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HIGHLIGHTS:

- account of an earthquake in 1933.  
Evelyn: What was your basic diet?

Elsie: There was no special, special kind of diet. We just go along and eat what we eat every day, like, boiled potatoes, cooking outside, make our tea outside, and build a fire and they put it, like a tin. And then they'd put, on one side they'd boil potatoes and one side they'd boil the water for the tea. Did you ever drink that tea that you make outside? It has that smokey taste to it, is it ever good. (laughs)

Evelyn: What is, how do you make it?

Elsie: Well, just your ordinary tea. Just have a little pail, like that, and put it on that tin and the water boils; just put your, they used to have this loose tea. My grandmother, this is the way she does it. You put one big one in and one little small one. (laughs) She used her hand. That was her measure, one big one and one small one, and it would fill up that little pail. That's the way they do and.... We didn't have too much meat, most, sometimes vegetables. Sometimes we'd eat in town, like, we'd go into town, stay in

town, we eat there in a restaurant. Yeah, it's not always we eat, just when we're, like, go back to the camp. Somebody will go to the store and get some bacon, and eggs, just what you eat here and you cook them outside.

Evelyn: Did you have anything like, anything wild?

Elsie: Oh, once in a while. Once in a while she used to cook raccoon.

Evelyn: How do you make a raccoon?

Elsie: Make it? Well, the men they go looking for it in the bush and they shoot it in the head like, you know, to kill it right away; they don't want to make it suffer. Is that on now? So anyways they see a raccoon up in the wintertime they got nothing to eat, everything is snow all around and they got nothing to eat there. So they go climb up the trees and they eat the bark, the bark off the trees or the buds, like, in the spring of the year. They eat something like that. And, and raccoon is clean, it's a clean animal. It doesn't eat anything dirty, or anything like that. It goes in the water and, you know, at the edge of the water and put his little paws, like this, and feel around, and for roots, whatever he finds in there he pulls it out and he eats, you know, wash everything, wash everything he eats. Clean animal. And it's really good. I've only eaten it about once or twice in my life, but it's, the way my grandmother used to cook it was, she was a good cook for cooking, you know, something like that. She was really good at it.

Evelyn: Did you have any kind of festivals that you celebrated?

Elsie: No. No, not that I know of. I didn't stay long enough anywhere to celebrate anything. (laughs)

Evelyn: So did you celebrate anything within your little group, your family?

Elsie: No. They just live out there wherever they made their camp and this everyday life, one did something, go in the bush and get, get the ash log and maybe, maybe one or two go out and go down to the lake and go for a swim, or maybe they go picking berries. Have berries, somebody would say, all of a

sudden he'd say, "Well, I'm going to go picking berries this afternoon." So that's it, they take off. One goes picking berries and maybe two go to the beach or someplace where there's water, and they go swimming.

Evelyn: So you didn't practice any kind of holidays, anything on a holiday?

Elsie: No.

Evelyn: So you didn't have any, anything special like Christmas, or Thanksgiving, or anything like that?

Elsie: I just had one Christmas story, I told you. That's all I remember at that time. And there was another time I remember we had Christmas. We were living near the track, we rented this old, old house, you know. It was, the flooring and everything was pretty good, but we had to make our own furniture, like, make benches to sit on, and table, and the stove was there. So I remember we didn't have no beds to sleep on. Well, my grandmother and grandfather didn't have none, but on the other side my aunt was living there and her husband and one little girl on the other side, like the next bedroom, but we were all together in one big room, like, in the daytime. But we had a bedroom. We were sleeping on the floor, but we had a mattress, mattress to sleep on. So I remember this Christmas Eve, it was Christmas Eve and my grandmother said, "You better go to bed early tonight." She says, "We don't know when Santa Claus is going to be around," she said. "He might come real early and if he see you around," she says, "he won't drop you anything." (laughs) He wouldn't drop anything, she said, and he'd just go right on, right past, you know. She was just saying that so I'll go to bed early, because, well, (laughs) I had a big long pair of black stockings, I remember,

long ones like this, you know. I put a elastic around there to hold them up.

Evelyn: Oh, up to your thigh eh?

Elsie: Yeah, up to here. Black stocking, there was a great big hole in the toe. (laughs) I wear them every day, every day, when I go out and play on the sleigh, or sleigh riding around. "So you better take the needle and thread," she says, "and you better sew up your stockings." She says, "Anything that Santa Claus puts in there it will come right through," she said to me. I said, "I can't sew. I don't know how to sew," I said to her. So I took the old stocking and I just tied it up at the end there, and then, "Well, where you going to hang it?" she says. "You got to find a place to hang it." "Well," I said, "there's one ash log beside the door. "You know, one ash log, because if you leave outside in the wintertime it will freeze. So they brought it in and they put it near the fire so it won't freeze; so I takes a hammer and a nail and I nailed it on the ash log right near the door. I said, "Well, he won't have very far to look." I says, "He'll see my black stocking there." So, "Yeah," she says, "that's a good place for it." Usually they hang it by the fireplace eh. Well, we didn't have none, so I just hang it near the doorway there, by the ash log. And so the next morning we were sleeping and my grandfather wakes up and, "Merry Christmas," he's hollering. "Merry Christmas," he says to my grandmother. "Merry Christmas," he said to me. "Wake up," he says. "Go look," he says, "Santa Claus must, maybe forgot you. Go see what he, if he drop anything off." I jump out of bed, but before that grandfather always gets up and makes a noise like a crow "caw, caw, caw," you know, just to

startle everybody and you hear this noise and you wake up.  
(laughs) And then he's sitting, sitting up in bed and my

grandmother was always awake too, and she'd just talking to him, talking away together. And I was thinking about the old black stocking, I wondering what I got there. So, "Oh, look what Santa Claus brought me," grandfather said. He had a big bottle of, big bottle of whiskey inside his shoe. (laughs) "Look what Santa Claus brought me," he said. "He put it inside of my shoe," he said. "How did he know I drank?" (laughs) So I gets up and grandmother says, "Oh, look what I got." She had a, she had a, maybe a dozen oranges in an old hat, inside an old hat not, it wasn't a bowl or nothing, it was inside a hat. "Oh, Santa Claus thought about me too," she says. So we all got up and, and I went to look for my, look at my old stocking to see what I got. I seen a little dolly's face, a little doll, she must have brought me a dolly, and candies right down, way down below, candies. (laughs) And, and another thing my grandmother made we wash that old stocking. (laughs) And that's what she was going to do, put the candies first -- she had it all planned, you know, all candies, and then apple, and then more oranges, and then she'd put the dolly on the top; so that was my Christmas gift. Oh, it was all right.

