

Acknowledgements

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∇·Δᵣᵇᵁ · ḅᵑ·Δᵣ·C·Δ⁻

∇·ḅ ḍ·∇σ ḌᵣᵃΔḅσ ḅᵑḍᵑḍ⁻ ḍᵃᵃḍḌᵑ ḅΔσḌᵣᵃΔḅᵣ·Δ⁻
Ḍσḍ⁻ ḅᵑḌḌ ḅ·Δᵣ·C·Δ⁻ ᵣḍᵣ ḅᵑᵑᵣᵇᵁ ḍ·∇ ḅᵑḌḌḅᵁ

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CḌᵑ ᵑḍᵁᵁḅ ḅḍᵑḌ·Δ⁻ ḍᵣ·ᵁ Ḍᵃ ḍḌᵑḍ ΔCᵑḅḅᵣ·Δᵑ
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Introduction

The Oji-Cree Mens' and Women's Traditional Practices Project was organized through funds obtained from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation under the program theme Restoring the Balance. "This theme looks at ways to heal the community in the present and keep it healthy in the future" (Aboriginal Healing Foundation Program Handbook, 2ND Edition, p. 13).

The goals of this project were as follows: (a) to gather information on traditional men's and women's practices from the Oji-Cree elders, specifically individual, family, community and environmental practices that enabled the Oji-Cree people to be strong in the past; (b) to hold a conference on traditional men's and women's practices bringing elders, frontline workers and interested community members together; and (c) to publish resource materials on Oji-Cree men's and women's traditional practices for frontline workers and the public. The information contained in this document is the result of these efforts.

Each of the elders were interviewed in Oji-Cree by Virginia Beardy in their home community. All of these elders were asked the same four open-ended questions:

- (1) What practices made you strong in the past?
- (2) What practices made your family life strong?
- (3) What practices made your community strong in the past?

and (4) What practices were important when you were living off the land?

Responses to these questions were recorded on cassette tape, transcribed into syllabics, and later translated into English.

In keeping with the goals of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, I hope that the information presented in the Oji-Cree Men's and Women's Traditional Practices Project will "encourage and support **Aboriginal people** [frontline workers and the public] in building and reinforcing sustainable healing processes that address the **Legacy of Physical and Sexual Abuse in the Residential School System, including Intergenerational Impacts**" (Aboriginal Healing Foundation Program Handbook, 2ND Edition, p. 4).

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Ruby Beardy



Biographical Information

Date of Birth: February 10, 1937

Place of Birth: Bearskin Lake,
Ontario

Present Address: Bearskin Lake,
Ontario

Name of Spouse: Caleb Beardy

Number of Children: 5

Grandchildren: 13

Great-grandchildren: 5

Number of Years Married: 47

Date of Interview: May 7, 2003

Ruby Beardy (Fiddler)

First, † will talk about a long time ago when our Native people managed their survival and how we always went to our winter home away from the community. Also, my parents taught us many things. Every summer we went to our winter home with my parents. This is what we did and we enjoyed being out there living in our remote area. The whole family travelled together in one place. We all grew up together. Every year we travelled to our winter home. The family would be gone for a whole year and we would return when it was time for treaty day in our community. It was very good for a child to be growing up during that time. The parents would teach many things about survival, how and what to do each day. The present is so different now; it is not like before. I enjoyed being taught by my mom. A child would start learning as soon as they were nine years old. The learning process began by watching how parents did everything each day, so a child could see how it was done. I learned

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at that time how to lift a fish net by myself. I had already learned fishing before then.

Now I'll talk about fishing. I enjoyed fishing and lifting a net. Each morning I was the first one up because my mother told me to lift the net early in the morning. Mother was ill so I did most of the work. She would instruct me while she was recovering from her illness. When I got to the fish net, I would chop open an ice hole; gradually pull out the net, and take out the fish. Then I would walk home with a bag full of fish on my back, because people walked to do all their chores. I would clean, and then boil the fish. I even cooked the guts. Any pickerel we caught was used only for its oil; I don't remember eating it. We only ate whitefish, jackfish, sucker, and red sucker. My mother taught me to smoke suckers and then make pemmican. Fish guts and heads would be boiled then the oil would be skimmed off. My job was to make it. I'm sure other communities had the same traditional ways.

Let me go back to the beginning. My family would leave Bearskin with very little food. We would take flour, oats, baking powder, and tea. Bannock would be made with the flour we had. We had to be careful not to use all our food at once because we were living in a remote area. Food had to be stretched to last. I learned to cook and occasionally used oats when I boiled pemmican. I would add fish oil and throw in some flour to make soup. This is what we ate. My mother taught me that, and this soup was tasty. Also, we would go and pick different kinds of berries to eat. I tried to do everything that my mother taught me. I worked all day until night. I got up every morning and had fresh fish. We never had day old fish. The net would be lifted every day. We lived where we could get food, like fish, during summer.

No one worked on Sundays. Food was prepared the day before and church was held in a house. We sat still during prayer and when the Bible was being read. Children didn't disobey their parents. A child

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would follow instructions from the father and mother. We did exactly what our parents told us to do. Children would be scolded if they didn't obey. Children were taught to be respectful of elders and help them.

I used to make bannock with fish eggs and we would eat it. Fish would always be boiled, never fried. There was no fishing for sturgeon and if one were caught then it would be used for its oil. We would make sturgeon fish oil and use it for cooking. This was done for survival. We didn't always catch sturgeon but sometimes we would eat it and only father would go fishing for sturgeon to sell for money.

In winter, we would go rabbit snaring. Snares were not wire but made of string. A spring trap was made on a rabbit trail with a bent-over stick in the ground. Rabbits would be hanging by their necks from the sticks when the traps were checked the next day. Rabbits were plentiful because God created them for us. This was a long time ago.

Mothers would get the daughters to work all the time, to prepare moose hide, by scraping off the hair and flesh, and then tanning it. They also learned how to stretch beaver pelts. Dad would kill a beaver and the feet and tail would be eaten for supper. There weren't that many animals around. My dad seldom caught any mink when I was growing up. One time dad killed a baby otter; which we ate, but we wouldn't eat a big otter. The baby otter would be boiled until tender. Not every animal was eaten. Mother taught us how to cook it.

That was part of our survival education and then the knowledge would be passed from generation to generation. These skills were important to survive in the bush.

The fathers would teach the males to maintain the camp or house. I

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would go and get wood. We used to have dogs and they had to be taken care of because they were a dog team. Their meals would be cooked from fish, so they would be strong and fit to pull a sleigh and do other odd jobs. Dogs' names would be descriptive and they understood their names. The lead dog was always the smartest. He could tell which way to go even when there was fresh snow on the trail. There were lots of dogs and [they] were given names. Pooji was one, Black Mouth was another, and White Neck was another. That's how they were named. The lead dog worked the hardest to pull the team. This was part of the traditional ways. Dogs were very useful to the Indian. We didn't have to walk. Men used the dogs for hunting.

Women stayed home while men went hunting and they would decide to hunt only for a month. There were no neighbors where we lived, so we hardly saw anyone, and only at a distance when someone spotted a person walking on the ice during winter. However, we didn't feel lonely or isolated because we were too busy learning to survive and enjoying what our parents were teaching us.

Our house had evergreen boughs for a floor. The nicest boughs were picked and then changed [with the old ones] when [they were] too dry. New ones were put in when needed; everything was done ahead of time. Later on, boards were put in the house, and nowadays paper is used for housing. We used moss to clean utensils and to wipe surfaces. There was no soap to clean with. Mother taught me to make and use ashes mixed with clay to clean the house. Evergreen boughs were tied together to make a broom. I used moss to dry the floor.

There were no store bought supplies. I learned everything from my mother. My blanket was rabbit skin made by my grandmother. Mother had the same kind of blanket. In those days, people were happy living off the land and using its resources. When someone cut themselves and started bleeding, we would use Labrador Tea leaves

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[to heal them]. Mother told me to go get some. The leaves would be minced and applied to the wound like a band-aid.

I enjoyed myself and we were hardly ever sick. We took our medicinal supplies with us to last a whole year. No one hardly ever had diarrhea, only when we used snow for water. Water would go bad during spring. Ice was melted for water and this lasted for two weeks. My mother told me to go get water and she would boil it for our drinking water. The house we lived in did not have beds or a floor, just ground. It wasn't cold. Moss was used to seal cracks. My mother helped to build it and made sure there were no drafts. The roof would be moss and evergreen boughs so there wouldn't be leaks. We didn't use supplies from the store.

We had medicine for when someone had a backache. This medicine would be boiled and a person would drink it and get better. We stored wild ginger and kept it for a bad cold. It would be chewed in the mouth. This wild ginger was very powerful in taste. My dad went a long way to find it. He would pick it at the roots by a creek. This knowledge was passed on to us from our ancestors and today it is hardly recognized by the young [people]. The people of Big Trout always went away to live in a remote area and would not return until treaty time. They wouldn't stay long [in town] and would be gone again.

Children were raised in that area. They went to bed and got up early. They were taught to do chores. Children wore snowshoes. They taught me how to trap and I trapped squirrels. It cost about 50¢ at that time. You got plenty of things for 50¢ because things didn't cost much in those days. We did not have a wood stove. We used a forty-[five] gallon drum and stove pipes came from Hudson's Bay. This drum gave off good heat.

Father would have the children sit down and he would talk to them. Afterwards the children would comb their hair, wash their face,

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then sit down, and listen to dad pray. It was very important for parents to talk to children and it became very important to children for their own good. When it came time for all the people to come together, everybody got ready to go to church. Some would arrive earlier than others and would stand around waiting for everyone else. No one was left. Everybody went to church. Everyone would sit still in church, no talking, just listening to the preacher, then everyone would sing. All the men would be there, too. [We had] church in the morning and church in the evening. That's what everybody did. It's different today from what I remember then. I haven't forgotten what I was taught about church.

