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INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: BOX 504  
LEASK, SASK.  
MISTAWASIS RESERVE

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HIGHLIGHTS: Joe Duquette, born 1904, on Mistawasis Reserve,  
never attended school, completely self-educated. Now Senator  
of F.S.I. and involved in teaching and counselling young  
people.

Story of Joe's arranged marriage.

Tony: June 17, 1983 and this is the Waterhen Cultural Camp.

We are having a conversation with Joe Duquette.

Joe, when were you born?

Joe: I was born is 1904.

Tony: Whereabouts?

Joe: At the Mistawasis Reserve. I was on the south end of the reserve, the southwest corner of the reserve. Amongst the sand hills.

Tony: Why are they called the sand hills?

Joe: Well, they was like this here. Sand hill you know. But, kind of sandy. Where we used to play in the sand, that is why I call it the sand hills. They never called it sand hills but that's how I was brought up in there. My playground was the sand hills.

Tony: How many people in your family?

Joe: Well, we were quite a few, you know. We were about 18 in the family but there is just myself left and I couldn't remember all of the brothers and sisters because I am the youngest in the family that was. I was raised with my other brothers and sisters. I don't even know how many sisters or brothers I have. The only last three brothers I had was - I know them all, you know. The rest of them, they died before I was born I guess.

Tony: Can you, what can you tell us about your early life on the reserve when you were a child? Can you remember much about it?

Joe: Well, what I can remember about the childhood, you know, well, where I was brought up I was isolated in a home where my mother didn't want me to go around visiting or always had time to do little chores. As soon as I was grown up, you know, I started to work with my mother because my dad was old, you know, and he was always working too hard and I guess we were brought up as a farmer, like, you know. No trappers, but just my mother used to trap a little here and there around close to our homestead where we had our home.

My Dad used to go out in the fields and I was about, oh around 8 or 9 when I was to go around with him you know, going through the fields because I never went to school. He had this walking plow and I was to follow him and I was to go around there with him. And I always had a stick where I had a nail at the end where I was to poke those oxen, you know, this and that, and Dad used to give me hell, "Get out of here! Don't poke them, you are hurting them!" and this and that you know. But it was in our language, it wasn't in no English language, so...

And the time came in that he had finished off the plowing and I looked - and I was with him all of the time you see - he had

the harrows, no discer, just harrows. And like a bunch of willows were tied up in a big bunch, you know, heavy, load up with some stones on top so the willows would be heavy to level the ground. After they finished the furrows were off, you know, but he was leveling up with a bunch of willows, and then when he had this. That was the harrows. I would see the willows were the harrows we had. Instead of... because we were poor, we couldn't afford to have this machinery like we have today now. It is different altogether than them days anyway. Even when we had the harrows, the horses, you had to follow them behind, you see, walk on foot. And besides the disc wasn't the same thing, you had to follow the horses there. Some discs didn't have the seat on, it was just that way you see.

Then we had this seeding. The seeding came in after everything was leveled up. Well we had...we went on and had the bags. He had a bag on the side there where he'd, that was the way he seeded the grain you see, by hand. There was no drill or nothing, so he just passed the grain, throw the grains so.

Some of them days our crops were 100% better than the crops we have right now. There was no fertilizer or anything like that that we have right now. Grain was real good and it was something that you growed. Everything you growed was better than we have today. Now you have to use fertilizer and all of this conventional stuff we use now, and so on, that came in, you see. Then harvest came in, cut the grain, you see. The grain was high, almost level, you see. Then he used to have a kind of a knife where he used to cut this grain in one stroke or twice. Then he'd tie the grain with the same, with grain you know, no twine or nothing, and then we'd stook it after.

Then, before I started this harvesting, he used to give me a little piece of land, oh just, maybe, just a little bit, you know, maybe 20 by 20, you know. That is where I put my crop, you know. I had to look after this, you see; that was my job. Everyday I would go up and see how my grain was, and all this and that, you know, when I had always something to do, you know. Going home, well, I had my chores, you know - haul the wood inside, get the water, everything like this, and my brother lived just down the hill where we had our house or up on the hill. But they had theirs down the hill you see.

Tony: Who was that?

Joe: My brother. The second oldest of my brothers, you see. So he'd be playing over there too, you know, then I would be playing over here. Then we'd yell at each other, you know, "Come here, come play with me!" And one day, you know, he, well he was through, you know. The parents, the people, the uncle that looked after them, you know...he was just like a baby, you know, everything, you know. Me, I was rough and then when he had a big dog, he used to have a big dog, you know, and he used to ride around in the yard. This dog was quiet, you know, he loved it, so it went close to us, you know. The dog would watch my mother, you know, going for something outside,

you know, and the dog would come up there and get those, something to eat, you know. So finally I looked at him one day and he was riding around on his dog, you know, so I took chips, you know - there was no bones but there was chips - I just pretended I threw these bones, you know, out. There he came, the dog. He was riding this dog, you know, and the dog turned over and left him and jumped and came back to see, to eat, you know. Oh, he got mad, you know. The dog didn't find nothing, 'cause there was chips, you know, that I picked up in the dish, pretended I threw these things out. Oh, he had his horse, horseback on his dog, you know. Oh, he got mad at me. So we, that is the way we lived, you know, parted from, different. He was in another home and I was in another home, my own home, with my mother.

And then things started to change a little bit. I could remember when the war came in 1914, then some of my cousins went out. Like one of the Gladeau's here on the reserve that came in from over our reserve, they came in and lived here you see. He died here, he is buried here. So he went to war you see. And then after the war, well he came back. Well it was 1918 then that flu came. A lot of people died, homes and people just like, you know, just dying off, you know. But, on the reserve there was a lot of people that didn't die because they had this medicine. They drank so much of it, they got cured. There was no hospitals then you know, there was but there was no room for them, for us Indian people. All we had was our own medicine to try to cure the thing that was coming on, this flu you know.

Tony: This was Indian medicine?

Joe: Yeah, and the Indian medicine, they take it. So they, most of them lived, you know. We didn't have it because we drank the medicine. We didn't. We were not sick but we still used the medicine and kept on drinking, you know, and I guess that kept it off, you see. We didn't have it. And I remember there, one time that we were going out when the Indian Affairs came in and the inspector came in to buy the land. This was the inspector Collin Graham from Regina, he worked for the Indian Affairs that bought the land from the reserves. We were working with the government, so they bought the land and we got a hundred a piece, like, you know, one person got one hundred dollars that time.