Evelyn: That was only done once, or twice? You didn't do Christmas every year?

Elsie: Oh, no, not that I remember. I guess we travelled around too much and didn't bother to...

Evelyn: So you, your grandparents didn't have any sort of traditional things that they kept every year, or did every year?

Elsie: No.

Evelyn: Did they ever tell you of any stories? Or any traditional stories, or...

Elsie: There was one time my grandfather was talking about when he was alone before he got married, like. He was talking of... And I used to be a good listener, you know, I'm all ears when somebody is talking, or reading stories, or telling stories and I was always listening. So my grandfather he starts to tell this story one time he was, it was in the wintertime. It was before he got married. Instead of going around the road, wherever he was going, he'd know where he was going, but he didn't want, he didn't want to go all the way around so he figured, "I'll cut across the bush." You know, get there maybe next day, or the next day. But that's what he done, he cut across the bush and, you know, he got about halfways in the bush and then, it was in the afternoon like, you know, those short days in the winter time and the wolves, he started hearing the wolves coming towards him. There's

wolves all around there. So anyway he, he dug a hole in the snow and he started a fire on a dry tree, or something like that, on an old pine tree that's been dead, or something like that, and to attract the wolves so they would look at the fire instead of looking for him. There's a whole slew of them, maybe twelve or more. In the middle of the winter, I guess, they're all hungry, they can't find nothing. Poor grandfather, (laughs) God help him if they ever catch him. He was wise. He dug a snow and then after he started the fire so it would attract the, the animals, you know, them wild animals. And it was a dry pine tree, and he got a little bit of paper, or something, he started it, and he lit that up and it started to burn and it's burning all the way up, and he's kind of leaning this way and he went to the opposite side so it won't fall on him when it does fall down. So he was wise, so he started the

fire on this tree. I guess, he was scared too, and he was inside of that little hole that he made and he could see, all he could see is eyes looking at this fire all on that side, all around behind him too. And they're all looking up, like that, looking up at the trees burning all the way to the top almost, and it's burning away by the roots; and he's still in that, hiding in that snow, the snow was like that.

Evelyn: So it was about like, how much? A yard and a half?

Elsie: I'd say about four feet.

Evelyn: Four feet?

Elsie: Four feet of snow. And he was quite a ways from that tree, you know. He heard them coming and he started the fire, and made, made the fire. And then he went and dug in the snow away from, because it will melt, eh, so he went away, far away maybe about, I don't know how, twenty feet, maybe more than that away from that fire. Because when the heat, eh, it would melt the snow. But it was still cold, it wasn't that warm. He wanted to make sure, I guess, that he was far enough away from the tree so it wouldn't melt the snow where he's hiding. You know what I mean? So anyway he was in there hunched up in that little hole he made and he was looking at all these, and they're all, they're all looking at that great big pine tree. And he's staying there and I guess he was scared too, plenty scared. So it's all burning all the way to the top now. It was just about ready to... You could hear it cracking and them old wolves were sitting there watching it, and they see it coming down almost leaning like, you know, it's gonna fall and you can hear it cracking, they're all jumping, you know, nervous, them old wolves. All of a sudden it came down, the

tree. It made a heck of a noise and it fell on top of the snow. And all the wolves they ran away, they took off, they were scared. So when he didn't hear no more noises, they forgot about him, I guess, when they see the fire they never seen anything like that before, I guess, in the bush, eh. So he got up, started walking again, no more wolves, but it come

daylight they don't come out too much in the daylight, because them wolves are scared too, you know, it there's somebody walking around with a gun. So they don't come out that much, only in the evening, at night time, that's when they roam around. So he made his destination finally.

Evelyn: Did he tell you this story?

Elsie: No. He was telling my grandmother, but I was listening, I was there, too. And once in a while I'd, you know, I'd ask him, "Were you scared?" You know, he said, "Yeah, I was scared." But he made his destination, he come out of that swamp and got onto the road. The next day he found the road, he made his destination.

Evelyn: Did you encounter any wild animals yourself when you were in the bushes?

Elsie: How do you mean?

Evelyn: I mean when you, you travelled along, a lot, right, getting ashes and things like that. Did you encounter any wild animals?

Elsie: No, no I didn't. No I didn't.

Evelyn: So you were lucky.

Elsie: (laughs) Yeah.

Evelyn: So, did your grandparents ever sing any Indian songs?

Elsie: No. Not that I know of. I never heard them, but grandfather he used to play the fiddle, violin, you know, after, in the evening, after supper he'd take his violin and play his violin.

Evelyn: But he never sang any tunes to them?

Elsie: No.

Evelyn: So you were not taught any songs at all?

Elsie: Eh?

Evelyn: So you weren't taught any songs?

Elsie: No.

Evelyn: Okay. When was your first encounter of non-natives?

Elsie: How do you mean?

Evelyn: I mean, when was the first time you've met a white man?

Elsie: When was the first time? Gee, I don't even remember. We've always, I didn't, you know, we were always amongst them ever since I can remember. Travel around, go to town and we lived way out, I didn't notice them at all, you know. It wasn't the first time, I don't even remember the first time.

Evelyn: What made you move to Toronto?

Elsie: It's the bright lights. (laughs) You know, we were living out in the country a lot and, oh, everybody is talking about the city, and the big buildings, and street cars, and big stores. And I used to think, "Oh, it must be nice to live in the city and everything is right there handy." (laughs) I was thinking that you have to work and earn your money and stuff like that. We used to come into the city hitch-hiking. We used to come in, my girlfriend and I used to come in and hitch-hike, and come into the city and spend the weekend; she had an aunt living in the city that we used to come and stay with her. We'd stay over the weekend and she'd put us to work making quill work. And like Monday, Monday morning we'd go back, hitch-hike back to Orillia again.

Evelyn: Orillia?