People were always busy working. They enjoyed going out to get what they needed. Birch bark is very useful to start a fire, especially when it was raining. I know this because we used to travel a lot in the rain. It rained when we went to check rabbit snares. Even a mother would carry a child on her back because there was no one to baby sit. The same [thing] would be done in winter.

We had a fish net that was no longer used for fishing. Instead, it would be used to catch grouse. We knew where grouse trails were and that's where we spread a net to catch grouse. It was done this way for a long time. I would do the same to get food for my family. This is how the Native people got their strength.

We never ate anything that was sweet, but we had sugar. It was only used for breakfast and sometimes in the evening, too. This is how people were careful with their food. Whenever my dad and brother were gone, they didn't leave without tea. Whenever we needed something, mother would send me out to [the] Hudson's Bay [Company store]. I would take my squirrel pelt and one mink that I had caught myself. It was a long way to walk to Hudson's Bay on the ice. When I got to the store, mink were sold for \$45.00. I didn't spend it all because prices were very low, not like today. People tend to worry about prices because everything costs so much today. It

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wasn't like that when I was young. There was no drinking where we lived, we just went to bed, nobody minded, and we were happy. This is how people became strong because there wasn't much to worry about.

There was home counselling in the community. A flag was raised and when people saw it, they knew there would be counselling that day. When someone had a problem, it would be dealt with right away before it got too big. The elders would be in council, and sometimes it would go on for two months, teaching included. Everybody went to listen to what the elders had to say. When the elders made a decision, everyone respected it. The elders taught very well. Today on the reserve, no one really cares about what comes in and it's gotten out of hand. Nobody had any playing cards in my time. Today, men and women have relationship problems. Some couples just live together and change partners. This causes big problems and affects children too. No one in the community is making an effort to stop this. If this had happened in my time, it would have been dealt with right away. The elders would've stopped it. These problems didn't exist when I was young. When I lived in the bush, my family would get together to deal with problems. And when people started living in one community, and when the children started school, problems, like alcohol, would surface. Society gradually changed but people didn't adapt and so problems became a way of life.

Today, everything is distracting young people, for instance, television. They don't listen to their parents. On Sunday, they just want to sleep. You will not find young people inside a church. Some of them go hunting all day long, not caring it's Sunday. Children don't go to church and if they do, they don't sit still. Today's parents have no control over their children no matter how old they are. A long time ago, a parent chose a partner for their children. Arranged marriages were common. A marriage didn't end until one partner passed away. It is not so today. [They break-up] whenever

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they want to. They part even when they have children. It has caused weakness in their lives. Children are affected as well. A marriage breakup causes pain and sorrow in the family, especially a child who has a lot to think about. When a seven or eight year old child goes out alone, whatever they see out there, he or she will do the same thing. Parents don't supervise their children. There is no discipline in parenting. The child has no boundaries. The teaching and discipline that I had when I was young is no longer there. It's very different. I hear talk about bringing back the old ways but you can't teach an older child because they are already set in their ways. Only infants and small children can be taught to grow up in the traditional way. The people have taken up the white man's ways and their laws. The elders obeyed what the Bible preached. There was no such thing as divorce. Today, mothers leave home to go to work, leaving behind their children. This didn't happen when I was young. Today, even mothers sleep in on Sunday, and children are left to watch television and are not supervised as to what they watch. Back in my day, we only had a radio and we listened to music and songs. We enjoyed what we heard.

When I think of the elders, I remember how they taught the young to behave and listen. Today's generation is not following the teachings or the Bible. They just do what they want.

I remember the way my parents raised us when we lived apart from the community. We would go inside as soon as it got dark, after work was done. We would sit down and be happy to be with our parents: talking, laughing, and telling jokes with each other. That's what I liked the best, being together with the family. Mom or dad would be telling us legends that we enjoyed. Then dad would say a prayer and we would be happy going to bed. I miss that very much and this has helped me through life.

As for our recreation, we would make up games. We gathered some boughs and tied them together with a long string. One end was very

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pointy and we took turns seeing who could throw it the farthest. Sometimes we rushed through our chores to play this game. We had many different games to play down by the lake when it was winter. Tied-up boughs would be thrown into the deep snow and the distance would be measured. The farthest throw would get the most points and win the game. We also made snow houses. There were lots of games to play outside and we never did fight each other. That's how it was with us a long time ago.

My sister and I were very close. It's wonderful to have parents like that. I think about a parent who lets go a child and doesn't think about whom this child goes out with. My parents chose my partner. I didn't know who it was until I was told it's time to get married. I never saw who he was and we never communicated. It was the parents who chose for the children who they were to marry. My husband and I have been together for forty-eight years. I'm speaking from experience. Sometimes there would be problems during our marriage, but we would get over them as we grew older. You talk it over with each other in the evening. We would spend time with our children. Today, we still get together at each other's house and do some cooking. This is how I enjoyed myself when they would come and get me. We had forgiving natures and we would talk about what has been happening lately. My boys never say a bad word to me. Even when I have a sharp tongue while I talk to them. When I disciplined them on what not to do, they didn't talk back to me. They didn't mind when I scolded them. When I learned about a life with prayer, I prayed for my children so that they will turn their life around and find God. One of my boys always goes hunting and I tell him not to go on a Sunday. He tries to obey but the Lord is not pleased when you work on a Sunday; the Bible says so. I see for myself how important that is. I see a lot of young people go hunting on a Sunday and nobody says anything about this. Also, to show our children we love them, we hold their hand and tell them we love them so they will know they are loved and are happy. This is what

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we do. We often try to get together, to see, laugh, tease, and enjoy each other. That's how they know we love them.

I want to talk about how people took care of animal waste. My mother taught me never to throw anything anywhere; like don't throw bones into the water. She told me to take fish bones into the woods and bury them in the ground. If I threw them in the water, there would be no more fish. I never washed a pot in the water and that's what a woman was taught. Also, moose bones and other bones were thrown into the bush where it was clean some distance away from home. It was very important regarding animal bones. We would boil these bones to get lard. Moose lard was good to eat with. Moose intestines would be eaten. All parts of the moose were used. Nothing was wasted. Beaver guts were thrown away far into the bush where it was clean.

We had a house as far back as I can remember. I wasn't old enough to start working, so I watched my mother work. She was still able to work at that time. There was a tipi made of logs placed close together with an opening for a door. I liked the way it was made on the inside. That's where they smoked fish.

My dad used to have a garden when he came back to the community. When we came back in the fall, we would harvest our potatoes. Some of them were very large. We would take them with us and eat them with fish. That's what kept us alive. There was other vegetation that was edible. Some tasted sweet. We would pick something carrot-like by the river and we would eat that. We also had to learn how to tan a moose hide. There were many steps to do and it was quite a job to get the hide soft. This was the woman's role to tan moose hide. They didn't wear boots in those days, only moccasins made from moose hide.

People had remedies to treat themselves. When a person had stomach cramps, they had the knowledge on what to use as

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medicine from the bush. This medicine would be boiled and a person would drink it. Bark was scraped off a Pin cherry tree and it would be boiled and cooled so a person could drink it to treat a cold. We would eat Pin cherries, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and other edible berries. We would go by canoe to look for berries and pick them. Older people were energetic and they would share their food, especially [with] visitors. When someone came to visit, it was important to serve food and be of help to that visitor. We were treated the same way when we went visiting.

Once when we were paddling in our canoe, it started to leak, so we went to shore, pulled it up, and turned it over. Then we went into the bush to get tree sap. It would be melted down over a fire and then with a stick we spread it over a hole. The sap would harden very quickly. That's how people patched up their canoes.

People would also get together to eat, especially during Christmas. Everyone pitched in to help with a feast. One feast was like Thanksgiving and special food was prepared to give thanks for the bountiful food that was provided for us. I was asked to go get fish for people to eat and feed the dogs as well. My grandfather told me to go because my father was sick. So, I left very early in the morning. I went to where there were three families living and they told me there was no fish right now to take home. So, I stayed overnight with one family and the next day they told me where I could find the net. When I got there, the ice hole was very thick because they hadn't checked it for a while. They told me not to go home yet, so I went inside the house and there was an old couple, Simon and his wife. They spread out a tablecloth for me and presented special kinds of food. There was bannock and pemmican. This was a special feast for me. I had not eaten bannock for two weeks and I was so happy to see it there. They sat me down to eat and I was very honored. I was given something that I'd never seen before, so I took it home and showed it to my mother. She said it was a moose nose,

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a specialty. This was given to young people because they were very important to the elders.

My dad was suffering from asthma. I was asked to go and check the net at our winter camp. The weather was mild when I left with the dog team. Snow was hard on their feet, then it started to snow very hard and I couldn't see, but my lead dog knew exactly where to go. When this happened to me I knew what to do because of what the elders taught me. These teachings made us strong and confident because we listened to the elders. Because of their teachings, suicide was unheard of among the young [people]. The elders stressed their beliefs of taking care of your life and if you committed to that, you have life. I knew a man who followed this belief and walked according to the Bible. He was also a counsellor and when it came time for me to be married, he told me not to reject my future husband. If I did then I would have many problems. I remember what he said to me and I thank this elder for teaching me. His teachings and wisdom were strong and beneficial for the whole community and me.

Families lived together in different areas using God-given resources. God placed the Indians here and the white man over there. Today, our life is different because we are using the white man's way of life, especially the young. It is a struggle. Young people say this is our land, yet they don't use it. Nowadays, people don't live in remote areas like we did in my day. We used to see them in their tipis wherever we went and how they took care of it. I wish it were like that again and raise children according to our tradition.

The elders knew what the weather would be like the next day, [for example] if it were going to rain. If the sunset was red for a long time then it would be a good day. If it stayed red a short time then it would rain. If the sun had little rainbows on either side, then it would be cold. Even the stars could be read and if the Big Dipper hung in a certain way, then you knew dawn was coming. Then there

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were the moon phases. Today, no one pays attention to that. When my mother talked about this, even I didn't listen.