Christine: When was that?

Joe: In 1918. After the war you see. 1919 that was the time I came in here you see, after the war, after we had sold the land. Then we had to move in further up north where we had homes here and there you see, all scattered, all the south.

Tony: When you say you had to move further north, you had to move the entire reserve further north or just your home further north?

Joe: Well, we had to build up new homes. We had to build up

new homes. There was no homes there ready to go and enter, you know. We had to pick up a place where we would live, you see.

Tony: Why was the land sold?

Joe: Well, the government bought the land for the Soldier Settlement Boards, you see. This is what the people get after they come out from war, you see. After their retirement, well, discharged, well, they could get some land, you see, but this was good land.

Tony: When the government bought this land, did they then give it to other Indian people?

Joe: No, no, no. Nothing. We had to share our reserve. The veterans, they got a piece of land right on the reserve instead of getting land outside of the reserve.

Tony: These were white people?

Joe: But these were white people that got the other piece of land, about 6 by 8 I think they got, you see. So this land was sold and this was given to the white people. But the land was

related again to the reserve, you see, 'cause our land was about 8 miles long by 6 miles wide, you see. So then we moved. Then our reserve is only, I think it was 15 miles long. Now we only had 8 miles long and 6 miles wide right now, you see. So then the land, when the soldiers came back, well what was given to them. They had a quarter section here, a quarter section there, right on the reserve. They never got no land outside the reserve. What they were promised to get, they never got that you see. So that belonged to the Indians, the veterans, you see. Now we are fighting it again right now. These days yet we are still working at it and we don't get nothing out of it.

Tony: You have a claim in still for that?

Joe: Yes, we still have a claim for it but we never got nothing out of it. But all we had was our own reserve, you see, given to us - well, here is your quarter, here is your land. You farm that and that's all. Well, people didn't have no machinery or anything. They had to go out and rent it out or lease it out to some white people to farm in there, you see. They could get a share out of there, of their quarries, you see.

Tony: So they ended up really getting nothing?

Joe: Ended up getting nothing, you see. Then we had these things that we were building up, log houses instead of houses we got nowadays you know. Them days they had log houses built up. And just the old people, the elderly people had houses built up, not the families that have big families. They had to make their own. And then they built up these log houses and that is all you seen in them days. No lumber buildings.

Finally the only lumber buildings we had was the Agency there, what we called the Agency where the Indian Agent lived and had a farm right there. See he had his own farm and he raised cattle, horses, pigs and chickens, and then he was the big shot, you see. But he didn't buy nothing from the... We didn't give nothing but he took the land himself. He had to get the money from the reserve, you see. That is how they worked that. Mind you we had rations given out to the old people, the people that didn't have, the retired people that were retired. They only had about, let's see, I figure around about \$8 worth of groceries - rice, bacon, flour, tea and sugar, and lard. That isn't very much, you know. It is not all in one pound or two pounds, three pounds. No it was about, maybe a couple cups of sugar they had. That is for one month.

Christine: For one month?

Joe: For one month! They never had any more. They didn't get in between the 15th or - you know, they had it one month. Every month you know. One time they had beef, you know, poultry, you know, so they...that is just what they got.

Christine: Well, how did they live then?

Joe: Well, they had to work.

Christine: Even the old people?

Joe: Even the old people had to manage how to save something what they had, you see. But they were wise, you see. They had their gardens and stuff like that that they prepared all summer for in the winter time because it is going to be hard. They knew how to survive, how to look after the things they had prepared for the winter in order to have enough things to eat, you see. Like when they, somebody butchers they give you some meat, you know. Well they dry that meat and save it, kept on saving it until, you know... Berries, pick all of the berries, and mix up all kinds of jam and stuff like that you know. Flour was, well, of course at that time everything was cheap, you see. We didn't have to pay, well, flour, maybe if you buy a dollar's worth of flour, well, you have quite a bit of flour. But nowadays you can't even buy a teaspoonfull or cupful of flour. You pay the amount of money they want for your tea and your sugar and the milk, you know. And they also had cattle. They raised cattle and these cattle - they made butter. They made all kinds of things with milk, you see, cheese and all that, you know. Sure, they were wise. They had their dugouts in there and they made their cellars, you know. That is where they put their vegetables, their grub, during the summer time and they used to put ice in there and it never melted all summer pretty near, way late, you see. But that was their deep-freeze. That is what they called their deep-freeze. Now they open up the door and they have berries. And some even had baskets, birch baskets, where they put all of the berries in, and they shook the basket and they digged a hole in somewhere in the bush and left it there. And whenever they want to eat berries, well, they go and pick it up and dig it out, you know.

Christine: Was there much hunting?

Joe: Well, there was lots of hunting. That is why I say we were never short of meat or anything like that because at the time where we lived everything was plentiful. It was just like a paradise, everything was full and everything. No poison in the fields. Now you can't pick berries; you get poisoned.

Nowadays, if we was to go out and dig seneca root and seneca root was something that was... They sell a lot of that, you know, to make money out of it. And if somebody had \$50 or \$100, oh, that would last them pretty near a year, the amount of money that it was worth then, you see. Nowadays - today you spend that \$50, \$100 in - it wouldn't even fill up your pocket. Yeah, a lot of things happened. What we lived on...

And as I said about the religion, when the people came, when the missionaries came in and back to our people and they went right through up north and went down and travelled and travelled. This is all they done you see. They didn't have their missionaries sitting in one place, you see. They just went on and the more people they had, the more... If you had more people than they had, well, they'd say it was your fault, you see, you didn't work it out.

Tony: You said a little while ago, before we started recording, that you had been brought up as a Roman Catholic, all right? But also you said that you had lived a traditional life at the same time. Could you explain how you did that?

Joe: How we did this, because my parents were strong believers, you know. They were faithful with their religion and their way of life. They respected the old way, the way they were brought up, you know, the way they were told how to do these things. Not only that but, you see, they kept on holding their traditions, you know. How they handle it, it was every day, you see. It is not only tomorrow or day after tomorrow or skip up a couple of months and then come back to it, no, every day was the same you see. They went to church. As far as I know, they went to church; they come back from church; they had their own real life the way they were told, you know. They showed us all these things, how, later on, that we are going to live.