Elsie: Yeah. See we'd come into Toronto from Orillia. We were from Orillia, Rama Reserve.

Evelyn: Rama Reserve is from, is Orillia?

Elsie: Well, just across the lake, yeah, seven miles the other side of Orillia.

Evelyn: So what was your first impression when you came to Toronto?

Elsie: Well, there was nothing, you know. I've been around, you know, with my grandfather in my younger days. And I just wanted to see what it was like, you know, to come back to the

city again and... It was very nice -- I kind of liked it. We were riding street cars, them old, old street cars. We used to call them, now what do you call them? Trams, or something like that. They are wooden ones and the seat was hard, the seat was "biggity bang, biggity bang" and we'd go in rough places and gee, you're bouncing all over in your seat. There was really no springs in them seats. Yeah. We used to come like, you know, finally I came into the city one time and then I just stayed here, didn't go back because my people was all dying off. I didn't know, you know, there's nobody to go back to.

Evelyn: When you got married, you said that you travelled a lot. You were still in the bush.

Elsie: When I got married well, my other husband we used to live out at Norland, Norland, Ontario. That's Coboconk, Coboconk in Norland, and the man that I married, well like... (inaudible) The man that I married, he was a musician. He

used to play for dances, my husband he's, you know, he wasn't like.... The Davids, they always, they moved away from the reserve and they used to, the father he used to be a band master, or something in his younger days. And he learned his family to, to play the violin and all that -- violin, and the saxophone, so the boys got to know, learn the notes. I think they went into, I don't know where they went to, Lindsay or someplace. They learned the notes and after they got, one fellow learned the notes, to play the notes, and then they taught the other fellow; so they taught them all. And they used to go around playing for dances around Norland and different places -- Norland, and Coboconk, and Kinmount, different places three or four times a week, is what they used to do.

Evelyn: What kind of music did they play?

Elsie: Eh?

Evelyn: Indian music?

Elsie: No, no just, just the old songs, I can't remember what they used to play now. They were like waltz, waltzes, the old fashioned, some of them is old fashioned. Then was the modern pieces and they used to go to Lindsay to buy them, and then they practiced that for a few hours every evening. And then the next night they go and play for dances. They were making good money then.

Evelyn: So your husband and you didn't live in the bush?

Elsie: No, not with Tom, no. We used to live, we lived in Norland and we lived in, we stayed out all one summer. That was shortly after we got married, and the next summer, like, we stayed in a little camp all summer, in a tent. There was a whole bunch of us. My sister-in-law and her husband they had, they were sleeping in the car, and my mother-in-law and father-in-law, and two brother-in-laws, Bill and Joe, and Tom was my husband. So there was enough room for the big tent so we can all sleep in there. It was nice to camp out all summer. I kind of liked it.

Evelyn: A while back when you mentioned Mackenzie King. Was that the Prime Minister?

Elsie: Yeah, that was the Prime Minister. Like I said, we used to do a lot of travelling around and finally my grandfather, he wanted to visit Mackenzie King. And we went to see Mackenzie King and we used to get some money, like I said. You know, Indian comes in and they get money from the, Ottawa there. But he wanted to see Mackenzie King, so we went to see Mackenzie King and they took me along with them this time. And he told some people that he wanted to see Mackenzie King and so we were allowed to go and see him. We were travelling through these big halls, and there was all this high building; finally we went to see Mackenzie King, he was sitting in this big



chair, like a fancy chair where Mackenzie Kings sits. (laughs) So anyway, he was sitting there and my grandfather walked over and started talking to him. And they were talking back and forth, and, oh, they talk about a lot of things; about him travelling, he should settle down, and he got a family that he should look after, and cut out this moving around so much and make a home for us, like, you know.

Evelyn: You and your grandmother?

Elsie: Yeah. And that was after the kids was taken away. They took the kids away and I was the only one that was left, because I guess I was small-boned and I was small, looked small, but I was the same age as my other cousin, we were both the same age almost.

Evelyn: What was the reason they took the rest, the boys from your grandparents?

Elsie: Because he wouldn't, he wouldn't educate them, like, send them to school; he was travelling around too much. So they had to, children had to, you know, go to school; so they took them away from him. That's what happened.

Evelyn: Who are they?

Elsie: Well, the government. The government or whoever reported, and the government found out and he just said, "Take the kids and, and put them in their Indian residential school." So they would go school there and learn something, because they were after my grandfather before and he won't settle down. So that's what they done to him. Took the kids away from him, and the kids has to go to school, and they were growing up, and they were bigger, a lot bigger than I was. I was the smallest one, me and Jimmy. So they put them in the schools.

Evelyn: Have you, do you know anything about these residential schools?

Elsie: No, I don't know too much about it. But anyway we went to Chapleau after to visit the kids, like. I guess that's why he went to see Mackenzie King. So, I don't know, maybe give him hell for sending the kids over there, I don't know what he wanted to see him for. But anyway, he wanted to get some money and he got some money; because he was crying, you know, he felt real bad about this. He didn't believe in education. He said, "I got education." He said, "I don't make use of it." He said, "The same with my kids, and my family, they won't make use of it. They're not going to live like a white man," he said. "I've travelled around all my life and probably viewed the same thing, too, even if they had education." He said he didn't believe in it. He was well-educated, my grandfather. So anyway we went to Chapleau. I remember we got in the train, I think we travelled all night before we got to Chapleau. We got to Chapleau and then we went to see the Indians across the lake that lives near Chapleau.

Evelyn: Where is Chapleau?

Elsie: Up north someplace, I don't know just exactly where. You branch off at Sudbury. I think you go north someplace there, I don't exactly know. Anyway we went to Chapleau and we got off the train and our luggage and stuff, and we went to walk on the railroad, and we went to see the Indians. There's like a small Indian village on the other side of the track. That's where they lived, on the other side of the track. And there's a like a canal running there. I don't know how, we must have seen an Indian, or they seen us, and they come over with a boat. It's not very, you can holler to somebody on the other side -- they could hear you. I think that's what they done anyways then, and they must have come over with a boat, and parts there I don't hardly remember. But I remember we stayed at the Chief, Chief's place. You know, his name was Simon, Simon Chief, is what they call him. Chief Simon, or something like that.

Evelyn: What was the reserve?

Elsie: Eh?

