

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Jyl M. Wheaton-Abraham for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Anthropology
presented on May 14, 2014.

Title: “They Said I Would Never Amount To Anything”: The Life of a Kootenai Woman.

Abstract approved: _____

Joan E. Gross

There is a fundamental distortion in our understanding of Native people, especially Native women. This distortion is rooted in imperialism and the colonization of Native lands and has created a dominant/subordinate relationship between Non-Native/Native people. Anthropological life history research has traditionally reflected this relationship. As a Native woman, the author seeks to decolonize this research method by transforming how Native women's lives are presented in life history work. The author seeks to create a space where her mother, a Kootenai Indian, can share her knowledge and the stories of her life in her own voice. The life history covers the woman's earliest memories through her service in the U.S Army, and her life as a young mother at the age of twenty two.

©Copyright by Jyl M. Wheaton-Abraham

May 14, 2014

All Rights Reserved

“They Said I Would Never Amount To Anything”:

The Life of a Kootenai Woman

by

Jyl M. Wheaton-Abraham

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the

degree of

Master of Arts

Presented May 14, 2014

Commencement June 2014

Master of Arts thesis of Jyl M. Wheaton-Abraham presented on May 14, 2014

APPROVED:

Major Professor, representing Applied Anthropology

Director of the School of Language, Culture, and Society

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Jyl M. Wheaton-Abraham, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the Kalapuya Indians, as traditional owners of the land on which Oregon State University stands. I would also like to recognize my mother Eileen Wheaton as co-collaborator on this thesis. I will be forever grateful for the time we shared together working on this. I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Joan Gross, for the inspiration to pursue this research, and for her gentle encouragement and guidance throughout this process. I also want to thank Dr. Qwo-Li Driskill, for introducing me to new ways of understanding and expression, and for being an awesome individual. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, my family, and friends, for their support of my efforts and my education. My deepest appreciation and love go to Toby and Hailey, for their cheerful and unwavering optimism. Finally, to my mom and dad, words cannot express my feelings of appreciation, inspiration, and love, thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
1 Introduction.....	1
2 Literature Review.....	16
3 The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho.....	42
4 “They Said I Would Never Amount To Anything”.....	50
5 Conclusion.....	392
Bibliography.....	398

Chapter 1

*“Like miners in a shaft we are weighed down by the oppressive dirt
which colonialism has heaped on us” - Lee Maracle*

Introduction

What come to mind when you hear “Native American?” Is it a person? A set of ideas? Does the person have a gender, particular clothing, or seem to belong to a particular time or place? What images do ideas form? What emotions do you feel inside when you hear those words? Your race, your gender, your sexuality, your social, economic, and political positions and more inform the picture in your mind. Anthropology and anthropologists have contributed a lot to the image in your mind, especially in the United States. As Bea Medicine, a Lakota anthropologist writes, “anthropologists as reporters of ‘exotic’ and ‘primitive’ peoples of the world, have, by the very nature of their data, been portrait-painters of indigenous peoples and purveyors of images of these human beings” (Medicine 2001:289).

In research and in popular culture, the indigenous people of North America are called Indian, Native American, Amerindian, Paleo-Indian, and First Nations. These names stand in stark contrast to how Natives choose to refer to themselves; as members or descendant from a particular tribal group, or by the term in their own language for themselves (Medicine 2001:289). I myself am Kootenai; we call ourselves Ktunaxa. I am a member of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. While there is a certain amount of claiming these names by indigenous peoples, for example, in this thesis, I predominantly use the term

“Native,” and when my relatives speak in Kootenai, they are “speaking Indian,” these names are problematic for two reasons; first, these names suggest a certain amount of linguistic, geographic, and cultural homogeneity between very different peoples which, when given a voice, the people often contest (Medicine 2001:295). Second, these terms are names imposed on indigenous peoples by outsiders who came to this land with imperial intentions; for indigenous peoples, these names cannot be separated from the history of over four hundred years of the colonization of their ancestral lands.

As an anthropologist, I am particularly sensitive to how Native people, especially Native women, are portrayed in research and popular culture, for one informs the other, and both create the internalized image we see when we hear the words “Native American.” This internalized image has profound influences on both Native and non-Natives, through institutionalized research and policies which often reflect particular beliefs about Native peoples, bodies, and cultures, influencing perceptions of self-worth, the ability to survive, even their very existence.

“Draw A Native American”

As an opening exercise to three classes I spoke to at Oregon State University, I handed out sheets of paper with the words “Draw A Native American” on top. Out of 29 pictures, these were the results: nine depict males that look like they are from the Plains, two are gender ambiguous with no distinctive bodies or faces, six are drawings of me, four appear to be contemporary people (only one of which was recognizable as a female), one is a drawing of the Earth, and seven are stick figures with or without faces and braids. Besides the drawings of myself, only three appear to be women; one is a head, one ap-

appears to be a woman in a shawl from behind, and one is a stick figure with long hair, which I am assuming is a female, as next to “her” is another stick figure with a beard.

Overall, the drawings depict strict gender binaries, dominated by males, and only one individual could be interpreted as inspired by a tribe not from the Plains. Even though this is a very small sample, it is significant that the majority of the images drawn by students are of men. It is also significant that despite being in a state with nine federally recognized tribes, and a combined Alaska Native/American Indian population of over 100,000 (United States Census Bureau 2012:7), the drawings are culturally and geographically removed from Oregon. Interpreting these results, it can be said that the collective image these students have of a Native American is a male from a Plains tribe.

One way I can make sense of these drawings is to look at how we as a nation are educated about Native people. The student’s illustrations portray what our education system teaches about Native cultures, as well as the student’s limited awareness of living, breathing contemporary Native people. This is alarming, because as Maracle writes, “Education is about culture” (Maracle 1996:91). What does it say about our collective culture if our children assume a “person” means a “man?” If they see Natives as fixed in a particular gender, time, and place? As an anthropologist, I must examine how, and what, we teach our younger generations. As a Native woman, I must conduct that examination with a very critical eye. This is because imperialism, colonization, and racism have nearly eliminated the Native people in North America. Imperialism in its European form is defined by Smith (2012) as 1) economic expansion; 2) the subjugation of ‘others’; 3) an idea or spirit with many forms of realization; 4) a discursive field of knowledge. Colonization

and colonialism are expressions of imperialism, and can be understood as the movement of Europeans and Americans into lands occupied by indigenous peoples with one, some, or all of the intentions defined under imperialism. Bell (2013) defines racism as a “system of oppression that not only stigmatizes and violates the target group, but also does psychic and ethical violence to the dominator group as well. Racism functions not only through overt, conscious prejudice and discrimination, but also through the unconscious attitudes and behaviors of a society that presumes an unacknowledged but pervasive white cultural norm.” In our collective culture, these three phenomenon have determined “the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples [have been] collected, classified, and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back onto those who have been colonized” (Smith 2012:1).

The image of a Native American, as drawn by OSU students, is rooted in a particular time and place-when North America was colonized, through westward expansion and the time of the “Indian Wars,” when much of the information about who Natives are was first brought to the attention of the dominant culture. It was Native men (mostly) who white leaders fought, made treaties with, and then romanticized in art, literature, and science in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because of this, Native men have become symbols of who Natives are in this country; virile, courageous, resistant to assimilation, but ultimately defeated. In contrast, contact between whites and Native women were often violent, sexually, physically, and mentally (and continue to be so). They have been perceived as lesser than Native men, who in turn are lesser than White women, within the

system of heteropatriarchy and white supremacy¹. Looking at the student's drawings, aside from the pictures of me, I think there is profound significance in the drawing of a Native woman with her back turned/faceless, as well as a disembodied woman's head. In our collective culture, Native women are less than fully human, silent.