And this I said there, when I could remember when I was small when my mother used to chase me down to go and see an old lady and an old man with a dish of food, you know. And me, I was scared, you know, because maybe this old man or old lady would give me a spanking, you know, or send me away or something like that and mind you them days were people, they were old, old people. They were very, very old people. Some of them were over 100 years old. We hardly see anybody nowadays that is over 100, very few, here and there, you know. But them days, there were old people, you could see those old people, how old they were. Each one of them and how they lived, you know, but they lived in a way that, as I said here, what they had they

shared with each other.

This was one thing about the Indians, they share. They'll give anything they have, not sell, just give it out. If you go in their house, they will feed you. They will give you what they can, you see. Money is nothing to them because money was spent out of lies. It was different because they respect each other, they loved each other and the way we were brought up. This was what my mother used to tell me, "Don't go there, disturb anybody else. If you want to go and visit, go and visit, but don't bring anything home because that is stealing. You are taking this from the other person. They give it to you, well, bring it home." She made damn sure that something was given to us before we could take it home, you know. We could keep it then and use it. But otherwise, if we go out and take something in the yard and take it home, we had to walk back and take this thing and go and give it to this person that it belongs to, these things, you know. That is the way we were brought up. And also, all we had was to be friendly.

We had a tipi mostly all of the time, you know. That is where we lived, too, in the summer time. But we didn't live very much in the winter time in the tipi but as far as I know we always lived in the shack, you know. Well, it is a healthy place where we lived. We were healthy and happy because nothing worried us. There was no hospitals, there was no taxes, no bosses, nothing. We had a team of horses, and horses always had enough to eat, never starve the horses. And then we drove in miles and miles to go to town, you know, but we lived a good life. I think we lived a good life because our people were honest people and we didn't want us to disturb anybody.

If you have anything, go and give this person. When I was to go and give something to the old lady or the old man I was scared, pushing myself back. And he would look at me, you know, he'd watch me, you know, make sure that I give this, you know, in a good way, not throw it down like you are feeding a dog, you know. He'd watch me close, you know. This old lady would be very old, you know, hardly able to see but she knew, she knew my parents, of course. Now she would go

my ear and I would keep my head out, you know. I didn't want him to touch me, you know. My hand hurt. Then he would say, "Here, my grandchild," whatever relation it was, you know. He would give it to me, "Here, later on in the future you are going to live a long life. I give you this blessing that you will live a long life. You will have children, you will have grandchildren, you will have great-grandchildren. You will have great great-grandchildren, and some more," and so he kept on. I would run out. He would tell me that, it was that, I didn't know what he meant.

This is what I see now. The grey hair I have - that was their cap or hat, whatever they call it - this is my hat. It is just hair. But mind you they said it was there. This is what they are going to give you in the future, that you are going to see and live with it. The blessings I got from these old people, you see, for giving them, feeding them, giving them maybe



clothes, maybe a shirt or something, you know, cloth maybe to the old lady, or tobacco to the old man. Well, this is the gift I got from them. This kept on, you see, kept on.

And when my children grewed up, well, I trained them the same. But then now, on the side now, well they weren't scared about the old people because they seen them. They were travelled. We travelled back and forth all of the time. We were all mixed up all of the time so then they didn't, they weren't so wild as I was, you see. I was a wild man, a kid, you know. But I kept on you see until we started to... until I got married.

And before I got married, some days, you know, you weren't allowed... our people were so strict that we couldn't talk to a girl. We had to hide, you see. And I was growing up and I was to have a maid, you see. First thing, when I was able to work, to make a living, that is the time my parents left me and they said, "We are going out to visit one place here. We'll stay maybe two, three nights. Make sure everything, you work, you sit down, don't run around after your work, nice, stay home." So I did what my mother and dad told me. So they went away. When they come back, they say, "Sunday, this Sunday - you want to hitch up the horses Saturday. You are going to go up to that reserve and get a wife, a woman is given to you." I have never seen this woman. I didn't know who she was, you see. It wasn't a girl, this was a woman. So I had to obey the orders I got from my parents. I had to go to these things.

Tony: How old were you?

Joe: I was about 21 or 22 I think. Then I had to do these things. I had to obey my parents. So Sunday - Saturday came and my brother came into the house and says to my mother, " I am going to take my brother out to get his new wife." That was the marriage already, see. I got to go and get the bride. I had never seen her, never talked to her, I didn't know who she was. I just had to bloody well go and get her. I got all packed up in the wagon and I went out.

Christine: Where was she at?

Joe: At Whitefish Lake. From Mistawasis to Whitefish. It was the chief's daughter, you see. My father-in-law's name was "Pa-pee-win". That was the Indian name, Frank Papeewin his name was. So when we got down there, there was a camp of about six or seven tents there. I had to go and ask - my brother asked, I didn't ask. I says to my brother, "You go ahead and ask them people who she is, where she is at, where the chief lives." So he went and asked where the chief lives. So we drove there. Right away the old people knew, you see. I was coming for their daughter, because they gave their daughter to me. They had never seen me, they didn't know me. But the parents knew each other, you see. But us, we didn't know each other at all. So I got down there - there was no church or anything - I had to get there and get married right away, you see.

Tony: Right on the spot?

Joe: Right on the spot! No delay, nothing. After supper, she came in and I had to sleep.

Christine: So there was no ceremony?

Joe: No ceremony, nothing. Just went right to bed. I was scared. First time I had slept with a woman. I didn't know. And she was just...like the old people would send me out, you know, and things like that. And I kept rolling one places and wouldn't even talk to her. She was the same, she didn't know who I am. But finally in the morning when we got up, she woke me up, she says, "Get up and have some breakfast." She was already finished up the breakfast. So we got up and we had breakfast together and my brothers had theirs too.

Tony: How old was she?

Joe: Oh, she was older than I am. Older. Because she had one kid already, you know. Her husband left and left her and so that is how I got her, you see. Then finally we started to talk to each other, you know. We had to try to meet each other, the way we were going to be wife and husband, you know. Yeah, sure. But we got to a point that we had to come back. I didn't want to stay there, people staring at me, looking at me, she's their daughter. And my brothers and them, there was another guy that we went with, you know, they laughed at me all the way, joking, you know, and this and that. And here I was sitting there with this woman, you know, new wife. But, you know, when we got down home, I had a new tent ready already, set up a new tent, all my, our dishes, pots and everything, blankets were there. My mother prepared everything. We went out, you see. She had quite a lot of things herself, you know, brought back with her. Then I lived with her till she died, you know. That was my first wife.