Evelyn: What was the reserve he was Chief of?

Elsie: Gee, I don't even know the name of the reserve there. They had an Indian name, but I don't remember. So, my grandfather made an agreement with the Chief. Like they go away in the fall, fall time every, every fall all the Indians that's left around there, they go away. They take their, they have a dog team, and they have their wives and they have their children and they go way up the lake someplace, way up wherever they go, I don't know where, but wherever that canal or river, whatever. They follow that and they go. They all get together. It's kind of a sandbar and all the boats is lined up

like this, you know. So in the fall time we stayed with Simon, Simon and his wife and two girls. One girl was, her name was Zana, Zana, and they had one boy, his name was Johnny, and then the two other kids, I don't remember their names. But anyway he was going away and he asked my grandfather if he could stay. He give us the house for nothing, to live in that house for nothing, and well he'd find work in town, like, you know, to keep going. And Simon says, "If you stay in this house, you can live in this house, it's my home and I want you to look after this reserve," he said. "And then the white people come and they want to burn us out." They don't, they too close to the town, these Indian people, too close to town and they didn't like them coming too close. I guess they're scared of them, I don't know. But anyway my grandfather he said, "Well, that's a good idea. My children just going to school across the lake there, you know, and I can go and see them any time I want, you know." Well, that was a good idea he figured, so that's one time he had to stay put there. So anyway...

Evelyn: So he was put in charge of the whole reserve?

Elsie: Yeah he was, to watch, to watch all the buildings so nobody comes over and starts a fire. They used to have, you know, they'd burn their homes down.

Evelyn: Who?

Elsie: The white men from Chapleau. They'd come and burn their churches down, and burn their homes down; so they have to have somebody to look after it.

Evelyn: So how, what did the people, the Indians on this reserve do, as a result?

Elsie: Well, they had, that's what I was going to say, they go away in the fall and they want somebody to look after the house while they go away. They take their family and their... They have these twenty foot canoes, big long canoes. And it's really amazing to see them when they go away, you know. I never seen very much like that when I travelled around with my grandfather and grandmother. And they had these lined up with boats like that, and they had all these dogs and they're all getting excited, those dogs, you know, "bark, bark, bark, bark." And they're all wild, you know, and they're part, these animals had to be tied up because they wouldn't let them go. You know, they wouldn't let them loose, like me I can't touch them or they bite me, because I was a stranger, see, but they know everybody else, like in the family. Because that Chief told me, he said, "Those dogs are very vicious." He said, "They're very cross. And he said, "You can't go near them. If you hand them something to eat they'll snap at your finger, you know, bite you." So that's what they warned me. I didn't like those dogs anyway. Simon had two great big dogs about this, this high, husky. Oh they ever a cross looking. And you can't go near them, they'll growl and growl at you. I wouldn't go near there. So he had about two great big husky, and then he had four small ones, smaller like this. But those two huskies is the main dogs to pull the sleigh.

So anyway there's two men goes ahead when they're ready to leave, two men goes ahead in a great big long boat; and all the women, you know, if there's two women in one boat and all their kids sits in the center. That's how they travel, they watch the kids and the two men they're on the lookout if something comes along like bears, or wolves, they have guns handy. And that's why they put the ladies and, in the middle and then there's two or three more men coming behind and they're right

in the centre, and they travel along like that with all the boats. And the dogs, they run along the bank. They follow the boats. When they're ready to go they just untie the dogs and they'd just take off. They run as fast as they can go and run around, they go crazy because they're tied up all the time, they're vicious too, eh. And they want to get loose and that's why they're barking. They know that they're going away. And

we standing there watching them, you see all the women in the centre part and the men in the back is watching, and two, or three more in the front going along in the big boat that... Well, you know what they take? They take sleeping, sleeping bags, hard tacks.

Evelyn: Heart?

Elsie: Hard tack. It's a little bun they made, they make that in Chapleau. Hard tack. And if you could eat one of those hard tacks you make your tea, you can soak it in your tea to soften it so you can eat it, and if you can eat one of those hard tacks it will swell up in your stomach and it will keep you... I know this is kind of a funny, crazy, you know, but that's the way they do it. They eat a hard tack each and they take a great big bag full when they go, you know. They take that with their families, and the men carry all that heavy stuff; guns, shells, all they take is the hard tack and, not sugar, hard tack, salt, and tea.

Evelyn: Throughout the whole trip this is their meal?

Elsie: Yeah. And lots of shells. So anything they catch like, whatever they kill, they eat it, like bear meat, or deer meat. They can catch that, see, they have all kinds of meat.

Evelyn: What was hard tack made out of?

Elsie: I don't know what it's made of, couldn't say, probably made out of yeast. Hard yeast and I don't know what, that's what I think, because it swells up in your stomach after you eat one, and it will keep you full for twenty-four hours. (laughs) And they paid my grandfather, I think, he got fifty dollars to stay there. This was in October. They went away at the end of October and November they were gone, and Christmas time they come back again. And it's really cold over there, you know, before Christmas. And so we stayed in that old house, and you know their houses is way up, oh, about the height of that ceiling, that's where the house is built. Most of them houses are way up. You know why? There's a lot of poison snakes there in the summertime. Puffadders, blowadders. Yeah, you wouldn't even know, if they know there's people living there and then they just blow this poison, blow the poison out from their, whatever, you know, in their stomach, they'll blow themselves up like that and then they'd let that poison stuff come out. And that's the way they, they kill people like. That's what they told us anyways. And there was one family there they had their house not so high off, oh, about like that.

Evelyn: About how high?

Elsie: About a foot and a half off the ground. They didn't build it way up like the other people.

Evelyn: Oh, which is how high would you say?

Elsie: Oh, I'd say about ten feet anyways. Well, how high would that be about? Maybe ten, eh? Yeah. Well, these people had a house near the water...

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Evelyn: So you were mentioning about the people that had their house a foot and a half off the ground.

Elsie: Yeah, there was a whole family living there. There's a man and a wife, and I don't know how many children, maybe three. And this snake got underneath that house and he knew that there was people up there, human beings, and he got underneath there. And that house, you know, wasn't properly made or something like that and there was cracks in it. And they got a whiff of that poison, and they were all sleeping when the blowadder, whatever you call him, blows all that poison. They were all sleeping and, in the morning, so the poison they got, they breathe into it and they all died.