I had mentioned moss earlier. Moss would be used for babies in their *tikinagan*. Only the good part of the moss was used and a baby never had diaper rash. I used it myself. When diapers came on the market, moss wasn't used anymore. But I knew it was the best for babies. Also, our mothers taught us what to do when a baby got sick and how to look after a baby when they are teething.

Rabbits were fat and plentiful. We caught so many that we could hardly carry them home. A platform was made high in a tree so that no other animal could get to it. Food would be stored up there only in wintertime.

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Biographical Information

Date of Birth: December 10, 1922

Place of Birth: Kabakaaneechoowuk
near Kitchenuhmaykoosib, Ontario

Present Address: Big Trout Lake,
Ontario

Name of Spouse: John Childsforever

Number of Children: 12

Grandchildren: 46

Great grandchildren: 41

Great-great grandchildren: 9

Number of Years Married: 51

Date of Interview: May 5, 2003

Eliza Childsforever (Sainnawap)

I lived with my parents when I was young. We lived in the wilderness during winter most of the time and would leave Big Trout Lake in the fall. We always had traditional food and I learned how to work. We were urged to learn and try to be very good at what we were taught by our parents. I would go hunting, trapping, and snare rabbits. I always went out and came home just before nightfall; that's how much I loved it.

My dad would hunt moose and he taught me how to handle a gun, and what to do if I killed a moose. Sure enough, I killed one and it was getting dark as I was butchering a moose. I took out the innards to take home after gutting it and placed fresh boughs on top then buried it in snow so wolves wouldn't touch it. My parents worried because I was gone for so long and knew I had very little bush

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experience. So, they went with others to get moose meat. And this is what I teach my children and [they] are using their knowledge today.

I always went rabbit snaring with my mother and we spent the night in the bush. We would spread some fresh tree boughs to sleep on in the open and cold air. There was no tipi, just an open fire out there in the bush. I copied what I saw my parents doing and followed their example. We had rabbit skin coats and they were very warm. My mother and grandmother made those coats. Then we went fishing together, catching a lot of fish, and I learned from my mother how to do these things. Also, I learned to scrape moose hide on a stretcher with a hand tool and hang it inside a tipi used for smoking fish and moose meat. My mom would try to finish moosehide tanning as soon as possible and then make moccasins for the family. There were no store bought shoes then.

My dad was also teaching a young man that lived with us all the things he needed to learn about bush life. My mom was teaching me the same things. I still remember all that she taught me and now I can pass it on to the next generation. Young people and other workers come to me and ask how certain things were made. They ask what they are called and then write them down.

Back then our people were physically strong and didn't get sick much and always walked when they went hunting, fishing, and trapping. People ate fresh food all the time. They always had to get something to eat and that is how they got very strong. Later on, dogs were used to carry the load and they were looked after very well too.

There wasn't anything to disturb people who lived out in the wilderness; winter didn't bother them. If any problems arose, they would take care of that themselves and if there was a death, they did what had to be done. Also, midwives were present during

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childbirth. A woman was healthy and continued with her work soon after giving birth. It wasn't until spring that they would hear about the outside world when it was time to move back to the community. People would gather to trade news and have their treaty day, too. So, there aren't that many people of that generation living today. When autumn came around again, they went back to their remote winter homes.

What was it that made people strong and well? Today, we don't seem to see that and why is that? So many are sick and suffering from diabetes and many are losing their limbs, mostly a foot or leg. Many of our people are diagnosed with diabetes. Others have arthritis and there are other kinds of diseases prevalent among our people. Diet is so different; almost everyone goes to the store for food. Food there is very tempting and enjoyable to see and tastes so good. Today our young people do not want the traditional food of their ancestors. They all want food from the store and I feel it is the cause for the illnesses we suffer from now. We are not eating natural food and store bought food has additives and preservative mixed in, and that to me is the health problem among our people today.

Many others have become lazy and don't exercise by walking. The reason they aren't strong is the lack of exercise. I can see for myself this is happening. Store bought items and junk food eaten are not healthy food choices.

I want to mention too, that whenever someone is going out, they need a trail radio to depend on in the bush. I see a change in that because no one wants to leave without modern technology in his or her pocket. Young people don't have survival skills.

My parents taught me how to raise my children and how to maintain my marriage according to their teachings. I will not forget what they taught me. Some married couples have changed partners and that is not one of the teachings. Every morning I got up early to

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feed and take care of my husband and children. I made sure they were warm, both inside and outside, and to be extra careful with our babies; to watch them every minute, especially when the stove is on so they wouldn't get burned by the heat and by hot water. When a child is in a *tikinagan*, you have to keep an eye on them all the time. Even if a child is in a *tikinagan* or when you put them on a swing, you still have to watch them.

When a woman breast-fed her child, it was healthy for a baby. Today, mothers are using milk from the store. A mother fed her baby breast milk until they were old enough to eat solid foods. Mothers drank fish broth to keep breast milk flowing nicely. I was taught these things and did them, too. My grandmother and mother's teachings taught me to use moss for my baby in a *tikinagan*. We went to a swamp for the kind of moss we needed and we would hang each clump on a branch to dry in sunshine. Then [they would] bring it home to prepare moss so that it would be soft for a baby's skin. We made sure there are no bugs and sticks. Soon we had cloth to use along with moss. A baby never had a rash and it was a good thing for them. Today, I wish mothers would have a chance to bring up their babies with the same good care.

I will now discuss home care. Today young [people] don't want to look after a baby because they weren't taught the skills. They want to depend on their mothers to take care of a baby. They don't seem to know anything about baby care just as long as they can bear a child: it doesn't matter to them. Even some grandmothers are looking after their own grandchildren. A baby is fed store bought milk and given some juice; then I hear the babies are not strong and healthy anymore. Young mothers don't want to be bothered cleaning up after a baby so they go to the store to get disposable diapers. They don't know anything about child care and how to take care of a husband or even how to clean her house and all the chores that need to be done. And I often think about that because young people want to depend on their parents to take over for them and

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will not accept the responsibility of raising a child. I hope for their sake they will learn how to look after themselves, and then I wonder what will happen to them when their parents have passed on.

I have a few things to tell you about what my mother and father told me about raising children and I want to tell my children, too. I want to pass on the knowledge that they are not to go after anyone about something and disrespect anyone, especially an elder. They are to be of help to an elder, to not just stand there, and to look at their need. Fathers also told the same teachings: to give them food if they are hungry and not expect to be paid for it. I see them doing what we passed on to them. Respect your elders and others was what we were taught, too. If you see an elder falling down, go and help them up.

I have seen many elder ladies who needed help. The place [were] they lived was not that warm and I was told to go and help them. I went to get some wood on the same trail where they got wood. I used a dog team and brought in fire wood to keep their dwelling warm and I didn't even think about how I was helping or receiving any pay. My people told me I would have my reward for my actions. These ladies said the same thing to me. There would be life for me for the way I was taking care of their needs. I believe that it is the reason why I'm still living to this day. They told me that when they were gone, [they would] leave behind a long life for me, however long it would be, because I was helping them. This is the respect given to our people. And now I know, as I get older, what it is like. I see young people around here are very quick to help an elder. Whenever I'm at the store, they are there to help me down the steps. I tell them how much it helps me and of the important teachings when you have compassion for someone. They really think about it, too. As a sign of my appreciation, I like to give a bit of money knowing they are thinking about wanting something from the store, too.

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I think about how my people were teaching when going out to the bush: be sure to take matches, have a tea pail, some food, clothing, socks and, most important of all, never forget to bring along an axe. If you start to feel cold, make a fire right away, not when you are already cold. Look where there are lots of trees that block the wind and if the snow is deep, shovel it off to make a fire. Make sure which direction the wind is coming from so that smoke won't go inside your shelter that was made from evergreen tree boughs placed all around. Then make a big fire and that is what you do when travelling in the bush. Sometimes it's not possible to make a fire, look for plenty of dry wood and a place that is away from the wind. As you walk along, rip off some birch bark and dry, small twigs for kindling and put them in your bag. This will help to start a good fire. These are some guidelines to help you from freezing out there.

Sometimes, I talk about my upbringing to young people. I tell my children all about my experiences so they know what to do when they go out hunting. My oldest boys are already using what I tell them and I don't worry much at all. If something happened, I encourage them to take care and to remember what I taught them. When you go to the river, check for thin ice because most people go by ski-doo now. Ice is very thin in some places, so every time you go out check the ice, then you can go on safely. That is what I was told to do when the lake freezes; to go and see how thick the ice is ... then you know it is safe to go. In the spring, if you see someone falling through ice you should not go after him or her right away. You always take along a rope just in case and it should be long enough to reach the person. They will hang onto a rope and eventually get out of the water. If you try to reach them, you will fall in, too. If you don't have rope but have an axe in hand, go and chop a long stick so that a person can hang on. Don't pull the person too hard. Just wait for them to get out on their own time. This is for others to know as well, if they happen to be out there walking around on ice during winter.

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In summer, you take along your food, an axe, and some pots in case you get stranded in the bush because of rain or strong winds. Always have some type of tarp or something to use for shelter against rain. Always make sure your boat is securely tied and pulled away from the shore. The wind carries boats away sometimes and there's nothing you can do to get them back. Also, it will take a long time before someone will find you stranded out there. These are the precautions to take when going out by boat. Check the weather at all times, always look at the sky if there is thunder storm approaching and get to shore right away. Make a shelter away from big trees in case they get blown over by the storm because sometimes lightning can strike a tree. Try to make your shelter as fast as you can because using an axe might cause lightning to strike. Plus don't use a flashlight during a thunderstorm, many people use it and I warn my children not to use one. These are the teachings passed on to young people and I've done the same to my children, too. So now, you know these teachings.