So was the second one here. I lived in Mistawasis, she lived in Sturgeon Lake. She's a Sioux. I never talked to her. We never talked together like this although I used to see her lots of times, but I never used to talk to her, you know. All of a sudden, it was our children now, it wasn't our parents, it was our children that wanted us to get married. Now, you see, the opposite way. So she had little ones. My kids - my first wife died and she left me little ones, you see, two little ones there. I couldn't afford to look after them day and night, you see, because I had to work, I had to get something for them to eat. But this way they wanted me to get married to this woman, a widow. We made up and since then we got married and it is just over 30 years since we lived together, a happy life, and raise up our children on both sides. They are brothers and sisters, they are just like one family. They don't ever quarrel about your kids are doing this and that, I never said nothing. She gives them what she has got and my children, I give them what I got from her children. They all call me dad, they all call her mom, you know. So we were always happy. And

I leave her now for a whole week. Now for three weeks. Next year it will be four or five I will be away all together.

Christine: Is that the way it was mostly done back then? The marriage was arranged by the parents?

Joe: By the parents, yeah. Most of them by the parents. They would decide who you were going to get married to. Who you were going to have. If he was a good worker, well the parents, they watch how the young people, you see, if they want to have a son-in-law, they will pick up a son-in-law who is a good worker so their daughter won't suffer, you know. And the same with the woman, you know. The woman, the parents would watch the woman, how she acts, how, if she is a good girl, the parents will go and buy this woman. But mine, they didn't buy me this woman, they just made arrangements that we get married together.

Tony: Was there normally an exchange of gifts or anything of this nature?

Joe: No, not on my way. But some others I guess, some other people used to do that, you know. But in my days, we didn't have no exchange of anything, gifts or a horse or tipi or anything like that, it was just getting married. We stayed together all of our lives, we worked together and raised up our family, had five children, or eight children, but three died and there are still five kids living here. And they have big families. As I said, we going to have them, all written in the book so I can know their names.

Tony: How many grandchildren?

Joe: Over seventy grandchildren, the last time I - about 2 years ago, about 71 grandchildren, 34 are great-grandchildren, 9 great-great-grandchildren.

Tony: That is a lot of names to remember.

Joe: There are so many names to remember. I call one of my grandsons there, he is a little baby, I'm going to call this Gilligan. By Joe, that Gilligan, he is a little beggar! I'm his grandpa . Everybody called him Gilligan, you know. Oh, he is just as bad as Gilligan on the TV there. I said, "Never sleep under the bed with Gilligan. He will run over you," I said. Oh, we still have lots of things like that, you know. We name our kids different, we like it. Maybe my brother-in-law or my sister-in-law... oh, it is a way of life you know. We call our children, call them grandpa, grandma, you see they are little kids. Because we love them, you see, that is why we treat them. They sure miss me when I am not home, you know. Every one of them come in and as soon as they see me, they run to me and kiss me you know, "Grandpa, Grandpa!". This is my great-grandpa, they call me that is my great-grandchild, in Cree, you see, but the short way. For all of

the great-grandfathers that is how they used to say it, you see. It is a lot of these things, you know, you can always mix it up a little bit in Cree and a little bit in English, you know, translated so you know what that means, you see. Like "chapun" means my great-grandson, you see, and then you can translate it in English.

Christine: You didn't go to school but your children did, eh?

Joe: My children did, yeah. They all went to school, all of them went to school.

Christine: To residential school?

Joe: No, different schools, you know. Some of them went to boarding school, some of them went to other in town, in the city, in towns, like, you know. They are all mixed schools. They have the big school in Sturgeon there. You ever go to Sturgeon Lake? Oh, they got a wonderful school there, you know, great huge school. Central School they call it. I was there at the opening, I opened up the side of the school there, you know. It is an awful big school. They have a big gym there. They have everything modern, you know, classes and rooms where they have everything. Mostly all Indian teachers they have, but they are well trained you know. This is what we should have had a long time ago, you see. Maybe I would have been a teacher or a priest!

Tony: Even though you didn't go to school, you speak very good English. How did you learn to speak English?

Joe: I guess I had to try to learn how to talk English when I was working amongst the white people. I used my finger to point out the things that I wanted on the table. There was no "Give me the coffee, give me the tea, sugar," like that. I had to point what I wanted you see. My fingers were no good, I had to use my tongue. Mind you, where I worked for a guy there for eight years at the farm - of course not a steady eight years because I had to go home and back and forth, you know. But I worked for this guy, for one farmer there for eight years. He is a Hungarian. Him too, you know, he had broken English, you know, English was poor so we matched together, him and I. It didn't matter what we said, we had to learn each other anyway. But he was a good guy. He died last year. He was a good friend of mine. One day he told me he was in a rush to go to town for a repair, you know, and I had to get in the tractor. I never used to use a tractor, but I went on that tractor, pulling on everything you know, trying to start the tractor. Finally I started it. I learned myself how to, he never showed me nothing. Let Joe go on that tractor, on the disc. I had the disc behind me. Good thing I didn't jump off of the back. I did it. Once I started the tractor, well, that was it. When I watched, with the lever I changed shifts, you know, then I done it. Then after a while, there was nothing to it. It was like holding a horse on horseback, you know, pulling the lines. That is the way I was.

Tony: Did you teach yourself to read and write too?

Joe: Yeah, I sure did. Yeah, I sure tried to learn myself how to read and write, you know. But I had all the spelling I had to do and it was hard, you know. And yet today, any hard words I can't pronounce them, you know, the way it should be pronounced but the way it sounds like. I'd say, like for instance, my wife wanted to say Hutterite and she has broken English too. You can't talk good English, you know. But they call them Hutterites, you know, "houserights". So we know when the Hutterites are coming to the house, the "houserights are in." All of these things. I am telling you we had a hard time.

(End of Side A)

That word that was written in there, I could know it is a word, so I know what it means, and if I am going to study it myself, I learned myself through that, you see. So that you take and match, you see, the numbers to the other. I used to watch the boxes or something, you know, like matches, you know, and all that. This is where I got my experience on reading and writing, you see.

Tony: What did you have to do, wait until somebody said what it was?

Joe: No, no, I would take a pencil and draw the letters, you know. And then I would keep these things, you know. Maybe my writing was poor but still I would keep all of these things, you know. And when I hear something, I would try to find out from a book or a box or something like that. I understood myself what it meant, you see.

Tony: How long did all of that take you ?

Joe: Oh, it took quite a few years, yeah. Took me a long time.

Christine: Was there a reason that you never went to school?