Evelyn: So who told you about this?

Elsie: That was the Chief's story. The Chief said that. We seen the house still, was still there, there was a church, behind the church was the house where these people was living. And he said the whole family died there. And so, there's lots of snakes there.

Evelyn: Did you ever see any?

Elsie: I fell into the pit. (laughs) I did. I fell in, but they didn't touch me. They didn't touch I was running so fast they didn't have a chance to... (laughs)

Evelyn: What happened?

Elsie: Well, we were picking blueberries, this is what happened. That was the following next year, like, we stayed there all summer, or all winter. And coming on summertime, but

we had moved to another, another house after the Chief came back; but I didn't finish that story yet where I was at. Do you want me to finish that story?

Evelyn: Yeah.

Elsie: When they went away to the, wherever they go in the bush, way in the bush, I don't know how many miles, fifty, sixty miles into the bush. And by travelling by boat, I was just going to tell you the Chief, you know, we start to stay there in October in his house and November. And just before Christmas, about a week before Christmas he come back, and had caught all these pelts, they caught all these pelts all together. You know, one just don't go anywhere, because when

they move they all move together. I don't know how many there is, how many men, and how many women, and how many children and they all have sleeping bags to sleep in. And so, anyway he come back.

I was playing around outside in that old house, you know, and there's nobody there, just myself, and I was always warned not to go across the lake, just play around outside, close by. And I'd do that. And all of a sudden I hear something.

Grandmother was home, and grandfather was home, and I think Newt, there was only Newt there and grandfather, and me, and grandmother. And I was outside playing around. I had a sleigh just, you know, trying to make myself, play around in the snow, and making snowmans and what have you. So anyway I heard something way down, down as far as I can see, there's kind of bend there, I hear somebody saying - "Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho," you know. I thought to myself, "What the Sam Hell is that?" And I sit there and I look, and then I saw these whole bunch of dogs coming around, you know. And here it was that Chief. Here was the Chief coming back for, to get toys for the children, and medicine, and booze. Booze, they, you have to take, drink booze there a lot, because it's cold outside and

even the kids drink it. You know, to make it up in the hot water, each kid so they won't catch a cold, is what they'd take a bunch of whiskey with them.

And I look and I see, I recognize the old Chief. I run as fast as I can go up to the house and I went and told them. I said, "The Chief's coming," I said, "with his dog team." They all run to the window. And they had these six, six dogs, four small ones and two great big ones. And he was running behind hanging onto the sleigh, you know, like a toboggan built in. He had all that stuff like fur, what they caught all together, they all chip in together. What one man catches they all put it together, and dry it, and then they pack it away, and that's what he done. And he had this big sleigh, built in sleigh, like, it comes way out like that. And then they had siding and then the top covering was canvas.

So he, I can hear him downstairs and grandfather run down, big high steps, come down, and he went down and met him, shaking hands and glad to see him. And he brought us a great big moose leg, you know. A great big leg like this. He brought two of them, moose, moose meat. Two great big legs and he brought us some deer meat, and what else? That's all I can remember. Deer meat, two great big moose legs, and deer meat. And so he come up, he says, "I'm going to go into, I'm not going in, I'm too tired," he says. I've been running a lot to keep warm." And he has to run, make the dogs run, you know, and he just makes that noise and they go. And then he's running behind to keep himself warm, but when he gets tired he jumps on, you got a little thing at the back, like, there with a seat on it. He built it himself, I guess, and he sits down for a little while to rest. So anyway, he stayed there all night with us. Next day early in the morning I [he?] said, "I owe you some money," he says. "I'll give you some more money," to my grandfather.

I don't know how, I think he gave him a hundred dollars this time. And he had a great big bag like this, great big leather bag like that hanging and that's all packed with money, (laughs) bills. And it has a little draw, draw thing.

Evelyn: Draw string.

Elsie: Yeah. A draw string, and he wears it around his neck, you know, he wears it inside his clothes and flattens it right out, and put his big heavy coat, and his belt; nobody knows he had any money there. So, anyway, he went and bought some more hard tacks, some more salt, cartridges, and he bought a big bag full of toys, you know, for the kids, big bag full of toys, and oranges, and stuff like that to take back to kids at Christmas morning. And my grandfather, he bought him a big bottle of whiskey for a Christmas present, and he gave him a hundred dollars.

Evelyn: That's nice.

Elsie: I think it must be a hundred dollars if not more. So anyway, he stayed one night and he went to town, and then he stayed another night and the next day he had to go. He had to go back. Be there in time he maybe travels one or two days to come in to see us, like, you know, bring all this like a trading post there with all these furs. He came and sold all his furs.

Evelyn: He was, the reserve was very close to the white man's...

Elsie: Yeah. That's why they wanted to burn them out, because I guess they were scared of them, you know, Indians. That's why they try and burn them out. But that's what he did. He come into town and he bought a big bag full of hard tacks, and salt, and shells, big shells like that for their guns, and I don't know how many boxes go back, and oranges and stuff like that. He wrapped them all up in the, in the skin, you know,

and then they shoved it way down in that empty thing there. It was all empty then, and wrapped it all up. He gave my grandfather some money and he was gone, gone back to them, wherever they were. They just sleep here and there, they sleep on top of the snow. You know, they just, they travel around. If they don't catch nothing in one place they keep moving, they keep moving along.

Evelyn: So these, this Chief when he came back with pelts and with whiskey, and he also brought, you said, with medicine, herbs?

Elsie: No, he didn't bring no medicine, they never take any medicine. All they have for medicine is whiskey, just for the kids and everybody like, you know, keep them warm, keep them from catching colds and stuff like that.

Evelyn: Oh well, okay. How about the pit story that you were mentioning.

Elsie: Oh that was, that was that summer after they come back. They come back in the springtime, they come back. I seen them when they coming home. All the boats, you could hear the old dogs, "bark, bark, bark," they're running along the, you know, the on the, what do you call it? Right close to the water, watch the boats as they go along.

Evelyn: The banks.

Elsie: Yeah, the banks. And then they come home, so Simon gave us another house to stay in, because nobody lived in it. Way at the far end of the village.

Evelyn: So how about, you mentioned the time that you fell in the pit, with the snakes.

