the difference between them, no.

Kate: Well, they're pure wool. They're a nice material, yeah.

Christine: Where would you get the material?

Kate: I got it in Simpsons.

Christine: Where was the Simpsons?

Kate: In Toronto. By mail order, eh. I sent.

Christine: Oh, yeah.

Kate: And I got my coat there, too.

Christine: So you had catalogues and you ordered.

Kate: Yeah, we had catalogues, Simpsons and Eatons. But Simpsons was where I ordered it from. Then I had a little bit of money left. I had three dollars left and then my sister's birthday rolled around there, Rose's. Her birthday is on the 12th of November. So, I had a birthday party for her. And then they said, "Oh, we'd like to treat those." She was eight years old at the time. So they had eight little girls for her birthday, eh, came in. And they said, "Could we use your money? We want to go." And in those days chocolate bars were only 5 , not even that I don't think. A bar, and a bottle of pop was only a nickel. So anyway, they treated, after supper they took these little girls all up to the store and treated them with a bottle of pop and each a chocolate bar. And that was my....

Ernest: They used to, for a while there was a big bottle of pop came out about that high, Kick, eight cents.

Kate: Yeah.

Ernest: It wasn't very good, mostly water.

Christine: What kind of holidays were celebrated then here? Just like Christmas and Easter?

Kate: Yeah.

Christine: Other ones too? Do you remember?

Kate: Well, yes, they used to have the days when it was a holy day of obligation they call it and because there was, we were Catholic....

Ernest: Yeah, there used to be a lot of those.

Kate: Like the 1st of November was considered a holy day of obligation, there was no school. Then again...

Ernest: The church was in such complete control, the department never said anything. They just said it's Saint's Day and....

Kate: A Saint's day and so you could get a holiday. Now you can't do that anymore, boy.

Ernest: It was good to be a Catholic in those days.

Tony: All the holidays.

Christine: So what would you do on those holidays? Was it just a holiday from school or...?

Kate: Well, you had to go to church. There was no way you could get out of that, eh. That's why you got that holy day of obligation. You're parents, believe you me, they made sure that you went to church.

Ernest: Yeah, this is I guess the strongest Catholic community in the north country, this here. Even today although all the people have fallen off, there is still what, a couple of masses on every Sunday?

Kate: Oh, yeah.

Ernest: How many? Two?

Kate: Two, yeah.

Ernest: Even then, there is a big crowd. Even then. Before it used to be bigger crowds.

Christine: So your parents were real strong Catholics?

Kate: My mother was. Yes, see she was raised by... very scrupulously religious, she was. She used to say to us, "Oh, I



wish I had been a sister. I wouldn't have had all you bad girls coming along and..." (chuckles).

Ernest: That Father Proulx, Father Proulx's family was part of that family.

Christine: What about your dad?

Kate: Oh, he was good. He never spanked us or nothing, he was good.

Christine: Was he Catholic, too?

Kate: Yeah, yeah they were all Catholic. But he was a different kind of, he used to like to go to parties, eh. And he used to like to socialize, you know. My mother was different. She wouldn't go, you couldn't even go anywhere but it had to be a Catholic that you were talking to. It had to be. My mother was very strict, very, very strict.

Ernest: Corpus Christi too, was big. The processions.

Kate: Yeah, that was another thing. They don't have those any more.

Christine: What was that like?

Kate: It was a procession, you...

Ernest: It was in July something. I guess it used to be in big Catholic communities everywhere. And it was Sunday afternoon usually.

Kate: Yeah.

Ernest: And there'd be altars built, and West Bay it used to be the whole village.

Kate: The whole village, yeah. Here, too. There would be about four altars. All over the place. There would be one up there, one down here and further down. And the whole community would be in a big line in procession.

Ernest: Jim was telling me that...

Kate: And pray and sing and pray and sing.

Ernest: They would be, say in West Bay Corpus Christi, people would start coming west two days ahead. Horse and buggies from Wikki (Wikwemikong), right from Shesheganing. You know how far that is, just for that.

Kate: Just for that one day, yeah.

Ernest: Well, that would be a visiting thing, too. Families would be there, a few days, four or five days maybe. It was a central thing. There is still some old pictures here and there.

Christine: Was there any Indian religion practised at that time?

Kate: No, there wasn't.

Ernest: No.

Kate: But there was some, after I got married, eh, sometime after. This was after the war. When was the war ended there? This old man that brought the religion, he brought Jehovah's Witnesses to Wikwemikong. This John Jocko, John Bonishi. Annie's father, Annie down here. Annie Budge, Annie Bonishi. So he never went to church, this John, and he was Jehovah. But he was a good old soul. But we weren't allowed to talk to him because he was another....

Ernest: Was he the one that had the glasses?

Kate: Yeah, yeah.

Ernest: He was accidentally shot. He was talking to somebody and somebody was target practising and just hit him right in the head when he was talking. He lived on the hill here.

Kate: No, that was (speaks in Ojibway).

Ernest: Oh.

Kate: That's the one you're talking about, yeah.

Ernest: Oh, I see.

Kate: No, this was an old, old man. He was in the first war, the war of 1914.

Ernest: 1914.

Kate: Yeah, yeah, he was, and that's when he started this religion. Or, he didn't start it but he brought it here.

Christine: The Jehovah's?

Kate: Yeah, the Jehovah's.

Ernest: Now you got that Pentecostal outside the reserve here.

Kate: Yeah, (inaudible) but right here on the reserve, we don't. They had a big voting on it. And maybe if I had been, like if that went around today, if they said, "Well, we're going to vote for what church you want here in Wikwemikong," I think I'd be number one there to say if an Indian religion is brought here, we'd have that. But at that time, when they voted - that's just a few years ago - they said "Oh well, I'm still, I don't know, it wouldn't be good." So I put no on there.

Ernest: I think because Catholicism is so strong, it'll always be here. And I don't think Indian religion will ever come back in that way here. Nowhere near the way it used to be. But I think what we will do is to respect it.

Kate: Oh, yes. Definitely. Yeah.

Tony: What about medicine, Indian medicine? Was any of that used? Herbalism and things like that?

Kate: Yes, oh yes. It was.

Ernest: Even now.

Kate: It's still used.

Tony: That's something that didn't die off with the spiritual side?

Kate: Well, there is two kinds of, there is this one they called sorcery. Like they, people maybe used it for evil, to do evil to others. This was one thing that we were, as Catholics, we were told not to believe in. Not to have anything to do with, not to. So, this is, oh, I better....

(End of Side B)

(End of Interview)

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