Joe: Well, it was the parents you see. They didn't want us to know, to understand the white people's way, I guess, because they were brought up in their own traditions, the way they were brought up too, you see. I guess that is the reason why they didn't want to let us go to school. They thought, maybe if we go to school, the white people would take us away and we would never see them, you see, like that. You see, all of these things, they were very particular that you were their children, raise their children for themselves, by themselves.

Christine: Did the Indian Agent try to make them send you to school?

Joe: No, they didn't.

Christine: They left you alone?

Joe: Yeah, they left us alone. There was a lot of us that didn't go to school in that reserve at Mistawasis. Lots, yeah. But it was the missionaries that came in and forced us, you know, and kept us, and kept taking the kids away from the parents, you see. Some of them didn't ever ask the parents. They just took them and grabbed them. And with the farm instructor, see, they were so scared about...for the agent, you know. They never asked permits or anything like that to let the child, they just...they were running around like this and everything, I was lucky enough to be out of it like, you know, I didn't have to be taken away by the white man and taken to school you see. I am glad, the way the people are talking about the schools now that they were - how they suffered, you know, and getting lickings. And they weren't able even to say anything, to squeal on the teachers or the priests or the nuns, since the nuns were the worst ones - I think that - about lies. I think they are the biggest sinners. I always say they are the biggest sinners because they should have children like anybody else. This was given to us. This is why the Indians get married and raise children, the power given to them to be mothers. Raise children, like the grass and all of the trees come up, it is nature, you know. My mother, why shouldn't we believe it and not believe, like, what we believe in, that this is why we have this faith that we have. And there is a spirit that gives us the power, the blessings to raise our children, how to raise our families.

Tony: You now do a lot of spiritual teaching, eh?

Joe: Yeah, I do a lot of spiritual teachings, yeah. Because I have a pipe, I have a sweetgrass, I have the other gifts that I can present to the Great Spirit and spiritually, I always have my faith in it. I don't drink. I have been a drunk one time but then I seen it was no good to me. It didn't do me any good, disturbing people and bothering people. Finally one day I just said, "It is no more, finished!" I didn't have to go to AA and get teachings from them, I just went ahead and said no. And today I can say no, yet that is thirty years now. It will be thirty years in August. I am always happier. I can meet more people this way than when I was drinking because I was just a bum when I was drinking. I bummed from everybody ten cents, five cents, a nickel, a dime, or a quarter or a dollar. You see this person, he should be using this money to feed these children. I drank up all of that money from other people. When I found that out I says, "that is the end of it." I drank a lot of money that is wasted. Now I got, see, my money, I know where my money goes today. My fridge is always filled up with groceries, enough to eat all of the time. Also we are just alone, me and the wife, but since a year, over a year, one of our daughters come in and brings up the children, the weekends, you know, and come and do the work for Mom. Because she is getting old and she can't do everything now but she helps her, doing cleaning up, all of the washing, all of the everything. We have a house where we live. We have a cookstove, we have a woodstove, because why is it that I have this woodstove? I make a fire and burn my sweetgrass.

Electricity I can't do it, you see. We had a new stove, a nice big stove but I gave it away. I didn't want it. This way I can use the stove, the charcoals, when I want some fire you see. We burn wood that was given to us to use. Fire, the real fire.

Tony: When you were drinking then, you obviously weren't pursuing a spiritual life then?

Joe: Well, I wasn't you see.

Tony: Then you went back to it?

Joe: Then when I went back to it, I still hold it now you see.

Tony: When did you get your pipe then, Joe?

Joe: I had this pipe over sixty years now. I got one here but not the one I always use. The real pipe, you know, for special occasions, where some special ceremonies where I use it, you see. I also have my beadwork for dancing, warbonnet, eagle feathers that I just passed on this year to people. They need the blessings of the eagle feathers. My friend where I get gifts from him, you see, and these gifts I get are really something that a person had to understand. He can't just get it and say, here, you have just dreamed something, well maybe you dreamed something, oh, something you have never seen, or just sat and dreamed something very seriously. You want to know, you want to understand, but there it is, you see. Then it disappears, you see. Never again it comes back to you. When you get a gift or a power, a power comes in all of the time, and you dream that, and you can even hear the spirits talking to you but you can't see them. That is how precious this is, the things that we do, you see. And a person has to be clean. Always have the sweetgrass. They allow the sweetgrass every morning and every night. And at home, too, I have this wall where I have my blanket with this five eagle feathers with the sweetgrass tied up and we smoke this all of the time. And I have two eagles, one big one and one small one. That was given to me, I never bought them, they just came to me, you see. How strong the eagle is with me, you see. And lots of times I cure people with this, with this friend of mine, you see. Well I don't say I am a doctor, that I am a medicine man, I don't want to say that because I honestly respect the gifts I have. I want to spread it out you see.

Tony: Do you have, in the practice of your spirituality, do you have many dreams or many visions?

Joe: Well, quite a few, yeah. But they all come, it is all connected in one way, like, so I can understand these visions, the dreams I have. And lots of times people come to me and ask me about these dreams they have, scary or not scary or they don't know why. I can pretty near tell right away what caused this dream they have or a vision or something like that.

Tony: Are you able to talk about some of your own visions or

your own dreams?

Joe: Not that, no.

Tony: You can't talk about that. Okay.

Joe: It is, it is nice you know. That is one thing I was told by the spirits not to pass it on or spread it on. I am not a doctor you know, a medicine man. I use a lot of medicine though, but I don't want to say I can cure a person no matter how sick he is. There is ways that he comes back and I look after him, you see.

Christine: You were telling us before that you came up here in 1919?

Joe: 1919. When I came in here in Waterhen, we lived across the lake here, south end, and we were on the north end, but we had a store across the lake here on the south end of the lake. And then it was 1919 when we first put up the store here. The Gladeau's, cousins of mine, their name is Gladeau, they came in four wagons from Mistawasis up there, and all of the groceries and, oh, we had a lot of stuff that we brought in here, you see. At that time, that was the time that the groceries were cheap, you know. But we had lots - in four wagons we could load up a hell of a lot - and we travelled from Mistawasis, took over ten days to come down here. And we travelled by wagons and rough roads, no roads, and we had to cross the rivers and creeks, and not wide rivers like the Saskatchewan but small rivers, you know. You know how they are around the bush country. That is how they were you know. Them days they had no road allowances, nothing.

Christine: No roads at all, eh?