This thesis expands upon my interest in how Native women are imagined and understood in our collective culture. I collaborated with my mother to document her life history, from her earliest memories to her early twenties. I present her words as she spoke them, with very little editing (primarily for clarification); these stories are hers, though they speak of experiences and memories shared by many Native women. My hope is that other Native women can see themselves in this life history, and may use this work as inspiration to share their own knowledge and history.

The Invisible Women

If Native men are (defeated) warriors, who are Native women? For too long, writers and researchers have gone to Native communities to study "Indian problems²," issues which frame "Native Americans as a single group" (Medicine 2001:108). Looking at Native communities in such a manner erases gender, habitation, linguistic, socioeconomic, tribal distinctions and more. The perspectives of women are often never asked nor heard. *When* Native women are present in literature and research, they are often depicted as wise old women, princesses, drudges, "horticultural matriarchs" (Medicine 2001:93), or the

¹ For more on this, see Andrea Smith (2013) "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White

² Bea Medicine (2001) considers "Indian Problems" to be research agendas focused on issues such as poverty, use of alcohol, school drop-out rates, and the poor self-image of many Native youth.

worst, “object[s] for sexual release for white males who appetites are too gross for their own delicate white women” (Maracle 1996: 18). These gendered description of who Native women are has “left a legacy of marginalization within indigenous societies as much as within the colonizing society” (Smith 2012:48). A particular image of Native women has been invented, validated, and perpetuated by dominant culture as well as by Native men (Medicine 2001:93). As a result, Native women as fully realized human beings in research and literature are rare. Because of this, Bea Medicine (2001) has called on Native women researchers to work with Native women, particularly to conduct life history research; for if we want to change how Native women are represented, we must change it ourselves.

Native/Woman/Anthropologist

As a Native researcher, I bear the status of “Native Anthropologist.” As a concept, a “Native Anthropologist” is an individual who conducts research within his or her own community. The name implies a certain amount of “insider” status, as well as cultural homogeneity. Boas himself encouraged indigenous people (and women) to become anthropologists, as he thought they could gain access to particular information easier than male researchers. Natives (and women) practicing anthropology were “tools” in a sense, for “real” white male anthropologists for many years.

In the past few decades, indigenous researchers have questioned the concept of the “Native Anthropologist,” as globalization, transnationalism, degrees of assimilation, and the intersections of different identities have challenged the dichotomy of “insider”/“outsider” status in anthropological research (Narayan 1993). Regardless of benefit or

criticism of the idea of the “Native Anthropologist,” this distinction is reserved primarily for researchers of color. White anthropologists conducting research in white communities are not commonly referred to as “Native Anthropologists,” and white women are not distinguished by their gender *and* race in their research.

As a person of color within our shared culture, my race trumps my gender, and my ability as a researcher is tied to people’s perceptions of my race (Smith 2013). As a “Native Anthropologist,” I can expect my research to be held up to scrutiny not given to white researchers, both within my Native community and within my academic community as well. The motivation for my research can be challenged, the quality of my work can be questioned, and my loyalty can be interrogated (Ranco 2006).

Being distinguished as a “Native” can be imposed upon a researcher based on indigenous descent; however, that does not mean they are considered “Native” within a Native community. The status of claiming a “Native” identity may be much more rigorous, and often depends upon descent, community ties, residency, and more. Taking that into consideration, a “Native Anthropologist” is a place-based identity in the field and within the academy. While my race and occupation make me a “Native Anthropologist,” I would not claim that title without the confidence I have in myself; this is a position many women and anthropologists of color have struggled with as they have embraced or resisted a “Native” identity (Naryan 1993:672).

Decolonization as Action and Process

As a Native woman in the United States, I look at our shared culture and history from the perspective of a colonized race. As Smith writes, “Imperialism frames the indigenous

experience. It is part of our story, our version of modernity” (Smith 2012: 29). While Native cultures possessed their own ways of ordering their worlds and themselves prior to European arrival, “Imperialism and colonialism brought complete disorder to colonized peoples, disconnecting them from their histories, their landscapes, their languages, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting with the world” (Smith 2012:29). This process continues today; in addition to a lack of representation as contemporary people, modern Native communities continue to struggle with high rates of addiction, violence, homophobia, and other issues, “Which are formed and shaped by their impoverished material conditions and structured by politically oppressive regimes” (Smith 2012:4).

To counter these destructive forces, many Native people pursue higher education with the intention of contributing back to their communities and addressing their communities’ own concerns. Many Native researchers now follow an indigenous research agenda, informed by their traditional practices and beliefs, in the spirit of resistance against perpetuating research assumptions and conditions created and sustained under European knowledge, based on imperialism and colonialism. The intention of these efforts is to support Native people and communities move beyond survival, to recovery, development, and self-determination of themselves and their cultures through mobilization, transformation, healing and decolonization (Smith 2012).

Smith sees decolonization as "centering [indigenous] concerns and world views, leading to an understanding of theory and research from indigenous perspectives and for our own purposes” (Smith 2012:41). Decolonizing is *action*; research methods “are inclusive

of all knowledge systems and respectful of the researched” (Chilisa 2012), they are often grounded in traditional customs and protocols, and seek to avoid extractive knowledge practices (Kovach 2009:29). Decolonization is also a *process*,

“Which entails developing a critical consciousness about the cause(s) of our oppression, the distortion of history, our own collaboration, and the degrees to which we have internalized colonialist ideas and practices. Decolonization requires auto-criticism, self-reflection, and a rejection of victimage. Decolonization is about empowerment—a belief that situations can be transformed, and belief and trust in our people’s values and abilities, and a willingness to make change. It is about transforming negative reactionary energy into the more positive rebuilding energy needed in our communities. Decolonization in its farthest extension moves us beyond mere survival and becomes a means of restoring health and prosperity to our people by returning to traditions and ways of life that have been systematically oppressed.” [Wilson 2004:71]

Decolonizing research entails gaining a deeper understanding of Western knowledge and history, how they are positioned as superior to Native knowledge (Chilisa 2012) and history, and how they shape the perceptions and experiences of colonizers and the colonized alike. Decolonizing research challenges Western concepts of knowledge as democratic (anyone can obtain any knowledge), as belonging to individuals, and based on You/I relationships, which subordinate Native peoples, especially women, as “Others³.” Decolonizing research is important not just for Native anthropologists, but also for all who conduct research with marginalized communities. Decolonizing research can “improve theoretic constructs pertaining to Natives” (Medicine 2001:301) by shedding light

³ “Others” are people identified by Westerners through writing and art as exotic, unchanging, and inferior to Western knowledge and experience (Smith 2012). They are held up for comparisons against Western civilization and progress, and portray people as subjects in need of Western authoritative rule (Rosaldo 1989:42).

on dominant/subordinate relationships in society and in researcher/informant relationships. Decolonizing research offers new ways of understanding our world, our interactions, and how power relations between colonizers and the colonized structure our research methods. Decolonizing our understanding of knowledge challenges our assumptions of people, and of how, where, and why we conduct anthropological research.