Elsie: Yeah, well, see that was where we were living. My grandmother says, "We're going to go picking blueberries, but you got to watch," she says. "There's a lot of snakes up there crawling around." She says, "You stay close to me." I guess she was scared of them too. See I wouldn't, I'd pick berries and I'd eat them all and I'd run away on her. (laughs) And she was down, way down and there's a little path there, and here I'm way up on the rocks. There's a path up there too. And I was running along looking at her, teasing her, I used to tease her a lot, you know, and make her mad. And here at the end of the trail there was a great big hole and I fell into that. And snakes, you know, there were snakes was coming out and going inside the holes like that, and I'm running all around like mad. And I was screaming and hollering. I finally got out of there, I got a hold of a branch, or something, and pulled myself out.

Evelyn: How old were you at the time?

Elsie: I must have been about six maybe.

Evelyn: Six?

Elsie: Five or six. (laughs) Oh boy, I was in my bare feet too, I was stepping on them.

Evelyn: And none of them bit you?

Elsie: No. That was, I was lucky that none of them bit me, I was just shivering and screaming, and hollering and nobody come to help me. But I think my grandmother did come after, and then she didn't see me. She could hear me. She had to drop

her pail and run up there. And she seen me, and I got hold of a branch and I was pulling myself up and she got a hold of my wrist and pulled me right out like that. Boy, did she ever give me hell! She really give me hell. She said, "You'll know better next time when you go picking berries." She says, "You'll stay close to me." (laughs) Which I did too. Oh boy. Snakes, talk about snakes. When I think about it I get the



creeps.

Evelyn: I bet they were quite dangerous.

Elsie: Oh yeah, but, you know, I was lucky that I didn't, they didn't, you know, what do they do anyways, bite you, or sting you, or what do they do?

Evelyn: They bite.

Elsie: They bite. Yeah, I was lucky.

Evelyn: Was sending off Indian children away from their parents to residential schools. Was that very, was that typical?

Elsie: Well, they used to do that in the old days. In the olden days they'd take the children away from their parents. If they didn't send them to school, and the government made those Indian residential schools. There was one in Chapleau that I know of, and there was one in Sault Ste. Marie it was called Shinguak Home, Shinguak Home. And there was one in Spanish. Spanish is, Sudbury is in between, between like Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie is where this Spanish is. They had one there. That's for the Catholics. But the one in Chapleau it was for Protestants. And the one in Sault Ste. Marie that was Protestants too. So, but they stayed over there

for a while. I don't know what made them change, ship them to the Sault Ste. Marie, I don't know why they did that. Maybe they were getting too crowded, or they have to learn so much there and then ship them to the other place. I think that's what it is, I don't really know. But they stay there for a while and then they finish going to school over at Sault Ste. Marie. That's where they all left like, you know, one at a time according as they learn.

Evelyn: So were these kids from all over?

Elsie: Yeah, they're all... Well the ones that went to, the ones that I know that went to, from Rama, Rama Reserve, they were sent to Sault Ste. Marie, Sault Ste. Marie. They were, I'm related to them, like, they were my third cousins or something like that. Their name was York. Really it's kind of a mixed up affair, they're like my sisters, I should really say, like sisters, or it's their, their brother was my father. Their brother was my father and they would be my cousins, cousins I guess, eh, yeah. Because when my father was born the old man said the father of all these York, he said his name was York, the old man, I forget what his first name is, John York, or something like that. But he, one kid that was born and he thought it wasn't his, it wasn't his kid. He always said it wasn't his kid, so that was supposed to be my dad and they gave him away when he was a baby. They gave that little baby boy to Indians that lived down there on Scugog Island. So there was an old Indian lady there, her name was, Marston. And she raised that, was supposed to be my dad, eh. He was my dad, I

can say that, because everybody knew that.

But my grandfather, he was bullheaded. He wouldn't let my mother marry him, because he was an outsider. He didn't belong on the reserve. As if he'd had something to do with, you know, he didn't like people that didn't belong on the reserve. He

wanted my, his daughter to marry a man that belonged in the reserve, so he could be a member from the reserve. But he was an outsider. He wasn't born in, I don't know, they just gave him away, them days, I guess, I don't know. But anyway he's my father his name was Wes Marston. Well, Wes York, that was the old man's son, but he wasn't a York anymore. They changed his name to Marston, because Marston family kept him and raised him. And he was a hunter. He was a good hunter. He grew up to be a good hunter and never worked out where the white man, you know, working on the farms or anything like that, that was his life, hunting. And he always had lots of money, you know. He'd go hunting beaver, mink, and everything like that and then he'd sell them, and he always had money. I don't think he made baskets. But his other two brothers made baskets. Charlie Marston and Elijah Marston. But he didn't, I don't remember him making baskets. It was always Elijah that I used to see, and Charlie. So that's where he and they named him Marston. He wasn't a York.

So that what's supposed to be my maiden name, should be, but instead of that my mother, she wasn't married, like I said, like grandfather wouldn't let her marry the man that she got pregnant by, because he was kind of strict, and... He didn't like, he didn't like my father. So that's the way he was. But he knew, and I know. When I went down there I heard the whole story, "And this is your father," and, you know. Even my grandmother used to tell me. My grandmother used to tell me that he was adopted down there, and his name is Marston.

Evelyn: Was this unusual? I mean did women have to marry men of their reserve?

Elsie: Well, that's the way my grandfather looked at it. That's the way he figured was the right thing to do. Marry an Indian that comes from the reserve then, then you got

something. You know, they can, you live in the reserve and they can make you a home, and make your home on reserve and everything like that. But if you marry an outsider, he don't belong anywhere, they just keep travelling around all over. Just like him, but he had a reserve but he didn't want to stay there. My grandfather, he was one of these guys that wanted to wander around all over.

Evelyn: Your father was a hunter. Did he ever take his dogs, or anyone with him?