Joe: No roads, well there was roads, you know. They built up for wagons but they were just narrow enough for a wagon in places. It was so rough and the roads...on the roads, you know, trees fallen and we had to cut them, go down, get off of the wagon to open up the road. Sometimes there was a heavy wind, big trees you know, and then we have no saw, well, we had to use an axe to cut the timber out of there, off the road, you see. And we never had time to build up bridges, you know, cause sometimes we would be up where it was very, very soft, you know, cause we would get stuck, and then cut up willows and just pile them and we went through this rough muskegs. There were some awful bad roads. But we made it right from Mistawasis through Big River, Big River to Meadow Lake, Meadow Lake to here, you see.

Then we built up a house there. The house wasn't ready, we had to build up a house here and after we finished up the house, well we had to fence, you know. We put up our house in no time. In two or three days it was finished already. There were a bunch of us, you know. So this way, that is how we come to build up this place here, like, you know. So then my brothers stayed here, you see. They moved from Mistawasis to here, you



see. But I went back in the winter time and we made a sleigh. You couldn't take the wagons back home but we made a sleigh with runners with birch, you know. And they put these cross-pieces and we made like a rack, you know. Put a little frame in it and we put our stuff in there and away we went. We went home like that.

Tony: Quite a journey.

Joe: It was, you know.

Christine: Was it easier with the sleigh than with the wagon?

Joe: Well it was, you see. Then we went right through Meadow Lake, across the lake, and here, and all that, you know, well it was easier. Of course from here on, you see, the road was more better than the other place coming down, you see. This was an old road. Those traders, you know, used to go up back and forth, you know. Oh, the roads were bad, places there we got stuck. In lots and lots of places we got stuck when we have to lift up everything or unload. It was lots of work. I got tired of it, and before we got here... and by the time we got here, I was getting sick of it you know.

Christine: Were you already married then?

Joe: No, I wasn't married then. I was sure glad when we went back home. That was the time already that the man was standing here. In all them old days all the old people were here already on this reserve, but we lived across the lake, you see. There was a few cabins there, log houses, but on the reserve there was more people on this side you see. And then that little man was standing there on the hill already.

Christine: Which little man?

Joe: You didn't see him up there on the hill yet? You better go and see him there. I give him gifts you know.

Tony: What hill? Just over here?

Joe: Just down here, yeah. The last hill there by the lake. The last hill, by the graveyards, the next hill there.

Tony: The one past the graveyard.

Joe: Yeah, past the graveyard, yeah.

Tony: We'll go and look.

Joe: Yeah, you'll see all kinds of gifts, tobacco and presents there.

Tony: We'll take some tobacco.

Joe: Yeah, yeah. That has been there for years before we came in here, before I came in here. And then I see these old

people that were here, they were old already and they said that was there a long, long time before they were born, I guess. I don't know. And yet it is still standing. Even me, about 60, around 50-60 years that, since I first seen it, you know. That is a long time.

Tony: You called it the little man, the little old man. What is it?

Joe: Well, it is a narrow old man that helps people to have, I can't really express the way they say it. But Lawrence will have better thinking of telling you why they have that little man. He has got more English than I got - so.

Christine: Does it have a name?

Joe: No, I don't know. I don't think so. They just call it the man, you know. Now, for instance, if the priests or other religions or other denominations would see this, and see all of the gifts he has got there, would say they worship their god. They might say that is their god, you see, but it is not. But sure enough, that thing that made you...it will make you surprised. Yeah.

Tony: We will make an offering when we go.

Joe: Yeah, you got to make an offering. You stand there. It is a dummy but, you know, I tell you he moves over the...he wants you to do it, you have to move, you know. He is powerful, you know. You can't play with it or make jokes out of him, you know.

Tony: Joe, what do you know about the medicine wheels?

Joe: I was up at Moose Mountain last year about this time, and I was there with some young people. They wanted to learn about this place here. And as I was told... it must have been over 400 years there is a medicine wheel there at Moose Mountain. So before we went up there we had a pipe ceremony down the hill, before we entered this hill, you see. Then we had some presents, tobacco, that we presented up there. That was given to me to present to the offering there where the people used to do their ceremonies, different tribes I guess, you know, not only Indian people but I guess Ojibway and all other tribes they had there, they used to go there.

And it is a circle where the stones were piled in the middle. It is a huge pile of stones and down in, it is like a basin, a hollow, you know, and the remains of these too sit right there. And then they have the four - the east, south, north, and the west - they have these four long rows of stones piled up, you see. They are not piled up, you see, they are just put in rows. And yet you can see them, you know. They are not covered or anything like that.

But there has been some people been taking some stones out of there, so this place is very closely watched now. The guy that

looks after that place will take you down but he watches you not to take any...gives you advice not to touch anything there is in there. So it is protected now, you see. Before they used to go there and pick the stones because they were holy or something like that, precious, you know. They used to do their ceremonies in the summer time and pray there, you know, give their offerings for the summer and this is how they... They loved this medicine wheel. Otherwise, after that I don't know what they do, you know, but that is what I was told. But I seen the place, the real medicine wheel. I have some pictures at home but I should never leave these pictures, I should always carry them to show the people, the young. Now for instance here, you see, that is something that the children would be very interested to understand that they exist. And where I was standing, not only taken of somebody else, but where I was standing and where I had my pipe ceremony with these young people. This is all taken cause I told them to take the pictures because we want to have the proof that it was done, you see, and be shown to other people, to other young people.

Christine: What are the short spokes for? The shorter ones. You said there was the four directions and then there is some smaller spokes.

Joe: This is, these are the paths, the long paths, or the paths that they travelled, you know. You're going to travel a long, long life, like. It is a life movement, like. This is your life. You see you are going to follow these trails. You see you're going to go there and there. Some trails you gonna go, you're not going to go very far; some trails you are going to go a long ways. These are the four long rows. You see, the trails are, you are going to follow, like. They are straight, you see. The four corners are straight. And the short ones. There are some shorter than that you see. It is a circle, you see. You see, you take...for instance, you are going from your home, you are going to start from your home, you are going through a long ways, a long journey. These are the directions you are going to follow. Maybe you are going to go a short distance and these are the shortest, and how they made these directions. Protections like, the guidance that you are going to follow. If you are going to go, you ask the Great Spirit to help you, or the gods, "Here, I am going to go on a journey, I am going a long ways, help me, keep me, direct me to a straight line so I will come back again. Nothing will happen to me." That's why they made these things, you know. But they used to follow them.