Life History Research as Decolonizing Research

In anthropological research, the life history is some of the only work where Native women can be found as both primary subject and participant (Medicine 2001:109). As a Native woman anthropologist, I approach this life history as an intentional act of decolonization, to create a space where a Native woman, my mother, can share her knowledge and stories, and to re-discover the recent history of my tribe.

Life history research is firmly embedded in qualitative research methods, but it can also fall under decolonizing projects based on indigenous research agendas (Smith 2012). Decolonizing projects are efforts by indigenous people to conduct research within indigenous communities, for purposes intended for their own communities. The projects I use to understand my mother's words are *storytelling*, *remembering*, *gendering*, *reframing*, and *envisioning*.

Storytelling as a decolonizing project is more than simply sharing a story, or the story itself. Stories "contribute to a collective story in which every indigenous person has a place...the story and the storyteller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story" (Smith

2012:145-146). Shared stories can “educate the heart, the mind, the body, and the spirit” (Smith 2012:146), and continue oral traditions in Native cultures.

By telling her story, mother is contributing a woman’s experience to the collective oral and written history of the Kootenai people. My hope is that the individuals she remembers can re-connect lost generations to contemporary Kootenai families and my tribe can have a greater understanding of the history of our land base as my mother remembers it.

Remembering “relates not so much to an idealized remembering of a golden past but more specifically to the remembering of a painful past, re-membering in terms of connecting bodies with place and experience, and importantly, people’s responses to that pain” (Smith 2012:147). Too often, the histories of Native communities are shrouded in silence, as the suppression and forced forgetting of our histories caused immense pain and trauma.

“The aftermath of such pain [is] borne by individuals or smaller family units, sometimes unconsciously, or consciously obliterated through alcohol, violence, and self-destruction. Communities often [turn] inward and let their suffering give way to a desire to be dead. Violence and family abuse became entrenched in communities which [have] no hope. White society [does] not see and [does] not care. This form of remembering is painful because it involves remembering not just what colonization [is] about but what being dehumanized [means] for our own cultural practices.” [Smith 2012:147]

The history of my tribe between the 1950s and the 1970s is virtually unknown to my generation and those who have come after me. I understand this to be because violence, alcohol, and an oppressive and uncaring federal government had reduced the Kootenai

Tribe of Idaho to 64 individuals by 1974; people who lived during that time generally do not talk about what happened back then. My mother's remembering is especially powerful in this context.

Gendering "is concerned with issues arising from the relations between indigenous men and women that have come through colonialism" (Smith 2012:152) Colonization broke down gender relations between men and women, and dismantled traditional family structures, "child rearing [practices], political and spiritual life, work and social activities...[by forcing upon Native people] a colonial system that positioned its own women as the property of men" (Smith 2012:153). *Gendering* as a decolonizing project looks at the traditional roles and relationships of Native women in their communities, which are "embedded in beliefs about the land and the universe, about the spiritual significance of women, and about the collective endeavors that were required in the organization of society" (Smith 2012:153). I chose to work with my mother to add her story about Kootenai women to the collective history of my tribe. I also believe life histories of contemporary Native women need to be recorded. My hope is that the stories and knowledge she shares provides a woman's perspective on gender roles and the treatment of women, within our traditional culture, as well as how these roles have changed under colonization.

"*Reframing* is about taking much greater control over the ways in which indigenous issues and social problems are discussed and handled" (Smith 2012:154). Research in Native communities "has historically been damage-centered, intent on portraying our...tribes as defeated and broken" (Tuck 2009: 412). As I mentioned earlier, research about Native people often collapses tribal differences into a monolithic culture and seeks

solutions to “Indian Problems” without regard for such differences. Researchers also seek the causes of “Indian Problems” *within* Native communities, rather than examining how larger societal systems impact Native lives. I hope this thesis, and the stories and knowledge my mother shares, can help reframe how the history of Kootenai Tribe of Idaho is understood, and how issues within our community are linked to institutionalized policies from the local to federal government.

Envisioning “asks that people imagine a future, that they rise above present-day situations which are generally depressing, dream a new dream, and set a new vision” (Smith 2012:153). I take inspiration from Eve Tuck, who calls for an end to damage-centered research⁴; I am not conducting this work as a means to obtain justice for events in my mother’s and my tribe’s history, I am conducting this work so my tribe will have a record of our recent history, from which they may be able to better understand who we are today. Perhaps this work can inspire positive change.

The Mother/Daughter Relationship

“In anthropological investigations, mutual trust and understanding must be built carefully and sensitively. As with any human relationship, reciprocity, responsiveness, and responsibility are essential” (Medicine 2001:5) Research collaboration between a mother and daughter is uncommon in anthropology. I looked to Mary Catherine Bateson, the daughter of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, for guidance as to how to conduct the life history interview and work within the power dynamics of a researcher as daughter

⁴ Tuck (2009) defines damage centered research as research that operates, even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury to order to achieve reparation.

and participant as mother, but she could offer little perspective. Instead, reading her book, “With A Daughter’s Eye: A Memoir of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson,” (Bateson 1984), I began to reflect on the role my mother has played in my pursuit of degrees in anthropology. As a little girl, my mother would often take me to the Anchorage Museum of History and Art, where I would lose myself in the dioramas depicting traditional Alaska Native life. She encouraged me to read and explore, sending me to Europe at 16. I graduated from high school early; without my knowledge, my mother enrolled me into the anthropology program at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. While I did not know what anthropology was when I arrived at my first class, I soon realized that I had been interested in human cultures for as long as I could remember; my mother understood that. My mother decided to help me with this thesis because she wanted to see me complete my Master’s Degree and she thought her story should be told. I understood from the beginning that it would be my responsibility to represent my mother and her words as accurately and honestly as possible, out of respect for her as a Native elder and my mother, and to myself as a Native woman anthropologist.

This research developed from the questions, “What was life like for you as a child? What was happening in our tribe when you were a kid? For five days my mother sat at my kitchen table and answered these questions. She had always been an enigma to me, and the stories and knowledge she has shared have allowed me to understand her more. I hope with this thesis I can give my mother something worthy of the gifts of history and perspective she entrusted with me.

In Chapter One I review the literature on life history research in anthropology and examine how seven life histories portray Native women as well as fit into developments in qualitative research methods in anthropology. In Chapter Two I present a brief overview of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. Chapter Three is my mother's life history from her earliest memories to the age of twenty-two. Chapter Four concludes this thesis and is my interpretation of whether or not life history research can successfully utilize decolonization projects to better understand and interpret the stories and experiences my mother has shared.

Chapter 2

“It is the function of systemic education and training to promulgate the knowledge and culture of a given society in the context of a given historical perspective. That perspective is always determined by who has the power” - Lee Maracle

Literature Review

Fundamentally, life history research seeks answers to the questions, “What made you who you are,” and “What must we know about you?” These stories can situate “individual lives within a bigger picture...to convey how [they] are not free-floating, but are socially constructed” (Gough 2008:484). Native people are the only racial group in America whose lives have been continuously managed by governmental authority. U.S. Indian policies have helped shape our collective understanding of Native Americans from an imperialist perspective, and it is impossible to fully understand Native people’s lives without an awareness of policies “designed either to maintain their powerlessness and poverty or force them to Americanize” (Healey 2012:279). The researchers who wrote the life histories I read never mention these laws and policies, even though the effects of these policies are realities the Native women could not escape. This speaks to the power held traditionally by non-Natives to frame the lives of Native women, as though the colonization of their lands, bodies, and cultures has been an invisible, neutral or benign experience. For these reasons, I include brief descriptions of policies in place during the lives of my mother and the Native women in this review.