Elsie: Yeah. There was, that was his companions. He used to go at night time. That's when he'd start out. Everybody would be sleeping. Around midnight he'd take the dogs and he'd

go down the lake, and he'd take his gun, and his two dogs -- they were well-trained dogs -- and he'd get into the boat and he'd paddle around. Oh, maybe a hundred yards from the shore, that's a island, you know, where he lived on an island, and he'd go along easy. And he had a high powered light, you probably seen those big flash lights, the high powered ones, you know, about this big around, the light part. And the part of it I think there's about four, or five of these, what do you call them? Batteries. And he had, he rigged up something there, and he'd just go along so easy if he can hear something along the edge of the water he puts the light on. It could be ducks, or they could be beaver, or they could be a mink, or otter and he stops and sits there quiet, and the dogs would just stay so quiet, you know they were well-trained. And if he sees a, like, a whole bunch of ducks then he shoots at them. In the middle of the night nobody is going to hear it there, everybody is sleeping. He shoots at the ducks, maybe he'll kill one, or two when they're all, you know, sleeping there all in a big bunch maybe he'll kill one or two, maybe three with

one shell. And they all fly away, they go away. The ones that are dead they just float around so the dogs they jump out from the boat and they go right for the ducks -- grab them and bring them in, you know, hold them in their mouth. And he'd pick up the duck and throw it in, and then he'd grab the dog, pull him in. (laughs) And he had a well-trained dogs. And that's the way he goes around, he travels around at night time. And then you see him.

I used to stay with some people over there and I didn't stay too much with my grandmother. I used to go where, like sleep overnight or something like. That place when we lived in Scugog Island. And I can hear this early in the morning, I'd be up early in the morning, I'd hear somebody rattling the boat somewhere. And I say, "Who's that rattling the boat?" "Oh, that's Wes, Wes Marston," they said. "He's just coming home." They said he'd been out all night hunting. Then you see these dogs coming up just below where I was staying. The dogs would be coming up the field, and he'd be walking real fast with his gun underneath his arm and a great big bag full of whatever he caught through the night. Beaver was good money, and mink, and otter. Otter in them days was, I think, eighty dollars if you catch one otter. Otter, you know, there was good money in....

Evelyn: Did you ever go with your father on any of the expeditions when he went out?

Elsie: No. No. Never went with him.

Evelyn: So what you've been telling me, did he tell you about this?

Elsie: No, but people knew that. In the reserve they all knew him, what he does at night time. So they all know him. So when I ask them, "Who's that down there rattling the boat?"

"Well," they'd say, "that's Wes Marston." Some of them that didn't know it was my dad, you know. All the time I do, but I don't say nothing. So I see him coming up, and then he go right on down the line, down the road, he goes with his two dogs and his gun. He travelled at night time while everybody was sleeping. And that's how he made his money.

Evelyn: Did your father tell you the stories about his expeditions?

Elsie: Yeah, I used to go bed at Ann, the woman, the housekeeper that lived in that house, like, it was his friend, girlfriend or whatever. But anyway I used to go in there and he'd be sitting down eating. He'd have Jolly, Major, and the little one right beside him. He was always beside him, Tim's little dog. And he'd be finished, you know, just about finished eating and he'd have some pieces of bread and he's just fooling these dogs, more or less playing with his dogs. And he had a piece of bread and he'd be tearing it into pieces like this, you know. And when he's sitting still, still as he can, and is he going to throw this piece of bread to one of those dogs. And they're just patiently, and all of sudden he threw it to the dog over there, or threw it to the dog, or this little one. They all catch it, you know. They're so fast, he'd feed them one or two pieces each and then he'll move away, move away from the table.

Evelyn: Is this when he told you stories?

Elsie: Yeah, that's when I'd be sitting there, you know, and I'd ask him about the dogs; does he take them along with him? And he'd tell me. You know what he does, he'll move back in his easy chair like this, big wood chair, old-fashioned one.

He'll start talking and I used to wonder, you know. He'd be looking at the, he wouldn't look at me, he wouldn't look at me at all. He'd be looking up like this and then he'll start talking about he goes with the dogs, and how he catches all these animals, and he'll tell you what he does and the dogs goes after the ducks, or whatever he catches, whatever, you know, he kills through the night. And by the time he's finished with the story he's end up at this corner and then the story's finished. But all the time he's telling you the story he won't look at you. He'd just keep looking up there. If he stops, he leaves his eyes there until he goes on with the story again. Yeah, I, he used to tell me what he used to do, you know, the dogs, taking the dogs. And I'll tell you -- this is going to be interesting, too.

There was one night, that was in 193- either '32, or 33, it reminds because we were talking one day, me and my husband, that's when he was born in '33. And they had this earthquake in Montana. That time, that's where the earthquake, they had the earthquake in Montana. And Wes, he was out but he didn't take the dogs with him, he didn't take the dogs with him because it was in the summertime. I think he just went out to fish, or just wanted to be alone, you know. And he took, took

the boat. I remember that night, it was around midnight, because I went over to go see Sara -- she was my friend, like, you know. I used to go, always go over there, and sometimes I sleep there then I come home, because I'd be scared to come home, there's no lights. It's all fields where I'd have to travel, you know. So they said, "You can sleep with Sara tonight and you can go home in the morning," you know. If I wasn't going to school or that, I used to sleep there. And it was this, I went, I went there on a Halloween night. There was Sara, and Sara, Bill, Bill David that was the youngest one, and me, and Ernie Edgar that lived across the road, Ernie, and who else was there that night? But we were going to go, we were

going to go to people's houses and we going to dress up. So anyways Sara, she, I had long hair too, and she had long hair. So she put this old cap on, and she put one on me. And I had a kind of a, she gave me an old red sweater, a red sweater to put on, and she put on one sweater. And we had our hair inside the cap. And then we went out. And we dressed Billy up, that's her brother, Billy, Billy David. And he had on high-heeled shoes and we're having a hard time with him going along this gravel road. He was falling down with, his foot would go over like that, eh.

Evelyn: Twist it.

Elsie: Yeah. And so we went to the first house, we went to the first house and we went knocking on the door, and we were laughing at the lady, but we didn't make no noise. And she took after me. Billy and Sara ran away. Down the lane they went and she got a hold of me. And you know what she did? She tickled me, and tickled me, and she pulled my head. We had blackened our faces too, put black shoe polish all over our face so she wouldn't recognize us. And you should have seen us. We looked like, we looked horrible. But we had fun, but we had fun. And so she got a hold of me and she took me inside, she hanged onto me and took me inside and she tickled me, she pulled my hat off and after she knew who I was, and she got me to tell who the other kids were. So I had to tell her before she'd let me go. (laughs)

Evelyn: This is for Halloween?