My parents and I moved around during summer. I would worry as we approached rapids and I'd get scared even though my dad was very good at shooting rapids. My mom was at the back steering and my dad was in front watching for submerged boulders so we wouldn't hit them. We proceeded with caution and when I married, my husband and I would shoot rapids with our child on board. That can be pretty scary and I worried a lot. So, with that in mind, I made sure we did the right thing in our canoe to keep it from tipping over. One has to learn how to shoot rapids going down as well as going up. If you paddle on the same side that will cause the canoe to overturn. Also, [you have to know] how you sit at the back to balance it all the way down. That is what we did when I went places with my family and for me it was always scary. Then we would go through portages carrying our gear and canoe. I would have my *tikinagan* on my back and carry a few things. Sometimes people perished going down rapids.

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Next, I want to talk about hunting. When a husband gets a fresh kill, a wife should know how to clean and dress the animal. This is the job of the wife, when her husband brings in food, to prepare it by skinning and cooking. And the teaching is that a woman helps her mate with anything, everyone who marries is to be partners and work together for life. Everything they do is important for the marriage so that they will have a good, strong family. The waste was to be thrown away in a clean spot far in the bush. [We were told] not to be careless with bones, too. We were trapping at our winter home and always took good care of everything the way we were taught. We started working as soon as animals are brought in from the trap line, so it doesn't just sit there and spoil. This was an important teaching for our young people. Today, they don't want to have anything to do with trapping, cleaning, skinning, and cooking, as a wife should do traditionally. They see it as too dirty to clean and prepare pelts. You cannot depend on others to do things for you. Today it's much more simple to get what you need and stores have everything for the home. There may come a time when Natives find themselves alone and won't know where to turn. This is the reason our people did a lot of teaching. If young people take heed of the teachings, it will help them to raise their children for a better life. If there is no love shown in the home, young [children will] have problems because parents don't show love to each other; children ... see that and, therefore, will be unhappy, too.

I have mercy for children and their problems. I see no respect shown to parents because children don't personally know their mom and dad. I was taught to show my children that I had love for them. Talk to your children so they'll know how much you love them. When they do something for the home, say how much you appreciate their efforts and that they're doing a good job. Don't ever say it's no good when a child tries to show what he/she can do [or they] will feel embarrassed. Your love is very important to a child, no matter how old. I tell mine whenever they come over to visit me. I love my son and daughter. I love you and my mercies for you

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all. Let them know that you think of them and when they are tired from hunting all day, let them know they did a good job so that they will not think mom doesn't care. Let them know how much you think of them in your life and they will be glad to have you for a parent. I tell my grandchildren I love them, too.

This part of my story I've mentioned already, but I still have more about Big Trout Lake and what people did way back. People gathered in summer and some came from other communities, as far as Kasabonika and Wunnimun Lake. Many of them came by canoe. They had been trapping and now it was time to get together and visit with each other. People considered Big Trout Lake as first among other communities. They were happy to be with their families. It was a place where nothing disturbed them. They just wanted to be together and become friends with each other. There were games and dancing. People liked that so much there would be parties all over the community. There was no alcohol whatsoever, and everyone had a good time without it. People themselves worked together and no one had to be paid.

People had very little to live on and when welfare came to our community, it wasn't that much. I remember my grandmother getting welfare; she would go to the store to get her food. The store didn't have much in stock at that time and food items were measured on a scale. My grandma would share her store bought food with us as much as she could.

Another thing the people did was to make their tipis with long poles stripped of their bark, tree boughs were used inside for flooring, and they were very nice to see. The summer was treaty time for everyone and each individual got \$4.00. That was a lot of money then because prices were very low. Today, treaty money doesn't go far, so we can't afford anything with high prices. People were proud to have tipis all over our community. And then the Indian Agent, a mountie, and others who came with him, went

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around to see all the tipis and [they went] inside each one and were amazed with them in our community. The people were happy to be together and have good, clean fun.

People were strong believers and held high regard for church attendance. There was one church here. People got up very early to be ready for church. They would prepare food ahead of time for Sunday, and for other things because God said in his word that you are to work six days, then worship God and have a day of rest. We were told to behave and not go running around on Sunday and not touch anything or even break a branch. That how it was at that time. All people held Sunday as a holy day and you saw a long line of many people going to church and when the bell rang [they] all went inside. A mother kept her children beside her and told them to be quiet, no moving around or going where the priest was sitting in front of the church. My daughter would help her grandma who was blind. She would lead her by a string. People had respect for elders. Today, children are not like that and I have seen them going in and out during church service. Even small children run around inside the church and parents don't mind at all. I see that happening everywhere. This is one of the teachings our people had for parents: to keep their children and sit beside them, and a child was to know that the church is a holy place.

I want to tell you about my father and how much he respected the community church and that people should have the same respect. He said there should be one day in the year for people and name it a "Day of Praise" for the living to see another new year because our winters are hard and difficult, and for summer to see new growth everywhere on earth. My dad thought about it throughout his lifetime. People of Big Trout Lake would hold a feast for that day and I hope that our young will think about that, too, so our "Day of Praise" can be an annual event in the Big Trout Lake community.

Alex Fox



Biographical Information

Date of Birth: March 5, 1939
Place of Birth: Oonawhoosanick
(Severn Lake) about 90 miles from
Bearskin Lake, Ontario
Present Address: Bearskin Lake,
Ontario
Name of Spouse: Sarah Jane
Elizabeth Mekanak
Number of Children: 0
Grandchildren: 0
Great-grandchildren: 0
Number of Years Married: 38
Date of Interview: May 8, 2003

Alex Fox

These many ways have helped me to be physically strong. People at home always moved, pulling a sled to get wood fuel, breaking a trail for rabbit snaring, and walking on snowshoes made us physically strong and able. Also, we always carried rabbits and such on our backs. After many hours of walking in deep snow and you did not look at any chore as impossible. That is how we got physically strong. So there was hardly anyone becoming sick or having a bad cold.

Homes were always drafty. Somehow, the wind would get in and cold air seeped into the house. During the night water would freeze in a bucket and we had to break the ice to make tea in the morning. No one was cold during the night, we had rabbit skins for a blanket, which was very warm. When using a rabbit blanket you wouldn't know how cold it was inside. We would feel strong doing our daily tasks; no problems with our lungs, especially when walking. We

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didn't use any store bought food. There wasn't anything like the groceries of today. We only had what the Creator provided.

Also, an Indian walked many miles—as much as seventeen miles—and broke a trail with snowshoes, too. ... They hardly had any food until some was brought in from the hunt for the day. It depends on how far you had to go to check rabbit snares and hunt for grouse. These were the only animals and [they] were plentiful. As for moose hunting, there wasn't much moose in our area. People always walked. They didn't tire easily when providing food for energy and we didn't mind getting our food supply. Also, no one was helpless in getting food, as we provided for ourselves. So, it was a good feeling to be strong, competent, and work to survive.

Inside our homes, there was no stove except during trapping season. Green tree boughs were used for flooring and bedding. Most boughs were used inside a tipi and a fire was placed in the center. So, when you went to stay in those tipis, it was cold and drafty, and they didn't mind that, as they would bring along their wives and children. Rabbit skin blankets were used to keep warm. There weren't any problems with children because they were physically strong. A mother, too, was busy working to cook, clean, and look after her family. Teenagers would help by getting wood and water. Children were taught to work and do things. Parents did the teaching, for these skills were needed to survive and grow strong. This is how children were brought up and they began as young as six years old. Already a child is eager to learn how to hunt and trap, and that is how people passed on their traditions. A child started with a small trap. They didn't tire easily when on a trail. [They were] always full of energy and willing to learn. They could do chores every day.

Parents were teaching their children a long time ago, and it worked for the good. When looking back, it was hard and today it seems easy. As a boy, I was disciplined with a twig if I didn't move when

Alex Fox

asked to do something or [if] I didn't want to do it. A twig was used to help me understand, to respect the importance of life, and to help me learn to work and provide for myself. Now I am very thankful for that. Parents were strict in the upbringing of their children. I felt the pain and was able to learn and be respectful about life. I was told to do chores each day, to bring water and wood, to do some hunting, and to help people. When a moose is killed, it's a big job and we had no refrigeration. They had to smoke meat to keep it for later. In addition, you had to work very quickly before meat would spoil. The same was done for fish. It had to be cooked right away, then smoked to make pemmican. We hardly threw away much waste. That is how food is stored to keep from spoiling. Making pemmican was very hard work, it took time, but the results were rewarding: you had food. When drying moose meat, you needed to cook it well and thorough to prepare it for making pemmican. Women worked very hard to keep pemmican indefinitely. The same method was done with fish. Children helped by bringing wood to keep the fire going. Moose meat had to be cooked through before it can be worked into pemmican.

We went out to find birch trees and rip out the bark. Birch bark was used to make baskets and would be filled with pemmican. You only made as many birch bark baskets, as you needed to fill with pemmican. Lard was always included in with pemmican and it was made from moose and other oils. A fish skin bag was made to keep fish oil. Oils were made from fish, duck, moose and grouse, and kept with pemmican. This food was so delicious to eat and very good for you.

People always physically moved around during the day. That provided [them] with exercise and therefore made them strong. Families were very well and stable. Fathers provided for their families and everyone worked to keep their family strong with nutritious food.

Alex Fox

The things we had for our use each day were a dog team, a toboggan, snowshoes, and an axe. There was no saw. Later, as far as I can remember, the kind we had was a hand wood saw that needed two people to push it back and forth to cut wood. It was a very useful tool back then, as well as an axe and a knife. [Another tool that] was very important to have, was an ice pick, which I don't remember how or where they got it. I remember a person would come around to trade with relatives because there were no stores. If you had pelts to trade, you could get something good. It wasn't like someone just dropping off household items for sale.