Before I discuss the literature I read in preparation for this thesis, though, it is important to situate the life history within qualitative research methods, just as I situated it

within decolonizing projects. The purpose of this is to understand how life history research has evolved through time as well as how and why participants use life histories in anthropological research.

Life History as Qualitative Research

Life history research falls under narrative inquiry and oral history within qualitative research methods. Narrative inquiry “revolves around an interest in life experiences as narrated by those who live them” (Chase 2011:421). Theorists in narrative inquiry use this method “as meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one’s own or other’s actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time” (Chase 2011:421). Narrative researchers are often motivated by personal change and social justice work. Chase describes a “sense of urgency” in narrative research (Chase 2011:427), which she characterizes as “The Urgency of Speaking⁵,” “The Urgency of Being Heard⁶,” “The Urgency of Collective Stories⁷” and “The Urgency of Public Dia-

⁵ The need for an individual to tell stories about traumatic or difficult events to “emancipate” himself or herself and facilitate healing. These stories are told by the narrator for themselves, to try and create “alternate narratives of one’s self or life” (Chase 2011:427).

⁶ The need or desires for individuals or groups to have others hear their stories of poverty oppression, marginality and survival (Chase 2011:427-428).

⁷ The need for marginalized and oppressed groups, who may be victims and/or survivors of social injustice, to tell link their personal stories and link them to the larger story of the group (Chase 2011:428)

logue⁸.” Research utilizing narrative inquiry involves the act of shifting from interviewer/interviewee to one of “narrator and listener” (Chase 2011:423).

Life history research can also be conducted as an oral history project in qualitative research. The Oral History Association defines oral history as “a way of collecting and interpreting human memories to foster knowledge and human dignity” (Shopes 2011:451). As Shopes writes, there are six characteristics of oral history; first, the interview, usually between two people, is the product of their interaction with each other, based on the questions from one individual to another. Second, an oral history becomes a “product” when it is recorded, produced (usually in written form), preserved, and made accessible to others. Third, interviewing and being interviewed to create an oral history is an intentional act, which “seeks new knowledge about and insights into the past through an individual biography” (Shopes 2011:451). Fourth, an oral history is an individual’s account of the past, and is based on experience, what is recalled from memory, and what one chooses to share with an interviewer; it is a subjective, not “factual” account of the past, which requires some form of interpretation. Fifth, creating an oral history is a formal and structured act, specifically seeking experiential, extended and detailed information about the past, and is not a casual, unstructured encounter. Finally, oral history is based on dialogue, and attention must be paid to “the conventions and dynamics of the spoken word” (Shopes 2011:452). In this type of research, questions can be open-ended or structured.

⁸ The need “to stimulate dialogue about complex moral matters and about the need for social change” (Chase 2011:429), often through creative expression.

As one can see, a life history project is a purposeful, collaborative endeavor between an anthropologist and a research participant. Whether the motivations are to bring about greater social change, often the purpose of narrative inquiry based studies, or to gain a more intimate understanding of everyday life, such as with oral history projects, the intention is to bring scientific method and analysis to the experiential level of an individual. To be successful at this, an anthropologist “must demonstrate interpersonal and cultural sensitivity and refrain from asking judgmental questions that can make the interviewee feel uncomfortable” (Chaitin 2008:584).

Questions, Benefits and Criticisms Regarding Life History Research

Life history research has fallen in and out of popularity over the last century in American anthropology because of questions regarding the “subjectivity” of an individual’s story and the less-than-rigorous methods historically used by researchers. As an individual grows and is exposed to new experiences, their life history is constantly revised. Thus, it is important that a life history be understood as a static document based on an individual’s interpretation of his or her own dynamic life. It is also important to understand the context in which a life story is narrated by the interviewee and recorded by the interviewer. Too often, detailed accounts of where and how a life history interview is conducted are missing in this type of work, hence questions concerning “scientific rigor.” In addition, some anthropologists have questioned whether or not we as interviewers and researchers are imposing the life history as a literary genre onto an individual’s personal account of their life, or worse, creating the idea of an “individual’s life” within a culture that may not have concepts of people as “individuals.”

The greatest benefit of life history research may be in gaining an understanding of particular aspects of a culture from the perspective of an individual's experience. This is particularly important when individuals possess unique knowledge or skills, have experienced trauma or violence, or are members of communities undergoing social upheaval. Another benefit is the ability to hear from individuals who may not normally participate in anthropological research, or who researchers overlook. Some anthropologists, like Jane Kelley in her book *Yaqui Women: Contemporary Life History*, cite specific topics such as culture change, deviance, age, personality and socialization as favorable for the narrow focus life history research can achieve (Kelley 1978).

The dominant criticisms about life history research are mostly concerned with the individuals anthropologists select to work with. In general, older males, those who are "typical" of an individual within a society, and men and women who possess strong personalities predominate as subjects in this type of research. Individuals who are at ease in research settings are often selected as well. When one considers age, gender, ability, position within a society, residency, sexuality, and other aspects of individuals within a culture, one can see the importance and need for more voices to be heard in life history work. Many anthropologists criticize that life histories about particular individuals often become the sole documents from which our understandings of entire cultures arise (Kelley 1978:4), which brings us back to problems concerning the production and control of Native images and cultures (Medicine 2001). Finally, while Medicine (2001) and Langness (1965) both praise the life history as a medium for voices of Native women to be

heard, they critique the absence or weak efforts to apply theory to research by anthropologists. This has been an ongoing challenge within life history work for decades.

The Life History in Anthropological Research

L. Langness' book, *The Life History in Anthropological Research* is an essential text to understanding this type of research. Published in 1965, he divides life history research into three time periods: prior to 1925, 1925-1944, and 1944-the present (1965). Langness makes these temporal divisions "for reasons of convenience" (Langness 1965:5) and based upon shifts in anthropology from interests in individuals, to the role of an individual within particular cultures, to the rise of the school of culture and personality.

Langness does not consider works about Native people published before 1925 to be true anthropological life histories. In his opinion, they were often written by non-professionals, and tended to be "romantic or sentimental" (Langness 1965:5). These early works centered on famous male chiefs, warriors, and diplomats involved in wars and negotiations with the American government (Langness 1965). Few stories and experiences of women and "everyday" people were collected. Gender, age, sexuality, ability, and cultural variability within a community or group were often missed, helping to propagate and reinforce stereotypes of Native peoples in static and gendered ways.

In the early twentieth century, Langness would date this as "prior to 1925", anthropologists were interested in gathering the stories, songs, and life ways of Native peoples. Motivated by declines in Native populations, concerns about the abrupt pace of cultural change occurring in Native communities, and by fears that traditional cultural information would be lost if not scientifically recorded and preserved, anthropologists went to

Native reservations, “in order to recapture ‘memory cultures’ that reflected the ‘golden days’ of Natives whose aboriginal culture was denigrated and whose future was seen as oblivion or civilization” (Medicine 2001:4). Called the “Vanishing American Indian Syndrome” by Bea Medicine, this early scientific work gathering traditional knowledge helped solidify perceptions of Native people as precious remnants of cultures lost or soon to be lost, and objects needing to be studied and saved by science.