They went into the entrance from the south where they put their offerings. They was to go down by the entrance of the south and the east. Where the sun comes up, they would go in. It is always - mostly every ceremony you have is from the east first where, then, it comes from the south, west, north is always the last, you see. This is why, when we circle up our pipes, it is always the way the sun goes. You'll point up to heaven, where God is, to keep your mind who you are asking to. It is the same in the church. The priest then looks up and says to God, lifts

up his hands maybe. Well he wants the power to come down, the Great Spirit to come down and help him too. With us nothing is written. There is no Bible, there is nothing written in our language. When we pray, it is all here, you see, and it is all passed on. You can have about eight elders praying together who are all different. They are talking about the same thing but they are all different way of praying but it is all in one.

Tony: But they each say their own prayer?

Joe: Yeah, each say their own prayer, and they don't miss it. Everything you hear, this other guy or this other guy on the other side, what he is saying, well, you don't follow him. You say your own prayer and you don't make a mistake. Yeah, you want to follow the way he is talking he will beat you, and you can't catch him up what he is saying you know. You have to follow your own way whether it is loud or low, whatever, it doesn't matter how it is. That is all the things that we do, you see. Thank you.

And, for instance, like, we digged the medicine from Mother Earth. Medicine never fades, it is always there. It's always there. You go next year and dig and it comes up every year the same thing. But people have to understand because our medicine is so strong. You would think that all the roots are all the same but they are not. They are all different medicine, I grow the herbs, everything is different and no matter how much you drink, how much you use, you will never get poisoned. You go to the doctor, the doctor will give you pills. You take that in two hours, three hours, one pill or two pills every hour or every four hours, and if you take more, you are gonna get poisoned. You get sick, you get worse than getting cured. But you can drink a whole pot of medicine in one day and never get sick. The more you drink, the more it keeps you healthy. This is one thing that the doctors ask too, you know, a lot of them. One doctor asked me about medicine, here, he wants to pay me so many hundreds of dollars, and I said, "No! You can't have it." I said, "No, I will never sell my medicine because it is so precious, it's the gift we have, it is ours. I am not getting no money, I don't make money from what Mother Earth gave me," I says, "I won't." And they couldn't do nothing to this person and Indian medicine cured this person, so I believe in it and I use it. To sell, I can't do it. It was forbidden to sell our Mother Earth, or the Creator, what He gave us you see.

Tony: You lived off of the reserve, away from Mistawasis for a long time, then you went back. Why did you go back?

Joe: Well, the reason why I went back, you see, I was fourteen years in Prince Albert there, lived right in the city. One day I had this vision like, you know, somebody telling me to go back, to stay where I belong. What was given to me, you go back and look how beautiful your land is. Hear the birds, hear everything, you see everything. In the city you go out - here in this place where you are, you go out - all stone. You go just a little ways and on the other side there is somebody, on

the other side there is somebody, behind you there is somebody, in front of you there is a road, things going like this. You can't move. You hear all of this noise all the time, day and night. Over there you will have it easy. You are going to live the way that was given to you. So when I woke up in the morning, I says to the wife, "Let's get ready; let's get the hell out of this place. Let's go and move where we have plenty of land, where we can move around, where we can see everything what Mother Earth gave us. You can hear the birds, ducks, all these things to look at. The sky... here we can't even see the sun. How many days sometimes we don't see the sun because we are covered up in the house or it is in the dark. We are always in the dark." I said. "There it will be bright all of the time. We will have fresh air. We won't hear too much noise moving back and forth. We won't disturb anybody, neighbours. We'll have a nice place to stay, make a fire outside, burn the wood, the smell of the wood and it smells good," I said. So we moved out the same day. Yeah, it didn't take us long. "To hell with the rent," I said.

Tony: What was it like at the reserve when you got back?

Joe: I was so happy. Everybody came to us as a friend you know. They helped us a lot as soon as we got back there and later on in the night. The same year that I moved in there in the fall, the same fall we started up our Indian Resistance you know. We had our sweat and this is where we started and it is still there. All winter, all summer, it is always there.

Tony: So until you went back, there wasn't anything there.

Joe: 'Til I went back there wasn't anything there. Antoine can tell you the same thing, there wasn't anything there 'til I went back on the reserve. I was the one who put up all this life again, woke up the people, the young generation. Out of the other half we have more people, like, this year. When I think of it, it is a blessing, you know, that we have our way of life that grows up again, wakes up, and waking up the people, that we are glad to join together, pray together, nobody bothers us. A lot of people... our sacred grounds there, see all those sweat lodges there, nobody ever tries going there and play with it, make fun out of it, nobody. Out of there, they don't understand nothing. They are just like white people, they don't understand nothing and yet they don't bother. Drunks go past there and just go on and they don't bother. They never had a drunk in our camp, you know. Sometimes we spend there a few days, you know. Together kids play and us, we have our ceremonies, pipe ceremonies, and we talk together and we are always happy, you know. We take grub in there and feed us and we eat all together and have a real feast, you know, after it is open. It takes a little work too, you know. Not only that, we have to make up our - fill up our camp, you know, and then we have to unload them again and go back home. Then we are always happy. We are always happy, I think it is a way of life that was given to us. I think we should be able to try to keep it and teach the young people more about it, that there is something that will keep us alive,

you know, in order to see our young children understand their culture. Because most of my grandchildren don't talk their language, but me, when I see them, I talk to them in Cree. I don't care if they don't understand. They just look at me, stare at me, and I tell them, "Yeah, you are no good." But they repeat that word that I said, they will repeat it. But they don't know what it means, you know, but their parents will tell them, you know.

Tony: You are also a senator of the F.S.I.

Joe: I am also a senator of the F.S.I. and I work with the Culture College in Saskatoon. I have been there for three years now.

Tony: What do you do there?

Joe: I do the counselling there for people that come in there, counselling about the lives. Some people have troubles, they come in. Like the young people while they are going to school, they have no way of starting up themselves. They don't know what to do. Some drunks or something like that, they have trouble at home, you know, they come in and have a talk with me and I tell them this is the way you should have your life or trying to understand the culture you had and been made, and you better go back on the reserve or stay there and try to make a living out of yourself 'cause there is nobody here will help you if you are stuck, or something like that, you know. Well, give them a hand, or anyway I can give support to the people, you know.