A dog team was very useful to have during winter. I enjoyed going everywhere with a dog team, especially in spring. I would go and get fresh evergreen boughs. We would be gone a while to fish for sturgeon and moose was hunted, too. We would start out in March and come back in June. Families always had to keep thinking ahead on how and where to get food. That's how it was for us.

Each evening a parent would read from the Bible. Children were told to get up and wash, comb their hair and sit, and after all that [they had] breakfast. In the evening supper was eaten and afterwards reading and prayer. The father always did the reading, prayers, and would sing a hymn. Children were to be quiet and go to sleep. Everything was prepared for next day like wood and water. This is how families became strong and well. Daily discipline and chores were to be done each day. Children were watched to make sure they washed their faces and combed their hair. It was all part of looking after yourself. Every day children worked and the exercise kept them fit.

Families would move now and then. In winter a dog team was used. In summer a boat or canoe [was used]. I remember moving, just the bare necessities were packed and dogs were taken along, too. Paddling was another form of exercise and no one minded paddling all day to get to our summer camp. Dogs were allowed to run along

Alex Fox

the shore and came on board whenever necessary. Dogs were looked after just as well as families. They, too, were important for survival in the wilderness. A family had to be strong and fit just like their dog teams.

More on dog team care. Boys were assigned to look after dogs and use a leash in summer. We would bring them food and water because dogs couldn't go down to the shore and drink by themselves. Their leashes had to be checked to make sure it wasn't tangled, usually at lunch and before bedtime. This was a way for children to learn what had to be done for survival. A dog was placed on earth to be of service to man. I had to learn what it was like for a dog to be tied up. If I were a dog, I would be thirsty, hungry, and very hot. Understanding a dog's perspective was a lesson on how important a dog was in doing the job of pulling our possessions or a toboggan in winter. Dogs were used to bring in wood if it was too far to pull on our own. I was told that a dog needs to be happy and well fed so it can do the job, and to be careful for them because we will need them during winter. Dogs had an important role in our society. ...

Parents were responsible for teaching a child as soon as children were able to understand and carry out lessons. Parents had to start them up in doing small chores. Teenage girls, too, were ready to learn how to prepare food and make pemmican. No dating was allowed or even to spend time with boys. Parents were strict with teenagers. Parents had to be sure that each teenager was ready to take on a partner and know how to live as a family on their own. Teenagers were never allowed to walk around together or even laugh and talk with the opposite sex. This worked very well for those parents who taught their children. But for those who didn't follow the teachings, it didn't work out so well for them regarding responsibility for their children. Later on, times and society have changed so much.

Alex Fox

When everyone started living closer to other families in Bearskin, we would go and set a net, which we didn't do every day. Soon a recreation person was hired from outside the community to have the boys learn to play soccer. This game would be played in the evening and it was enjoyable to watch. This was only for boys. Men were not allowed to mix with boys or any females. Later on, men were able to start playing, too. This was only one kind of sport or game, not like today. There are so many other kinds of sports these days. At first, there was a limited time to play—like not during the day because it was more important to take care of traditional ways. Families who applied this and kept up the teachings lived well and looked after their hardware. They did so for family survival and their hardware would last a lifetime.

The teachings from the church were important. People of Bearskin attended church services every Sunday. Everybody was expected to come to church. Parents feared for their families because the Laws of the church stated that everyone had to be there. It was a day of rest. In my thinking, it was awesome.

Monday to Saturday was a workday for everyone. People were to get their chores done before Sunday. They had to stop whatever they were working on, put their axe or rifle away, and prepare enough food to last the whole day Sunday. You were not even supposed to break a stick or branch. It was a time for being together in one place. All of the people of Bearskin came to church and the place was packed to capacity. I remember when I was a child, another church was being built big enough for all of the people. In 1940, something like a sawmill was brought into the community and lumber for the new church was made available. Some parts of that church have operated for seven years and are still here today. The elders wanted to have a bigger church and during construction, my mother sent me out to serve tea and smoked sucker to the workers. It was left to the people to donate whatever they had to the church because there was no pay.

Alex Fox

Another important teaching was not just to look after the church but also to give yourself in service to others. If you use your strength and physical fitness to help others, you will get a reward. In return, you will get more than double what you put in. There are always people who have needs in their lives. You will reap rewards for your help in feeding the hungry. This was taught to me a long time ago.

Whenever I go hunting, I share my food with someone in need. I put my family first and then for others. It has worked for me. I was fed from that teaching. It worked out for people, especially the larger families, where each elder and child — boy or girl (if you had one) — were to help other families. This was a powerful service and glued the community together.

Parents and elders were already knowledgeable on how to get things done. They had minimal problems and their services were unlimited with no weakness. They made sure of having a strong family. They knew how to get things moving and how to deal with a family in physical need or crisis. There was no chief so they did their best to carry out what was needed for someone who was in crisis. They also took good care of the land. They knew what to do beforehand, not like today. By submitting my knowledge, I hope someone will benefit from my stories and I think Native people are taking back their traditional ways and stories.

Steven Matthews



Biographical Information

Date of Birth: February 13, 1930
Place of Birth: in the bush near Fort
Severn, Ontario
Present Address: Fort Severn,
Ontario
Name of Spouse: Agnes Stoney
Number of Children: 8
Grandchildren: 41
Great-grandchildren: 4
Number of Years Married: 45
Date of Interview: May 2, 2003

Steven Matthews

I will start by telling you about the traditional ways and teachings: about life when our people lived in the wilderness and what they did to sustain themselves, as well as their spiritual life. I am glad to tell my stories to the young and other people, too [about] how to be strong while you walk this life, to have strong faith, and to be obedient to those teachings you are learning with help from above, in your soul and flesh. And now, I will begin.

First of all, I was born in Big Trout Lake and moved to Fort Severn in 1940. Life was hard for people. Back then you didn't see much of what we see today in terms of food and survival was very difficult. When I was very young, I can barely remember my parents working hard to keep us alive. My parents had to go out and get food for us to survive as well as for themselves because there were no stores or hospitals. People and their children were physically strong and didn't get sick as much. Children were taught the spiritual life and

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to have reverence for God. Also, parental teachings and traditional ways were taught to them.

My parents always told me to get up in the morning and sit with them while they read the Bible and prayed. This happened in the evening, too. Children were to obey their parents when being taught and the knowledge is there to pass on. They were to listen and be obedient when asked to do something.

The role of the woman was to work at keeping home and children neat and clean while the man was to work outside trapping and hunting. They both worked hard to provide for their family. This is how I survived, in my growing years, with my parents. They taught us to be strong and well. I watched them work all the time, leaving early morning to go out and check rabbit snares and bring back grouse for the day's food. When fall came, people started to move again and put up wigwams with tree boughs placed inside for flooring. That is what I observed while growing up. You're to listen and obey your parents. This will see you through many problems that you'll face during your life. Your parents are trying to teach you spiritual values that will help to live your life much easier. When I was old enough and able to do things like fishing, a child learned as soon as possible on how to do chores and become better at it as they grow. Life was hard and we had no family services or hospitals. When my sister broke her arm, a person who was there knew what to do and helped us mend her arm.

My parents worked each day to provide for us and as we got older, we began to help them. My mother tried her best to help her baby live and fed her baby by using rabbit ears for a nipple. Today, it's much easier to feed with a baby bottle using cow's milk. My mom's breast milk was not flowing and it was sad to see this happening [as it was] very crucial for both of them. If a mother can't breast feed, how will her baby survive? They knew how hard it was and tried their best. This is the reason I hope that you listen and obey your

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parents for your own survival. This will help in the future when you [reach] adulthood. It was important for parents to teach their children about how to live and make sure you can do it for yourself.

Today, everything we see did not exist for our people who lived back then. They had hard times in the wilderness with no airplanes or medical aide. If someone had an accident or was sick, an Indian had God-given knowledge on what to do to treat a wound or sickness. Sometimes, medicines for certain ailments were kept in the home. Medicine came from the earth: roots, berries, and herbs, too. They were used to stop bleeding, treat constipation, and bandaging infections. I saw with my own eyes how this was done.

People knew how to keep food for a long time. This knowledge was handed down through generations as Indians taught themselves how to live off the land. Many kinds of fish were prepared for food. It is good to know how to provide for yourself and for your spiritual life, too, and it is a daily walk, even today. The secret to survival is by really listening. I grew up with no bread, bannock, oats, or candy. I didn't grow up with anything sweet at all. No one ever had a toothache, either. We had tea and I drank that, too. We had no housing whatsoever when my parents lived in the vast wilderness. Many people have passed on the traditional way of living during their life on earth. I saw my parents struggle to survive and saw how they managed. [I] learned those ways for myself.

As we gradually see this way of life fade away, times are changing fast. When I as a teenager, it was already changing. People are not struggling to live off the land. I saw that as I got older, teenagers were already getting modern things that were disturbing their lifestyle. What was taught to them had an impact on their lives. Before, children were taught to attend church and take care of themselves by grooming and getting ready. They were not allowed to play on Sunday. A person made sure that they did what was needed for Sunday, like having food and having wood chopped ahead of

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time and to not work on your day of rest or anything. God said you are to rest on Sunday. People obeyed God and did what was pleasing to him. I want to tell you again to be obedient both to God and your parents because it is important and will save you from hardship.

Young people were encouraged to follow in their parents' footsteps in how to be skilled in doing things. They learned to go out trapping and that's a lot of walking to do in a day, the same way parents did their trapping. In those days, the price for furs was not much and groceries were cheap. A twenty-four-pound bag of flour, tea, lard, and oats were not expensive; not like today, the prices are so high that our people are struggling to afford it.