From 1925-1944 the “bulk of [anthropological work] was directed towards clarifying or portraying the cultural dimensions of human existence” (Langness 1965: 9); researchers produced a great number of Native life histories in which they tried to portray the individual life as reflecting cultural fact. These works varied in quality, with poor data gathering records the standard. During this time period, there was an increase in the number of Native women whose life histories were published, but overall, older Native men continued to prevail as subjects.

Following Langness’ timeline, “the use of life history materials in a cultural context for the purpose of getting at distinctive personality types” (Langness 1965:11) characterized life history research from 1944 to “the present” (1965). The dominant school of thought in anthropology was “culture and personality,” which was concerned with bridging the gap between an individual’s own psyche, culture, and the influence of the individual on culture (Barnard 2000). The use of life history materials in these types of studies was limited, but tended to be “problem” oriented. Life history research during this time looked at how acculturation affected an individual’s behavior with regards to self-esteem, alcohol use, feelings of despair and inferiority, motivation, cognition, and stress

(Langness 1965:16). This may account for the rise in life histories of women, “deviants,” lower classes, and other marginalized individuals during this time.

Langness cites seven themes common in life histories from 1944-1965:

“1) To portray culture; 2) for literary purposes; 3) in connection with cultural change; 4) to portray some aspect of culture not usually portrayed by other means (such as the ‘women’s view’); 5) to answer some theoretical question in culture-and-personality; 6) to communicate something not usually communicated (for example, the humanistic side of anthropology); 7) in some combination of two or more of these objectives. These usages never appear in pure form and there is always some overlap.” [Langness 1965:12-13]

Life history research during this time continued to be heavy on description and experience, and light on details of data collection, editing, and even the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (Langness 1965: 13). Langness’ timeline of life history research in anthropology ends here.

While many researchers allude to a “repositioning of individuals in anthropological studies” (Frank 1995:145) since the late 1960s, there has been no significant effort to follow developments in life history research from where Langness left off. This is significant, as several important theoretical shifts including, poststructuralism⁹, postmodernism¹⁰, and the rise of feminist anthropology, have all called into question interpretations

⁹In general, poststructuralism can be defined as “focus[ing] on exploring concepts such as relativity, plurality, fragmentation, and antifoundationalism...perspectives tend to concentrate on the operation of language, the production of meaning, and the ways in which knowledge and power combine to create accepted or taken-for-granted forms of knowledge and social practice” (Fawcett 2008:666)

¹⁰ A difficult term to define, postmodernism rejects claims of “universal” explanations of the world and “objective” constructions of knowledge as “products of a particular sociohistorical

of cultural action and expression, ideas of representation, power, “and the deconstruction of the writer as a creator of discourse” (Barnard 2000:139). Drawing from my own research, there has been a marked increase in the life histories of “marginalized” and “everyday” people, particularly Native women, since the late 1960s. Details such as the relationship between anthropologist and participant, data collecting methods and circumstances, and participants’ roles in editing have all increased, but could still be improved.

U.S. Indian Policy in the United States

I had difficulty positioning my mother’s life history, the history of my tribe, and the life histories I read for this thesis within Langness’ timeline and developments in life history research alone. I felt the imposition of a silent imperialist perspective on how Native lives have been recorded and interpreted by anthropologists. As a decolonizing project, it is important to name and know the policies which Native people have been forced to live under in the United States. This review does not include all legislation, only laws and policies that most likely directly impacted my mother and the other Native women in this thesis:

- Indian Removal Act - passed in 1830, this Act gave the President the authority to exchange unsettled lands in the west for Indian lands within state borders (Library of

context” (Olsson 2008:657), which has left out the voices of women, gays, indigenous groups, laborers, and other marginalized people. Since the emergence of postmodernism, researchers have been called on “to be more reflexive on their research practices, more conscientious in describing the influences on their work, and the power relations that underpin any research process: between researcher and researched, between researcher and their field, and so on” (Olsson 2008:659).

Congress 2014). Most tribes resisted their removal, and were forced to give up their lands by gunpoint.

- The establishment of reservations - while the story of each reservation is unique, in general, they “were intended to closely supervise American Indians and maintain their powerlessness” (Healey 2012:270). Those living on reservations had their cultures attacked, and “were subjected to coercive acculturation and forced Americanization” (Healey 2012:280).
- Bureau of Indian Affairs - this government agency was first under the War Department, alluding to the Indian/government relationship. It moved to the Department of Interior in 1824 under the name Office of Indian Affairs. In 1947, the name changed again to the B.I.A. (BIA.gov 2014). While the mission of this department is to “enhance the quality of life, to promote economic opportunity, and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of American Indians, Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives” (BIA.gov 2014), this department has a history of abuse based on paternalistic attitude towards Native people and communities. During the lives of most of the Native women in this review, “The BIA and its local superintendent controlled virtually all aspects of everyday life, including the reservation budget, the criminal justice system, and the schools. The BIA even determined tribal membership” (Healey 2012:279-289).
- General Allotment Act of 1887, also known as the Dawes Act - this Act changed reservation land from communal ownership to individual ownership. Men over 18 were allotted acreage, and the “excess” land was opened up for white settlement. This was intended to assimilate Native people into white concepts of proper land use, agricultural

production, and white concepts of land ownership. In reality, the passage and implementation of this Act resulted in the loss of millions of acres of reservation land. This Act also brought whites and Native peoples into closer contact, to compete for resources, often resulting in racialized violence.

- Indian Citizenship Act - this Act was passed in 1924, granting Native people U.S. Citizenship for the first time (American Indian Policy Center 2002).
- Indian Reorganization Act - passed in 1934, this Act “rescinded the Dawes Act and the policy of individualization tribal land...provided means by which tribes could expand their landholdings...[and] dismantled [BIA-run] boarding schools” (Healey 2012:282). This Act also financially encouraged tribes to abandon traditional forms of governance and adopt “Anglo-American” style politics and rule.
- Termination, or Public Law 280 - this law, passed in 1953, gave a handful of states, including Oregon, the authority to “end the reservation system and the special relationships [established by Treaty] between the tribes and the federal government” (Healey 2012:283). Almost 100 tribes were terminated, resulting in devastating poverty and loss of quality of life. This was a very traumatizing experience for many Native people, as “the federal government simply no longer recognized them as Indian nations” (American Indian Policy Center 2002).
- Indian Relocation Act or Public Law 959 - this law, passed in 1956, encouraged Native people to leave reservations and move to cities and assimilate, by appropriating federal dollars to pay for vocational training and establish centers in urban communities to provide services such as “housing assistance [and] English instruction” (Healey 2012:283).

Native Women and Their Life Histories

For this thesis, I am reviewing seven life histories, written by anthropologists and one sociologist, in collaboration with Native women. I situate the research into Langness' timeline, and then look to see if the work reflects any of the benefits or criticism concerning life history research; what level of detail was provided about the interview process; how the women were portrayed to see if they conformed to the stereotypes about Native women I mentioned previously; and if the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is discussed.

Waheenee: An Indian Girl's Story Told By Herself to Gilbert Wilson, PhD.

Waheenee-wea, or Buffalo Bird Woman, was a Crow woman living on the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota when she was interviewed by Gilbert Wilson, a professor of anthropology, and field collector for the American Museum of Natural History. The interview was conducted over nine hours, "in the sweltering heat of an August day" (Wilson 1921:189). Waheenee was about 83 years old. Waheenee and Wilson seem to have had a close relationship, and they worked together for many years. She was a stellar informant for Wilson during this interview, as well as regarding other aspects of Hidatsa life. Wilson even refers to Waheenee as "my Indian mother" (Wilson 1921:4) in the Forward of the book. Wilson writes that he recorded Waheenee's story "exactly as [the words] fell from her lips" (Wilson 1921:189), though he fails to mention that he translated her story from a Native language which he does not specify, into English, as well as where he had supplemented some of her shorter stories with details given by her son and

brother (Wilson 1921:4). He never provides the date of when this interview was conducted.