And I go to the schools, lots of schools. We have been through with Smith and I and Lizette, you know, talking to the kids there, and sometimes I wear my regalia there to show the people, the young children, what we have, you see, what culture we have, what is our culture. That hides, you see, it is all buckskin, you see, the bead work the wife makes. This is how we live, like, moccasins, war bonnets. I even got the eagle staff, what it says it is our flag, like, Indian flag. This is the main thing, we don't carry this for nothing, you see. This is something very precious too, like a peace pipe. When the grand entry comes in in a pow-wow, well, you see somebody using - holding this eagle staff. That is very, very important. It is how you live and how it was given to you. You don't just grab and make one like that, everybody would have it. It was made to use for, you know, for show or like that, for... but it's not, we respect that just the same as a peace pipe.

Tony: What sorts of things do you do as a Senator?

Joe: Well, when we have our meetings, like these conferences we have, we gotta sit there with the chiefs you see. We are about 12 or 14 senators, when we gather up. We sit beside the chiefs, you know, and the chiefs talk all they want, you see, up there, what they gotta say there. And everything is written and taped and after the meetings is over we have a special meeting there. We gather up and we decide if it is a good

thing they are talking about. Well, we decide whether to take it or not, you see. They have to decide the way we tell them. We tell the chiefs, "This is the way you should go at it and this is the way it has got to be run." So they can't do it the way they want, you see, they have to follow us. All these experiences that the old people have, they are the old senators, so they have to follow the rules. If I go there and tell them this is the way how things work, it was put in the Indian Act and all of that, you see, all this - they have to follow our way of approaching the senators before they decide everything you see.

Christine: What did you advise them about the Constitution? Did they ask your advice?

Joe: Well, they have, you see. Then we decide this, you see, how it is going to work, the Indian government, all of these things we planned. We have more meetings quite often. The senators have their meetings, you see, and then we decide how they are going to handle this. Although they are chiefs, they still can't just bloody well do the things they think they can do, you see. They are smart, well-educated boys but there is a lot of things... They make a mistake, they got to just watch themselves, they are just going to be bought from the government. The government will buy them if they are too damn smart and they are going to make a hell of a lot of money, but they are going to spoil the other people, they are going to harm, you see. This is why we are trying to keep that thing off from the government. We got to fight the government in order to get the things we want, you see, because we didn't sell anything over six inches of ground. That is just the surface of the ground that we sold, that we gave, not anything any deeper. We should get that, you know.

Tony: The mineral rights?

Joe: Yeah, that is what we should get, you see, but we don't get even that now, you see. Everything the government takes a hold of.

Christine: Was that a misunderstanding then at the treaty?

Joe: Well, that must have been a misunderstanding. Now you see, now...

Christine: The old people said that when the treaties were signed that that is all there was?

Joe: That's all there was, yeah, nothing. You see they wanted the land, just to farm the land, not to take any more. If there is - if there is anything, we will give it to you. It is yours. We are not buying that, it is yours. But we never seen this. We don't have that. Look at all the factors, look at all of the minerals, all of the big money they are making, digging the land, gravel, all the things in the water they take out. Now today they haven't got anything. The fish, the fur,

it is all taken away from us. We have to follow the rules, what the government puts in, we have to follow all of these rules. We can't even trap anytime we like. We can't even shoot a duck anytime we want, can't even fish anytime we want, we have to sneak in and try to find something to eat. If we get caught, we pay just the same as anybody else. But this is what we are trying to stop now, you see. There is a lot of things that we were entitled when they first made up their treaties and now it is all dead, it has all changed, you see. I wish I could be able to read and write and tell them this is the way you got to do it, 'cause in my own language I tell them off, because I have a better chance to say what I want to say in my own language. But this way you know, it is hard on me, you know.

Tony: It is sort of an unfair advantage that the government has. That everything is in English, and not in the native languages.

Joe: Not in the native language, yeah.

INDEX TERM	INDEX		DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
	IH NUMBER				
AGRICULTURE					
-farming	IH-122		DUQUETTE	4	2,3
CEREMONIALISM					
-paraphernalia			DUQUETTE	4	25
CHILDREN					
-raising of			DUQUETTE	4	9,10
CONTAINERS AND UTENSILS					
-for food			DUQUETTE	4	7
DISEASE AND ILLNESS					
-influenza			DUQUETTE	4	4
EDUCATION					
-attitudes toward			DUQUETTE	4	15,16
EDUCATION					
-self-taught			DUQUETTE	4	14,15
ELDERS					
-in political organizations			DUQUETTE	4	27
FAMILY					
-care of elderly			DUQUETTE	4	8,9
FOOD					
-preservation of			DUQUETTE	4	7
FOOD					
-rations			DUQUETTE	4	6,7
HOUSING					
-log houses			DUQUETTE	4	6
INDIAN AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF					
-Indian Agents			DUQUETTE	4	6
LAND					
-surrenders			DUQUETTE	4	5
MARRIAGE					
-arranged			DUQUETTE	4	10-13
MEDICINE AND CURING PRACTICES					
			DUQUETTE	4	4,5,24



MEDICINE AND CURING PRACTICES				
-and plant remedies		DUQUETTE	4	23
MISSIONARIES				
-attitudes toward		DUQUETTE	4	16
PIPES AND SMOKING				
-sweetgrass		DUQUETTE	4	16,17
POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS				
-Federation of Saskatchewan Indians		DUQUETTE	4	25,26
POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS				
-leadership		DUQUETTE	4	27
POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS				
-provincial		DUQUETTE	4	25,26
POWER				
-from dreams and visions		DUQUETTE	4	17,18
RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY				
-cairns and markers		DUQUETTE	4	20,21
RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY				
-medicine wheels		DUQUETTE	4	21-23

INDEX TERM	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY				
-prayer	IH-122	DUQUETTE	4	23
RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY				
-revival of		DUQUETTE	4	24,25,26
RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY				
-sweetgrass		DUQUETTE	4	16,17
TRANSPORTATION				
-sleigh		DUQUETTE	4	19
TRANSPORTATION				
-wagon		DUQUETTE	4	19
TREATIES				
-treaty rights		DUQUETTE	4	27
VALUES				
-honesty		DUQUETTE	4	9
VALUES				
-respect		DUQUETTE	4	9
VALUES				
-sharing		DUQUETTE	4	9
WORLD WAR I				
-treatment of returning veterans		DUQUETTE	4	5,6

PROPER NAME INDEX

PROPER NAME	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
MISTAWASIS RESERVE, SASK.	IH-122	DUQUETTE	4	5,6
PAPEEWIN, FRANK		DUQUETTE	4	10
WATERHEN RESERVE, SASK.		DUQUETTE	4	18-20