People used to travel by dog team in those days. Some people preferred carrying their possessions themselves. Even children helped to carry some things a little bit and walk along with their parents as they travelled. They went to where fish were plentiful and then travelled back to their winter home. This is how children learned by experience and they became physically strong. I, myself, used to carry things on my back and that is why a child was expected to be obedient. Today that teaching seems so far removed. No one is enforcing it anymore. It was a good up bringing. Today, it doesn't seem to be the case. I've seen a person using a four-wheeler to get around, even to go to an outhouse. The young ones love the convenience of modern machinery for wherever they need to go. Life is so easy now and years ago it was so hard. You walked long distances to get to your destination and there was determination in our generation. You don't see that today. Our young people don't realize what it took for their parents and grandparents to be active and strong to provide for their family. I really miss that way of life. People of my generation know what I am talking about; there was very little of anything, no store to shop in. Today, we see how rich in food and clothing we've become from what's found in stores. This has affected our young and their life.

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I speak to the young people whose lives are weakening. Years ago, young [people] were taught to be healthy and strong. They understood things that helped them flourish. They would listen to the teachings from their parents and grandparents. [They] became their mentors.

How is it that we have lost the teachings our elders carried? Many things distract our young people in this modern world of technology. Alcohol has destroyed many young lives already. Alcoholism has taken over and has affected everyone in the community. I was hired to work for Tikinagan Family Services and Nodin Mental Health Services. I worked with them for about ten years. I am speaking to young people, if you look back there was no alcohol or drugs. Cigarettes and divorce were unheard of. Couples stayed together for life and I say this so you can have deliverance and freedom from all that hurts and triumph over life's problems.

There is a way to be positive and fight for a better life. People who lived years ago had no gas sniffing problems that are seen today. I tell you this because I want you to know how wonderful life was back then and even though so much has changed over the years, it can be that way again. People went to church and had a peaceful life. There were no distractions.

I am very thankful for having been taught to leave alcohol alone and I have peace in my life. I see many things that distract people's lives. The traditional ways have helped me live my life in peace and served me well. [It is] better to listen to what you are taught and be obedient. A child instinctively knows that what they are taught for their own good and realizes this later in life. We have applied these teachings to our own children. There was no welfare when I got married and I did what was passed on to me. I had a calling in my life there in the wilderness. When I was in the bush, the call came to me and the message was powerful. Today, I still serve God, to walk the straight and narrow. From that you will achieve peace in

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your life. There is deliverance from wickedness and spiritual power can help you overcome your problems. I want to tell you, my friend, and listen to what I am saying to you, that God will help as you live a life of obedience.

The elders are trying to bring back our language to our young. God gave us our language to use here on earth. The white people have their own language. Every nation on earth was given their own language and so we must not neglect our language that was given to us. This is another important matter: not to loose our Native language. Today our young people and small children are speaking only English. Now there is a communication gap between generations. Young [people] will not know what to do or how to survive or the meaning of Native words when an elder speaks to them. Because all they understand is the white man's English.

People who lived years ago remember that life was very good and enjoyable. Now, young people are forgetting that traditional way of life. That is why it's important for parents to keep on teaching children and not lose our God-given language. God gave us our Indian way of life and how to raise our children and take care of our family, so that we may have a good, long life and pass it on to the next generation and so on. I try to encourage all my children to learn to sustain their lives and help themselves by being independent in their day-to-day living.

Young people want to be their own boss. Life is too easy for the young. They will not cooperate on how to make improvements while they are trying to have healthy children. I hear about programs on how to improve parenting skills. I have seen people come around with different job titles and they try to help people. We never had welfare and when it came people could buy food and that helped them live better. Jobs also became available. Pay was \$4.00 a day. That was the first time I got paid for working. It was kind of sad for me because I felt that pay was not much. Today,

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people are earning big wages. So don't forget your upbringing. When I think about it, it hurts me. I urge you to listen to the teachings of your parents while there is still time and they are still living. Many years ago people struggled to sustain life and this was not easy. Please hear me, those of you that will hear this tape.

The amount of welfare for one person was about \$30.00 from the government for people to live on. [I] wondered what affect it will have on our people. Now I begin to understand what it's doing and on jobs, too. Pay was so poor I thought I was getting a big cheque. I remember family allowances, too. Today, the amount given is not nearly enough because the cost of living is extremely high. How are people going to survive these days? You don't get many groceries for \$200.00 when you compare prices from a long time ago. Life seems to get worse instead of better. Wages get higher and services for people are getting more complicated. [There are] unexpected changes to the pension. Welfare has increased for people to live on comfortably. Looking back, people used to work for themselves and were able to support their own families without welfare. That is my reason for telling you to look at both past and present, about how life isn't easy, but we were given the resources to cope with it all.

Later on there was an increase for those receiving welfare and a change came for those aged 60 or 65, who get about \$700.00 a month. Now the elderly and widows are receiving a pension. We had no financial aid of any kind. Our people did not get outside help in their traditional way of life. People provided for themselves. I thought to mention this, so that you know how difficult it was for people. They did everything before any welfare or pension ever happened in our community.

I'm very glad to know that the information is being printed and glad, too, that I witnessed everything that I'm telling you with my own eyes. I will be happy if anyone reads and obeys the teachings of our people. Help will be available for them and for children. I am

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also glad to see health services and programs for people. With the change that is taking place, there is more sickness among people. What can be done about the difficulties of our existing lives? They ask, "Where does all this sickness come from?" I try to make improvements the same way as those health workers are doing by helping through programs for youth.

Marriages are breaking the lives of our young people. I do see many young couples suffering and unable to cope [with] and get over the hurdle of a broken marriage. There are many reasons for this. One of the partners walks away from the husband or wife and the children see that and suffer. A marriage should be as God intended it to be; that two live together for life and raise their children properly. We should try to better the situation and head it off. If problems are not dealt with right away, everything starts to break. Children don't want to go to school and don't sleep well at night because they see their parents are having problems. We have many health and mental services to help those who need it. I am glad you came to me so that I can talk about life and its teachings.

I see people who come with job titles to our community and tell us what life was like a long time ago. They tell us about what they learned and then pass on their knowledge to the community about how to cope with your problems. This is good for young [people] if they listen, so they don't end up in jail or become drug addicts, etc. The elders need to teach the traditional ways and be an example for youth so that they will have the knowledge to solve their life problems. Then they, in turn, will teach their children the traditional ways and the community will become strong again. So try to do your best with your children and it will help you in the long run. Some elders have different ways of presenting their teachings when trying to make it understandable for listeners.

There are problems in our communities. The hope is that our young people will start to think about their life and learn all the

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information that is available for them. This information is there to help you cope with your problems. People eventually get sick. There should be healing foods added to our diet to make us well and healthy. Doctors try to find out why we get sick and where the sickness comes from. People were healthy and didn't get sick when they lived in the bush. Today, many are sick all the time and that is why some are working with mental and health services to help you get well physically and mentally.

I am telling these things to young people that will help them cope with life's problems that we humans face every day. Young people are required to work and help their parents. You know [your parents] worked very hard and [they] did their best to help while raising you. [It is the] same with parents, [they have] to talk, teach, guide, and try to solve problems. That is what our family did, so that it helps them in the future. If children will not listen or do what they have been told, then someone else has been teaching them and they are following that and getting into trouble.

To people who are looking back on life, this is how it happened. God gave our people knowledge on what to eat, where to fish, and [how to] live off the land for a good life. It is true what they're saying. It is not our traditional way to mix in another nation's way of life that's different from ours. Especially for our young people, it is distracting and we should not lose our language. Our ancestors never went to school and learned another language — myself either. I have stayed the same as I was fashioned since my birth and retain my language. I tell what is asked of me, about how people lived and stayed healthy in the traditional way of life. Today, life is full of many other things. Before that, people were happy and content because the Creator looked after his people and, if you listen, you will find that useful for yourself.

I hope that what I have been saying here will be of help to you. Leave alcohol alone. Young people want those things that are very

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expensive and spend money on them. All their money goes to these things and so they don't get anything worthy that will enrich their lives. I'm speaking to you, young people, by doing this you don't get the most out of life and are of no help to yourself or your children. The result of listening is to understand everything so you will not despair. That is what I want tell you. I appreciate this person who has come to me asking about how our people lived their traditional ways. I am hoping that you will remember what I have said and live the teachings. It will be useful for you and your children and they, too, will benefit as long as the world still spins. And this is all I have to say. I thank the person for asking me to say a few words and I was glad to do it.

Georgina Neshinapaise



Biographical Information

Date of Birth: March 25, 1933

Place of Birth: Wunnumun Lake,
Ontario

Present Address: Summer Beaver,
Ontario

Name of Spouse: Alex Neshinapaise

Number of Children: 9

Grandchildren: 36

Great-grandchildren: 18

Number of Years Married: 50

Date of Interview: April 23, 2003

Georgina Neshinapaise (Beaver)

The resilience our people had made them strong and healthy because they ate traditional food like moose, fish, grouse, and ducks. White man's food was hardly ever eaten. A rabbit's insides were eaten as well as fish heads, guts, and fish eggs. Nothing was wasted and bones and other waste were given back to the earth. Goose and ducks' wings were taken to the bush and hung on a branch and duck bones were put back into the water.

Basic foods that they used were tea, flour, oats, and salt. They would drink fish broth because there was no juice or milk. I don't remember having these food items. In those days, no one became sick or suffered other illnesses. People were very healthy a long time ago, not like today when we hear about many people getting sick all the time. Walking was another form of exercise like hunting on foot. There weren't any snow machines, only dog teams. Sometimes a person walking long distances would be pulling a toboggan and

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carrying food in a packsack on their back. They would sleep in the open air; that's how strong they were a long time ago.

Women were strong because when a baby was born, they didn't stay in bed long, like the way animals do in the wild. Even when travelling, a pregnant woman stopped to have her baby. Or when lifting a fish net on ice, she went to have her baby and was back to work soon after. My father told a story about a pregnant woman whose labor pains started during a trip. She had a rabbit skin blanket wrapped around her as she walked, and when her companions looked back, they saw she wasn't following behind. They stopped to wait for her and made a fire. Pretty soon, she arrived and was warming herself by a fire with them, a newborn baby in her arms. Food they ate made them strong and they didn't get sick most of the time.