Waheenee's life history is set in the "golden" age of Hidatsa time, when her tribe and the Mandans had declared peace and were living together in one great village, before whites began to encroach upon their land. By focusing on this time, Wilson avoids discussions of Waheenee's life during war, forced removal, and life on the Fort Berthold Reservation as an old woman; I interpret his silence as an example of the belief in the inevitability of the conquest of Native people during this time.

Waheenee shares her personal thoughts and experiences, as well as the history of her family, village, and people. She never gives any sense of tension or resistance, or any insight into her feelings about being a Native woman, especially during a period of great cultural change; or perhaps she is never given the opportunity to share. She shares the struggles of a Hidatsa woman's life, following the buffalo and raising crops, though she does not conform to either the "drudge" or the "horticultural matriarch" stereotypes. Her only words about the significant upheavals she had seen during her life were these; "I am an old woman now. The buffaloes and black-tail deer are gone, and our Indian ways are almost gone. Sometimes I find it hard to believe I lived them...Our Indian life, I know, is gone forever" (Wilson 1921: 175-176).

Pretty Shield: Medicine Woman of the Crows

Pretty Shield was a Crow elder and medicine woman whom Frank Linderman, an early ethnographer, interviewed in 1931 at Crow Agency in Montana. Pretty Shield could not speak English, so Linderman interviewed her with the help of a Crow interpreter and

using Indian sign language. He gives some context to his interview process, for example, writing of “kindling a fire in an old-fashioned cannon stove occupying a corner of a room in the unused school building at the Crow Agency” (Linderman 1972:14). This is a great example of the descriptive detail found in life histories of this time, as noted by Langness, but Linderman fails to provide background details, such as how he translated Pretty Shield’s sign language and Crow interview into English. Linderman worked with Pretty Shield for several months. Their relationship seemed very formal, though he expresses his joy at her being an ideal informant, writing, “in her the three essential qualifications for such story telling are in happy combination, age that permits her to have known the natural life of her people on the Plains, keen mentality, and above all, the willingness to talk to me without restraint” (Linderman 1972:9).

Reading this work, the number of stereotypes about Native women expressed within the first few pages is striking. For example, Linderman writes, “I have found Indian women diffident, and so self-effacing that acquaintance with them is next to impossible” (Linderman 1972:9). It is unknown if these stereotypes point to Linderman’s lack of familiarity with Native women, or his agreement with the sentiments of many white people at the time. In contrast to Wilson, Linderman wanted to speak about “the days when her people were readjusting themselves to present conditions” (Linderman 1972:248), though he too references the history of the Crow people with a certain privileged vagueness. Pretty Shield, obliges, criticizing white men for fencing the plains and killing all of the buffalo, and “the White Chief in Washington” for leasing Crow lands and allowing white ranchers to shoot their horses. Pretty Shield shares a story where white cowboys dragged

and killed a young deaf and mute Crow boy, and she expresses her worries about how her grandchildren will make it in the future. It is interesting; Linderman does not pursue further explanation of Pretty Shield's stories about when the white man came, despite his expressed wishes to know more about this time. While Linderman deserves praise for providing such great details of Pretty Shield's early life, her emotions, and opinions, in the end her words conform to a sense of inevitability of conquest, and she is portrayed as a (defeated) wise grandmother, just like Waheenee. Overall, this life history is an example of one based on a stellar personality who is comfortable with the interview process; a theme common, though criticized, in life history work throughout time.

No Turning Back: Polingaysi Qoyawayma (Elizabeth. Q. White) As Told to Vada F. Carlson

This is the life history of a Hopi woman who was born into traditional Ppueblo life at the beginning of the twentieth century. Her life history spans her entire lifetime, from childhood to her life as an elder in her community. The author and Polingaysi knew each other well, and the motivation to record her life history began with Carlson's wish to let people know of this "remarkable" Hopi woman (Carlson 1964).

Her story begins with her childhood; she speaks of friends, traditional Hopi games they played, and the love her parents' had for her and for each other. She discusses her experiences attending Indian boarding schools, first close to home, and later far away, where she suffered many severe illnesses without the comfort of family nearby. She discusses marrying and divorcing her two husbands, her success as a home owner and land lady, as well as her challenges and triumphs as a Hopi teacher in local Indian schools. While

Polingaysi does not conform to any stereotypes, this is a “white or dominant culture-friendly” life history of a Native woman; she does not challenge the assimilation and colonization of Hopi culture and land, and had only nice things to say about her life, relations with white people, her attendance at an Indian boarding school, and her disdain for alcohol.

This life history is typical of the time period, as described by Langness. This is not to imply a lack of resistance by Polingaysi, for as she says, “Too much time has been spent trying to teach [children] to cast aside the Indian in them, which is equivalent to asking them to cease being. An Indian can no more be a white man than a white man can be an Indian. And why try? There is infinite good in the Indian cultural pattern.” (Carlson 1964:173). This story is ultimately about how well Polingaysi assimilated into white culture, and her attempts help other Native children learn to adapt to white ways as well.

Yaqui Women: Contemporary Life History

This life history work is a compilation of four Yaqui women’s life histories; set in Yaqui communities in northern Mexico and Tucson, Arizona. This book was the result of four years of fieldwork between 1968 and 1972, and was part of a research project “funded by the Canada Council to create life history narratives and explore the life history method as a tool for approaching certain anthropological problems”(Kelley 1978:4-5). Following trends in anthropological research after the late 1960’s, this research was undertaken with the explicit goals of adding more “everyday” women and “closing the gender gap” (Kelley 1978:8) in life history literature, which the author notes has existed since the beginning of anthropological life histories (echoing Langness). Kelley inter-

views multiple female informants, selected “on grounds other than stellar personalities” (Kelley 1978:4), to evaluate where the women stand within their Yaqui communities.

Kelley is attempting to push back against the critiques Langness puts forth in his book, by giving detailed accounts of where, how, and what was discussed in her interviews with the Yaqui women. Her intention in setting clear research goals is to counter claims that life history research is not a “rigorous” social science method. Kelley discusses issues surrounding representation at length, which has been an ongoing concern of anthropologists since the late 1960’s. Curiously though, despite her attention to honest and fair representation, she writes this book in the third person, and the work seems more oriented at the anthropologist and her research goal/method, than her interview participants.

Geographically, most of the stories are set in Mexico, and references to wars and political movements are outside of my knowledge of Mexican history. All of the women in the book are elderly, ranging from seventy seven to eighty eight years of age. The women, as Yaqui and “Mexican,” did not conform to typical stereotypes of Native women in the U.S., though questions could be raised if they conform to Mexican cultural stereotypes of indigenous people; this is unknown. These women also were not impacted by U.S. Indian policies, as they all spent the majority of their lives in Mexico. Two of the women had friendly relationships with anthropologist Jane Kelley prior to this project, while the other two women had no previous relationship with her. These two remained distant and formal with Kelley throughout her fieldwork, and their life histories take up only a few pages in the book.