Elsie: Yeah, this was Halloween. That was the very same night that they had this earthquake in Montana, it was in 1933. So Sara, she was waiting for her boyfriend, so she had us to, you know, we got to stay around with her. So anyway we went to

this church, it was the Indian's church, a small little church. It wasn't too small when you got inside like... We went and sat at the steps, like, you know, there's steps there, there's two or three steps. We all sat around there, we didn't try to break in or nothing, we just waiting for her boyfriend. I guess she had a date with this guy, Russell Elliott, I think his name was, Russell Elliott. So there was four of us. There was me, there was Sara, Bill David, and Ernie. Oh yeah, there's four of us and she's waiting for her boyfriend, so

we're going to sit with them. So Russell, he was coming, he was whistling, and whistling coming down the gravel road and, "Oh, here he comes now." You see these sparks. He was smoking a cigarette in the dark, there's no lights. But we know it was him, and he knew he was going to meet her there. So anyways we were all sitting around. So we sat around and they were smoking cigarettes and they were telling stories to us, and we're giggling and laughing, and it's a Halloween night and we got caught and we were laughing at that, you know.

So we're all sitting around by the steps there. All of a sudden I see somebody, somebody coming in the gateway. This was around midnight. There was somebody coming around, there was a big, what was it? Yeah, a big tall man, must have been about seven feet tall, a man coming, coming towards the church. It's probably the devil. The devil travels around at night time, you know. And it was a great big tall man, he was seven feet tall. And I said to Sara, "Sara! Sara!" And they're laughing and giggling, laughing. I said, "Look! Look!" I said, "Look at that big tall man coming!" And they all looked at the same time. We all jump off that, that church step. And it was an old stable, like, at the back of the church, it was an old-fashioned like, you know, when they used to come in with the horses and their buggies. And it was a big long stable and it was about this high off the ground.

Evelyn: How high is that?

Elsie: Oh about like that, about two feet off the ground. And I guess where they used to put their horses, and they had stalls in there, when they eat in there, when they were in the church, or something. And they used to put their cutters in the wintertime, whatever it was. So we all went on underneath that, what do you call it again? Stable. Horse stable. We got underneath, there we jump over the fence. We got on the, well, her place wasn't very far from there. So anyways, they never got a chance to get together, to be together very long, they just sat a few minutes, smoked cigarettes, and I seen this man coming. And we all jumped and we all scattered. So we're whistling at each other. I was hiding beside a whole bunch of clutter of bushes and somebody whistled somewhere else, and all these....

But anyways Sara said, "It's getting late. It must be twelve o'clock." She says, "Let's go home, you can stay with me tonight," she said, "and you can go home tomorrow." I said, "Okay." So we all went and Ernie went home, and Billy, and Sara and me. We all came in, and took our shoes off, and we went upstairs. It was only a small, small house. And I slept with her. And they were sleeping on the mattress, like, her mother and Sara and me. We all slept on the mattress on the floor because it's not a very big place. Her old man and Billy slept on the other side of the room. So anyways I was just falling asleep. You know, in a strange place I couldn't sleep so I'm just trying to sleep, everybody's quiet. Some of them is snoring. And I was just trying to think, "Oh, I wish I

could fall asleep," you know. When all of a sudden I hear this rumbling noise. It was a horrible noise, outside. Something was making this noise. You know what I thought about? That the world was coming to an end. That's what struck my mind. "What's that?" I thought to myself. And it sounded like horses

running around the house, outside. Just like a big gust of wind. And like horses running around this house. That's what it sounded like. And then you heard this "boom, boom, boom, boom, boom" underneath the ground. It's so scary. And I said to Sara, "Sara, wake up. I said, "What's that noise?" She sat up. I didn't sit up, I just, I was wide awake. So she woke her mother up, and her mother woke her old man up and they're all sitting up. And this grumbling, "boom, boom, boom, boom, boom." You can hear it, the thunder, like a thunder. Just like something rattling. You don't even know where it's coming from. It sounded like horses running around outside. That's what it sounded like to me. Like a whole bunch of horses, you know, how they tramp on their ground and make a rumbling sound and, like the wind. But there was no wind.

And so Tom, that was supposed to be my husband later on in the years, eh. He must have heard it, and Joe and Tom was sleeping downstairs and he was pounding on the ceiling. "Mom!," he said, "Dad, do you hear that?" And they said, "Yeah, we heard it, what is it?" "I don't know," he said. But they didn't figure out it was the thunder. First I thought it was thunder, you know. But it was clear, clear night and it couldn't be thunder. This is in October, eh, it wouldn't be thunder anyways. It's kind of chilly at this time of year. So anyways they were talking about it and the old lady got up and she start looking back in her life. "Well," she said to the old man, she said, "well, I wasn't a very, very nice person in my younger days. I did a lot of bad things." And they were bringing it up. I thought to myself, I was a little scared but not too much. I was a little bit scared of this noise, I could hear the "thum, thum, thum" underneath the ground someplace. It was so scary it's makes me feel like my hair was going to stand up. So anyways, "Oh," I said to myself, "I don't care what happens. If the worlds coming to an end, okay, I'm here ahead of it." So, boom, I went to sleep, thinking that way. I did go to sleep too. It didn't worry me at all.

So the next morning the old lady was up, and the old man was up, and Sara she come and woke me up. They were all up. I was just tired -- I never stay out that late, you know. So, "Come on, come on down and eat something," they said to me. And I got up and went down. And then everybody was talking about the earthquake. They heard it over the radio. They were talking about it. They had a radio and they turned it on, and they were talking about this earthquake in Montana. And they heard it in different parts of Canada and the United States and, you know. They hear all this noise and everybody is talking it. And Ernie that was with us the night before, lives across the road, he come running over. "I heard the noise last night," he

said, "after I got home," he said. "I went around holding everything down." The dishes was toppling over and his mother had dishes, fancy dishes on top of the cupboard and they were toppling over. Everything was falling, he didn't know what was happening. He was only about nine years old, nine or ten years old. He never know about earthquakes before, and he's hanging onto everything, the cupboards. (laughing) Oh, that was really something.

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