Women used moss for diapers and I used them, too. There were no store bought diapers. Babies were always warm during travel. Rabbit skin blankets, jackets, and mittens were made to keep warm. Some parts of a moose were eaten and other parts [were used] for tools. Nothing was wasted: bones were used to make moose lard. Caribou was done the same way. Hides were tanned and they didn't get cold during winter. They would sleep on the ground in the open air with evergreen boughs for bedding and they went where there was good hunting and fishing. My father said he was born in March 1933, inside a wigwam covered with tree boughs because he was born too soon. Women and babies were strong and healthy all the time.

My husband and I had nine children. We did our best to look after them and taught them well. We always went travelling together everywhere so that we can teach each child about life and taking care of yourself. That is how they learned, by fishing, hunting, and trapping with us, to keep family ties strong and be in good health. For about 35 summers we went fishing as a family. We trained them on how to keep a campfire going and how to make a shelter because

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there were no houses around. [We trained them on] what to do when it rains and they learned by watching us. Also, people didn't need refrigeration because they knew how to conserve food and store it indefinitely.

Our children consisted of five girls and four boys and those boys are good at hunting. Girls were taught skills for living healthy. They watched how we did things and they learned from example. That's how families remained strong. We taught our children everything they needed to survive: to have wisdom and knowledge in travelling through any kind of weather, to be cautious during freeze up and break up of rivers and lakes, and even to go up and down rapids. They are doing what we taught them.

Our son died of cancer four years ago. He left behind a wife and children (all grown up now). [They] are taking good care of themselves and we look after our grandchildren, too. We taught them all that we learned from our parents. Families become stable and strong from learning about life, survival, and teaching them important bush skills. If a person was isolated in the woods, these lessons are life-saving knowledge and teach children to be very cautious, too. They know what to do if someone is cut or had an accident. Learning what kinds of plants were used for medicine is important and what to apply when bandaging a person. The only hospital or medical care center was in Lansdowne House and they had the only medication around here. No one was taken out of our community for medical reasons either. Children were healthy because mothers took good care of them. Children paid attention to grandparents and listened all the time.

When dad went out fishing, [or] duck and moose hunting, older children went along. [My] mother was left behind with the girls. She showed them how to tan moose hide, clean fish, and skin a rabbit. Children learned to care for and know everything about living in the bush. Obeying your parents was a very important skill

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for young people. My children are grown up and doing what we taught them. They're married and are taking good care of their families. It makes me very happy to see that. In my thinking, it's now more easier washing clothes, not like when we had to haul water and heat it up to do laundry. Women learned to work hard and it made the community strong.

People didn't live close together in summer. They went where hunting was good and food was plentiful to feed their families. The month of June was a time people gathered from the surrounding area to feast and visit together. This showed youth how to love others and how they took care of their families. Alcohol was not available to them. When I was ten years old, I never saw anyone get drunk. The community stayed strong because youth did what they were taught.

When young people were old enough to marry, it was parents who decided who they were to marry, and today, it is not like that. Young people just choose their own partner. This did not happen years ago. If a man wanted your daughter, you and your partner would meet his parents to see if the match was appropriate and, if so, ask if your daughter could marry their son. And sometimes a couple didn't see or know each other before marriage and these unions made the community strong.

The tools they used were snowshoes and toboggans for hunting and other tools for making a birch bark canoe. I watched my father make one. Tree sap from a jack pine was used to patch a hole in a canoe and was always carried around for repairs. This is how they lived off the land: by making the tools they needed to see them through. Dog teams were a necessity that made life a bit easier. Dogs were looked after very well because they worked along side people.

Another thing they made was birch bark shelters. Bark was cut into different sizes and woven together using spruce roots. Shelters could

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be rolled up to carry when moving from camp to camp and you never got wet. Not only did they use birch bark for canoes and shelters, they made birch bark baskets to store food. Pemmican and dried fish were two of many items stored in baskets. Women did all the work making pemmican and dried fish to keep indefinitely. An oil container, a jackfish skin bag, was used to keep oil made from other fish and animals.

Moose meat and berries were dried for keeping, too. Those were the foods that kept them alive. Moose hide tanning was a job women did and I did, too. Today, you don't see much of that. Ladies don't want to try it. They have a modern way of living and didn't get the chance to acquire the traditions. Young wives have seen how I made moccasins. Only moccasins were worn and you didn't see anyone wearing winter boots.

In 1938, my mother passed away with all of the family beside her. I was about five years old. She had hurt herself on the knee with an axe. I had an older sister and a younger one. There are only three of us living now. Our aunt looked after us. Dad went out hunting and trapping for food. We didn't lose our Native language since mom's death. Dad took us to his sister in Kingfisher Lake by dog team. We spent two nights camping before we got there. We got a man's place. This man had compassion for us, three little girls. I remember moving away so well. Dad killed moose even in winter when there weren't many moose around, as well as bringing in rabbits and fish to feed us. I remember wearing a rabbit skin coat our aunt made for my sisters and me. We hardly had anything to wear.

When dad went hunting, there wasn't any machinery. He always walked, doing his best to provide for us. Sometimes he used a dog team to get game, and when taking pelts to sell. Other times he would pull a toboggan. The market for furs was not profitable then. We only ate traditional food and therefore didn't get sick often. We were strong because of the way we took care of ourselves. I

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remember killing my first rabbit. When we set rabbit snares, we used string instead of wire that is used today. I also went grouse hunting, and fishing on the ice. I got excited when I caught a fish. There were no modern pack sacks. People sewed their own. They always made things for their own use. By walking all the time, you didn't get too cold and didn't mind sleeping outside in any kind of weather. This is what it was like while I was growing up. Now today, everything is run by machines. Ever since 1945 up to 1950, some modern things were gradually coming into our community.

We fished during summer while our family was growing. We lost one child and have had many difficulties during our lifetime. I never expected to see modern technology in my life. Today, everything is different and we never experienced these trends a long time ago. The lives of young people have drastically changed over the years. The Bible says that we will have perilous times and we begin to see it happening today. These days people suddenly die. We lost two grandchildren in the summer of 2002: two in my family from a house fire. I just want to tell you that so it may help someone when they read and hear about life in the past. The next generation will carry on the life difficulties their ancestors encountered and not lose the Native language and traditional ways of our people. As for the elders, we have a chance to keep on teaching our youth and tell the young men and women to not forsake our Native way of life—the way their grandfather and grandmother lived and their parents too.

I can see they are almost forgetting what the fish, animals, and birds are called in the Native language and how many different kinds of fish, birds, and animals that live in the forest. All small children are not being taught to speak the language. Mostly, eight to 10 year olds are already forgetting what the animals, birds, and fishes' names are called in our language. At least some are still learning. The problem lies with the parents because all they speak is English. Back in 1945 and 1946, there was a bit of schooling for two months for children in summer, but before that there was no school. Children spoke

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their own Native language. We left the community when children were being selected to go away to school; ten of us were taken from our homes. An airplane with floats came to pick us up—three girls and seven boys. We went for one year and came home in June. Four persons that went with us are gone now. My experience in school was so strange because I never saw anything like it before. For the first time I saw a car and strange food. I really hated eating eggs but later got used to them. We were very lonesome. About half way through the school term, I realized that they were trying to teach us. I really didn't want to go home then, but I didn't forget where I came from or my home.

My father told us a story about a long time ago when people worked on boats that used to transport food supplies. They travelled two weeks from Big Trout Lake to Fort Severn to pick up supplies. The river was so wide that you could hardly see them walking along the shore dragging their boat. We dragged boats along the shore. The sand banks on both sides were very high so you couldn't get off to the shore and there was a swift current, too. Boats did go to Fort Severn. People who lived to see these things are telling their stories. Some other men and women just don't talk about it. It's just the way they are.

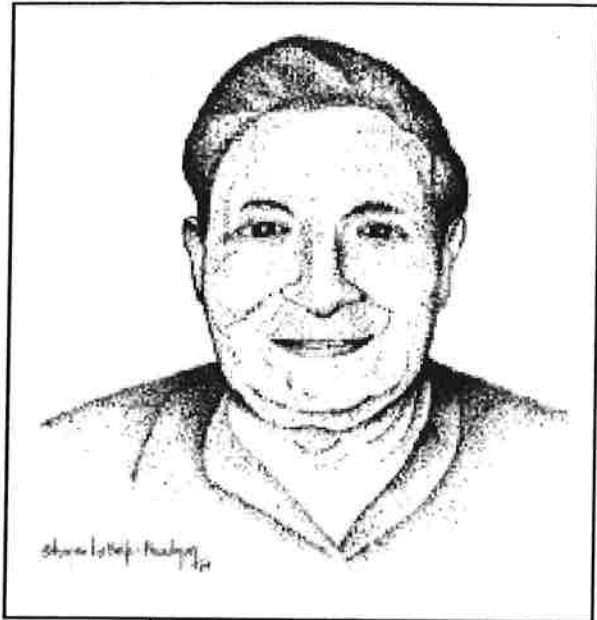
A certain medicinal plant was crumbled and applied to a sore like a bandage. I used it for a sore knee and dampened it to apply on my knee, which still feels well today. People used many kinds of medicine and a doctor said to use whatever we had for treatment. An acorn from the top of a tree was chopped up to treat swelling. A red bark shrub was a treatment for sore eyes. [They] boiled its bark, placed it on a gauze pad, and applied it to the eye. Another medicine was the root of a certain plant. It was also used for urine problems. A very fine, dry substance of a decaying tree was used to treat a baby with a rash on the neck and applied like baby powder.

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A plant called Labrador Tea was good for belly button ailments for babies and it worked. There were medicines for headaches and many other illnesses.

There were all kinds of medicinal leaves. Some were used for diabetes. Some medicines were roots and red bark. June is the best time to gather medicinal herbs. It is when everything is new and good. The trees' birch bark is ripped right to the bare wooden part.