Overall, this work is very different than every other life history I read; it's usefulness to this thesis lies not in the portrayal of Native women in life history research, nor the contribution to understanding Native lived experiences, but rather in Kelley's attempts to transform anthropological life history research, by being more detailed, inclusive and representative of gender, habitation, and personality differences.

Sadie Brower Neakok: An Inupiaq Woman

Sadie Brower Neakok is a half white, half Inupiaq Alaska Native, from Barrow, Alaska. Margaret Blackman is an anthropologist who has worked with several Native women to write their life histories. This life history began as a class project for Barrow High School students to learn how to record oral history. Sadie Brower Neakok's life story intrigued Blackman, and she wanted to produce a life history of an Inupiaq woman, so they began a multi-year effort to record Sadie's entire life and her knowledge of Barrow before her birth. This is because Sadie is the daughter of world famous adventurer Charles Brower, the first white man to live in Barrow. Sadie herself is also a bit famous, as a retired magistrate within the Alaska Court System and respected elder in her community. While Blackman does not portray Sadie as any of the stereotypes I discussed earlier. Sadie *does* fit the description of an exceptional person, not only by birth, but also with the fame and wealth of her family, her mixed-race heritage, and her education. This life history then, falls into the category of famous *and* exceptional people, as well as an interview with an individual comfortable in a research setting, all of which makes this work a "traditional" life history, about a "non-traditional" subject, a contemporary Native woman.

This life history exemplifies continued efforts in anthropology to include women and marginalized people, though Sadie's status as famous daughter, magistrate, and wife of a well-respected whaling captain, begs the question of how marginalized her life is. Overall, this work is similar to the life history of Polingaysi. Both women find success in the white world and return to their Native communities to help improve the lives of their people. Like Polingaysi, Sadie stresses repeatedly that she does not drink or smoke. Sadie never questions or challenges imperialistic policies or practices, which may be due to her role as a magistrate, and she does not stray from a "white or dominant-culture-friendly" narrative of her life. Whether this was intentional or not is unknown, as Blackman does not include the questions she asked. Because Sadie grew up in Alaska, she avoided many of the impacts of federal Indian laws and policies. Alaska Natives have their own relationship with the federal government, which are outside the scope of research here.

Saquiuyuk: Stories From the Lives of Three Inuit Women

This life history is about three generations of Inuit women living in the Baffin Island area of the Canadian Arctic; Apphia Agalakti Awa, is the grandmother, Rhoda Kaukjak Katsak, the daughter, and Sandra Pikujak Katsak, the granddaughter. They collaborated on this project, from 1993 to 1998, with Nancy Wachowich, a cultural anthropologist. The Inuit women had all worked with Wachowich during the field research for her Master's thesis, and soon after graduating, she had the opportunity to document three generations of women as part of a project for the Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal People. She approached these women to see if they would participate, and their multi-generation life history was completed five years later. This work is unlike any life histo-

ries I reviewed so far. The author repeatedly stresses the project as collaboration between her and each woman, as well as her effort at fair representation and balances in power relationships. This work focuses on the rapid changes in lifestyles between the three generations, with consideration paid to the colonizing of this region by non-Natives.

Wachowich notes that while the women's stories may reflect over one hundred years of Inuit life, they were all told within the context of modern living, by modern women.

The women truly are "everyday people," though anyone not familiar with life in the Arctic may find their lives "extraordinary." Apphia, who was sixty-three when the project commenced, spent thirty years of her life on the tundra, living a subsistence lifestyle. She shared stories of hunting, traveling, and traditional life before the Inuit were moved to more permanent settlements. She understood a few words in English but is referred to as "a unilingual Inuktitut speaker" (Wachowich 1999:15) in the text. In the book, she often expressed her joy regarding the opportunity to share her life story, "because she wanted the younger generations to learn and remember how Inuit used to live" (Wachowich 1999:18). Many of her stories are told in the structure of oral traditions, she often utilizes repetition, finely detailed imagery, and a certain "lyrical style" (Wachowich 1999:5).

Her daughter and frequent translator Rhoda was born in 1957, and was thirty-six when the project began. She lived on the tundra as a child, and has remained in "town" since her parent's moved her there when she was eight. When she arrived, she could not speak English, and was sent to a federal day school far from her village for several years. Many of her stories are situated around her forced removal, and the difficulties she faced as a young girl far from home. She tells her stories in English, and Wachowich notes that their

interviews began very formally, sitting on either side of a recorder. Her stories, and her daughter Sandra's, are structured more linear than Apphia's; Wachowich attributes this to "their exposure to western conventions of historical biography" (Wachowich 1999:5).

Sandra, the granddaughter in this life history work, was only nineteen when this project began. She grew up in town, and is influenced daily by television and radio. Her stories center around the struggles of being a teenager, particularly an Inuit teenager, trying to figure out a balance between living a traditional life and a modern one as well. Sandra spent many evenings with Wachowich typing her own story directly into Wachowich's laptop computer. She arrived the first day with a loose-leaf notebook in which she had prepared notes and short stories she wanted to share. This is in stark contrast to the other women, who arrived with bags of sewing, or with nothing at all.

This work perfectly exemplifies how life histories should be created, in my opinion. In this research Wachowich documents the entire process in great detail, from initially meeting these women, to approaching them as potential participants, her arrival in their village, and years of fieldwork. She discusses how she translated and edited each woman's story, again with her attention to detail. She gives the women the time and space to share whatever stories they wish, stereotypes about Native women were not to be found, and she repeatedly prioritizes the fact that these women are modern people, not stone-age relics. As Canadians, U.S. laws concerning Indian people did not impact them and any discussion of Canadian First Nation policies is outside the scope of this research.

The Woman Who Loved Mankind: The Life of a Twentieth Century Crow Elder

This life history is about Lillian Bullshows Hogan, “the oldest living Crow at the dawn of the twenty-first century” (Loeb 2012). She spent almost her entire life on the Crow Reservation near Billings, Montana, and lived to be between ninety-eight and one hundred and one years old (Loeb 2012:xiii). She shared the story of her life with Barbara Loeb, a longtime friend and scholar, and her daughter Mardell Hogan Plainfeather, who participated as co-interviewer, translator, and researcher. This life history exemplifies research at it’s best today; Loeb writes, “Our approach centered on collaborative scholarship, with each of us playing critical but different roles” (Loeb 2012:xxii). Loeb worked hard to document the nearly decade-long project. When the time came to edit the oral stories into book form, she strove to preserve Hogan’s exact words and expressive speech; she structured the dialogue to show the pauses and emphases, and writes, “I wanted to protect Lillian’s right to speak for herself” (Loeb 2012:xxiii), acknowledging Lillian’s ownership of her stories, and the power which can be exercised as scholar and final author. Plainfeather contributed her knowledge of Crow customs, language, and memories associated with Hogan’s stories. Plainfeather “is the first Crow to edit an Apsaalooke¹¹ life story” (Loeb 2012:xxii), upsetting the century-old tradition of non-Natives taking authority over life history work within her tribe.