George Sainnawap



Biographical Information

Date of Birth: May 24, 1930

Place of Birth: Kitchenuhmaykoosib,
Ontario

Present Address: Big Trout Lake,
Ontario

Name of Spouse: Emily Sarah McKay

Number of Children: 5 + 2 through
customary adoption

Grandchildren: 17

Great-grandchildren: 0

Number of Years Married: 36

Date of Interview: May 5, 2003

George Sainnawap

Hello and here is my story. I was fortunate to have seen both of my grandparents. I loved them and they always prayed each morning, noon, evening, and every Sunday. I knew my aunts on my mother's side and when I was fifteen years old, my mother passed away. My dad was much older when he died. I feel that I don't have much to offer and I wish you all well for the days that God gives us, speaking from the word that is written in the Bible. I worked a lot for my dad knowing it is very important to have respect for your parents. [I] watched my grandparents while they worked. My grandfather would ask me to go with him when he went fishing and grandma needed me to help her, too.

I was raised the same way as my grandparents were. They lived about fifteen miles from the community during winter season. I had a chance to see them, how they lived, and how they did their trapping. At that time there wasn't much sickness in the Big Trout

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Lake area and where we spent our winter. We had three families. Life was peaceful in the wilderness. The year was 1939, and I left home to attend an Indian Residential School at Pelican Lake in Sioux Lookout. [I] came back three years later.

I stayed with my grandparents and they provided for me by fishing. The fish they caught were very good and I can't remember when I left. I regret not asking my dad at that time. They were living in Angling Lake then, and later we arrived in Big Trout Lake somehow. I knew I would not be going back there. We were here during 1939 up to 1942 with the war going on [in Europe]. I started to go with dad when I was thirteen years old about 70 miles from the community with our family. We left in the fall and came back at Christmas and sold our pelts. There were no radio phones then. We went back to check our traps and we were gone for three weeks. We camped twice with a dog team. That was during 1943. There were hardly any jobs in Big Trout Lake and trapping was the only way to provide for our family.

In 1944, some people had money from trapping and my parents were still with me. In summer, my dad would go by boat south of the community. The trip was quite long. I don't remember how many miles. We left in early spring and came back in the fall. We had no motorboat. We just paddled to Pickle Crow Mine. We camped three times along the way. My dad, my two brothers, and I got jobs at a logging camp. One cord of wood cost \$2.75 each. That was in 1945. I went back home by paddling, it was very hot, and there were so many mosquitoes. Our canoe was very heavy to carry over the portage and there were a lot of rapids to go through. Upon arrival, we learned the price for a cord of wood was \$4.00. [That was] in 1947.

I was on my own but I had employment. I had a round identification tag made of metal. I would write my number on a cord of wood and every two weeks a worker came by to mark it. There

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were a lot of men from Big Trout Lake working in the bush camp. We would head to town for more supplies, and with our ID tags, the hardware store clerk used our number for a saw and axe handle to charge our purchases. [It took] two people to cut wood [with a saw], not like a power saw we see used today. And on Saturday, our pay day, we went to town with our ID tags to pay what we owed at the hardware store. After that, it was take home pay.

My parents always made sure we learned to be good workers and do a good job. They taught us to get up early and go to bed at the same time every day. We did the same thing when we went paddling, early to bed and early to rise. During that trip we took, it was the same thing for our chores Sometimes we would put up a sail if the wind direction was coming from behind. I paddled all day long in 1947 when I was young. I was happy knowing the lessons my parents taught helped me well in my life. In 1954, at age 24, I went to work at the mine. The mine hired men aged eighteen and up to work underground. I enjoyed working underground even when I knew it was very dangerous. I also met other men who came from overseas and were friends with me for the length of time I worked there. I liked working with them and got to know Germans and other foreigners who worked at the mine. The wage was 96¢ an hour and after working a year, it was \$1.02. The more experienced [workers] got paid \$1.20 an hour. Every now and then, we would get a bonus so that we would be happy working in the mine. We worked by the hour using a clock and that's how it was for me. My upbringing helped me to work well. I enjoyed trapping very much. There was a great demand for more workers and not many Native [people] applied for work. That's why I mentioned those I worked with. I learned and experienced much from working in the mine.

The most important lesson is to learn and know how to work. Another kind of work I enjoyed was fishing with a net. We fished for trout and sent them out whole by air. That airplane transport carried about eighteen hundred pounds of fish. The place they were

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sent [fish] had a freezer and workers there did the cleaning and gutting of trout. I went there, too, at one time, to see the place. The fish were divided according to what kind and put into boxes for shipment, but I don't remember where they were sent. I saw women working at a cleaning plant. In my thinking maybe they had a chance to take home some scraps to feed their families. In 1949, I went commercial fishing. The airplane came from Red Lake to buy our fish and that was a big help to us. The price of fish was not that great, either. The teachings helped me a great deal and now I have the knowledge on how to fish.

Now I will talk about the tourist camp. I worked at a tourist camp for about fifteen years each summer and really enjoyed doing that kind of work. The camp had six boats with twenty horsepower outboard motors. They had six tourist guides that went out on each boat for the day. Some tourists came on their own by air from Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, and flew down from Cat Lake, which is about half a day's flying. Everything at the tourist camp was to be ready according to requirements. Some went out fishing with a guide, some came to eat fish and others were there to visit Big Trout Lake to see our lake because it is so large. I would start out early each morning and go guiding, then have a shore lunch, put out the camp fire (we never left a place without gathering garbage to dump at the camp's disposal), and have a big feast at the end of a day's fishing. The tourists had their photos taken with fish on stringers. It was an enjoyable time for all. There were times when it was calm on the lake and other days were very windy. Some tourists gave monetary tips and the guides were able to buy food and such that they needed for their families.

In those days of trapping and hunting, my grandfather killed moose and that is how they got to be physically strong. We always ate traditional food and, today, I don't know how strong our people are now since we're on a different diet. Here in our community of Big Trout Lake, people still go moose and goose hunting, and they are

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still plentiful. Also, lots of fish are included in our diet. My dad goes hunting, is very careful with a gun, and uses a boat safely. We were seldom tired from paddling around all day long. I loved going paddling and watching the scenery as we went along the lake. The way God made such beautiful trees, rapids, rivers, lakes, and sand. That is how my grandfather lived his life and did things for survival. Young men and women were taught to be good workers and many things were to be done in our upbringing. There was no school building just yet. Our parents were [our] teachers. Even girls were taught how to prepare food. The tools we used were very important as well, like having a dog team that was very useful in our work when I was young.

When I married, monthly family allowances already existed from the government. Then in 1966, welfare came along for those who weren't able to provide for themselves. Back then, it was a very good thing. My wife and I worked outdoors pretty much. She's just that way. We didn't have much chance to teach our children what we learned during 1976. We did go camping with them a lot and children loved doing that, as all children do. They like doing things as well. They know how to hunt, fish, and get wood. It was very important, too, for a child to know their language and understand the writing to be able to read it. I read the Bible and try to understand the word. I also have a Bible written in my language. Whenever I'm not able to understand it, I sort of go back and forth between English and my language. It is a blessing for all of us to know the written word.

In my younger days my dad, or someone else, would ask me to go along if they wanted help lifting a fish net or getting moose meat where it was left. Someone always had to go with another whenever they went into the bush to fetch something. That's how it was for me, I was always asked to come along, especially with the elders, and there was no money involved for my work. Not like today, when young people are always expecting money to do a few chores.

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People in our community helped each other all the time when there wasn't much of anything, money wise. When someone was sick, they would go and sit with them. Our people helped for many reasons. Courtesy helped a lot like giving food and chopping wood. Help came from our leaders and counsellors. The leaders weren't paid a wage. It just did not exist. They worked to help their people. We had a nice garden and a good crop of potatoes. Some potatoes were put away underground beneath the house during winter, a sort of cellar to keep them. The ones who were able did the planting and harvesting of food.

I watched my grandmother plant her garden. She had a green house right off one of her windows. A door was made to go in and out and she kept it warm. Come spring, my grandmother would have startup plants ready for her garden and they would grow all summer. She was one of the best gardeners in her day. The rest of us got together to plant and maintain a potato field. We would keep enough potatoes for winter and sell some to white people. Our prices in those days weren't that high. Today, a garden would be a good idea for families because of what prices are for food these days, and now homes are built with refrigeration. I also overheard people talking about a community garden for everyone and would be beneficial, health wise. People used to have potato plants and helped each other to grow them.

A long time ago people used medicinal herbs and plants to treat themselves. One of the most used was wild ginger for bad colds. It grows in small brooks and you just didn't pull one out. You had to be careful to get the right one, too. You carefully dig at the roots where it will break off. Ginger was boiled, not a lot of it, and was cooled to drink. When you drank that, it made a person sweat. It was also used for someone that got too cold from being outdoors all day. It's a very good remedy for a bad cold. Another kind of medicine was for constipation and was administered like a laxative. The pin cherry tree was also good for a cold and the bark was

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scraped off and boiled to drink. There was twisted tobacco available, some people smoked it, and others used it to treat bleeding if you had a cut. It was good to have on hand when you went out hunting.

In our community a lot of people used trap lines for a living; those that were strong and physically able. Trapping was very good and selling of furs, too. Our lake is very big and we've been living here a long time. The places have different names all around the lake. The reason for naming them is to let someone know where you are going or camping, so that you can be found at that location should anything go wrong or [if you] didn't return at a certain time. Along there is a tourist camp and all kinds of fish live in our lake. Sometimes our lake is very rough on windy days but mostly calm where people lived along the shore.

Another thing we did was build a fish trap in the river. Sticks and poles were used to construct a trap and fish would be trapped in there. This is how people were able to survive for food in summer and winter. As soon as night came, there would be suckers and whitefish caught in the trap we had and that is how it was in my younger days.

I thank the person who came to record my stories. God love you all.