Lillian Hogan’s life history could be considered an example of an “exception individual.” Besides her unusually long life, she is a traditional healer and leader in her commu-

¹¹ The tribal name for the Crow, in their own language.

nity. She even entertained Lady Bird Johnson, who stopped by her home during a trip to the Crow reservation. Hogan's stories cover all aspects of a long life, from her earliest memories, her childhood, her time in an Indian boarding school, her two marriages and the births of her children, the passing of her husbands, her life as an elder, as a medicine woman, a wife, and a mother. While she can be seen as the "wise grandmother" type, Loeb points out that she is a modern woman, who can drive a car, read a newspaper, and has a checking account. Because Loeb chose to visually structure Hogan's dialogue as close to how she spoke it, this work is unlike the other life histories I read. Hogan seems to inhabit the pages, and the voice of an Indian woman can be heard in the text far better than any other life history reviewed here.

Concluding Thoughts

While I enjoyed each of these women's life histories, I often found myself thinking, "I don't know these women. I don't know these communities. I don't know this life." While some of the women discussed topics such as Indian/white relations, Indian relations within reservations, struggles with racism, poverty, drug and alcohol use in their communities, and other facets of Native life I am familiar with, I came to the conclusion that these books have been written for an audience outside of Native communities, more so than within. This may be because as I stated earlier, life history works often do not acknowledge the impacts U.S. Indian policies have on the real lives of Native people, or it may be because I often found myself wondering, "Is there more to the story than she is letting the interviewer know?" To try and reconcile my feelings, I wish to explore some of the thoughts I had about these life history works.

Looking at the first two pieces, I was troubled that while each woman was given the opportunity to share their knowledge and history at a time when works about Native women were rare, both Linderman and Wilson conform to the belief in the Vanishing Native. Both men were motivated to record history which they believed would soon be lost, but are silent regarding the recent history of these women's tribes, as well *why* certain knowledge was in danger of being lost. These authors created a fantasy narrative based on more description than detail of "dying" cultures, positioning themselves as the brave "lone ethnographer" (Rosaldo 1989), who came to save the stories, but could do nothing for the people.

Looking at Polingaysi's life history, I found it interesting that she had only positive things to say about her time in boarding school; this is a story unfamiliar to me, as every other story I know is about shame, punishment, abuse, and homesickness. Because of this, I did not enjoy this work, for it spoke to me as an effort to encourage assimilation by Native women into white society, by presenting a woman who could successfully 'blend' her Native ways into white American ways as well.

Jane Kelley's *Yaqui Women* was an attempt to rectify Langness' critiques of life history research, but I do not think her results achieve that. While her extensive and detailed notes on Yaqui culture and her history with Yaqui communities provided insight not found in the other works, this book served more to discuss the role of the researcher rather than the lives of the women she interviewed.

Margaret Blackman's life history of Sadie Brower Neakok was my least favorite of these pieces. While I have great respect for Neakok as a woman, elder, and leader, I

thought her book read as an example of a successful assimilation into the white world by a half-Native woman. I identified with her story the least, as she lived a life of privilege, which she acknowledges; her experiences are unlike any other Native person I have known or have read about.

The collaboration between Wachowich, Awa, Katsak, and Katsak was my favorite of all the works I reviewed here. This is in part because I grew up in Alaska, and love stories of survival and experiences on the tundra, and also because this work gives the best examples of the rapid effects colonization has had in Native people's lives. This work captures how quickly customs, language, residence, beliefs, and other aspects of culture can change, as well as how Native women strive to retain their traditional roles, jobs, and customs in the face of change.

I thought Barbara Loeb, Mardell Hogan Plainfeather, and Lillian Bullshows Hogan did a phenomenal job of capturing Hogan's life story accurately, respectfully, and with the best and most honest intentions. I found that Loeb's structure of Hogan's speech could also convey my mother's speech patterns, and I utilize it in this thesis. Of all the life stories I read, this one, and the collaboration above present, in my opinion, the actual lived experiences of Native women the best.

Reading these life histories has given me greater insight into how I can best present my mother's story, as well as what to avoid. These works showed me how life history research has developed through time, and have given me insight into how this type of

research can be improved. Reading these works reinforces my own experience as a Native woman; whatever my overall opinion, I often found myself standing with each of these women, gazing across the great divide that is the Indian and white experience in the United States.

Chapter 3

*“At every juncture in the history of colonization,
we have resisted domination.” - Lee Maracle*

“I have created you Kootenai People to look after this beautiful land, to honor and guard and celebrate my Creation here, in this place. As long as you do that, this land will meet all your needs. Everything necessary for you and your children to live and be happy forever is here, as long as you keep this Covenant with me. Will you do that? - *Quilxka Nupika* (Elders of the Kootenai Nation and the Members of the Tribe 1990:1)

The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

I begin this brief description of the Kootenai people with this commandment from our Creator, because to us, “that’s how time began” (Elders of the Kootenai Nation and the Members of the Tribe 1990:2). Any efforts to decolonize research must begin with centering an indigenous worldview (Smith 2012), and to us Kootenai people, our history begins with our creation and our Covenant with Nupika. Our actions should be guided by the commandments we were given, and acknowledge that everything Nupika has created “is sacred, and is there for a purpose” (EKNMT 1990:1). These words guide my research.

The aboriginal territory of the Kootenai people includes southeastern British Columbia, southwestern Alberta, northwestern Montana and the Idaho panhandle from Lake Pend Oreille to the Canadian border. We are a water people; the Kootenai River defines our territory (Brunton 1998:223), connecting us in the past by allowing easy travel in a region of rugged mountains, dense marshlands, and huge lakes. We traveled by means of our unique “sturgeon nose” canoe, as well as by horse when they came to our territory.

As a group, the Kootenai people are relatively unknown. Most maps of tribes in North American do not even include my band, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. While “every general work in American ethnology mentions the Kootenai’s existence” (Turney-High 1998:9), and usually includes a map of our aboriginal territory, the information stops there. Relatively few anthropologists have come to study the Kootenai people over the last century, including Boas, Chamberlain, Sapir, Schaeffer, Turney-High, and Ray. Turney-High’s work, “Ethnography of the Kutenai,” first published in 1941, is the best-known source of ethnographic information about the tribe. However, I know many Kootenai who dismiss the book as inaccurate and unrepresentative of our culture. This may be because Turney-High conducted his research with bands primarily in Canada.

Our Kootenai language is a linguistic isolate, meaning it is unlike any other in the world. In the past, many anthropologists, including Boas, Sapir, and Schaeffer tried to link the Kootenai language to others, though most efforts at this have been abandoned. These efforts coincided with attempts to determine where the Kootenai people originated. Schaeffer tried to link the Kootenai to “the circumboral region to the north” (Brunton 1998:224), while Turney-High theorized “an eastern provenience” (Turney-High 1998:10). Archaeologist Wayne Choquette believes the Kootenai people have inhabited their aboriginal territory for over 11,000 years, based on archaeological evidence suggesting an unbroken sequence of local material use and trade dating back at least to the end of the last Ice Age (interview with author, July 30, 2011). To us Kootenai people, we were put here by the Creator at the beginning of time, for this place (EKNMT 1990:1).

Before white people came to our territory, “we lived in small family groups in the areas best suited to the talents and tastes we had been given by the Creator in the beginning of time” (EKNMT 1990:3). Today, there are seven bands of Kootenai, five in Canada, one in Montana, and my band, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. Anthropologists have consistently divided the Kootenai people into Lower and Upper groups, based on their location along the Kootenai River, different dialects of the Kootenai language, and differences in habitat and subsistence (Brunton 1998:225). Tribal members have told me this interpretation of Kootenai culture is inaccurate. Considering this possibility, and the literature, I am uncertain of these divisions. I am unaware of different Kootenai dialects, and looking at Turney-High, his claims of differing habitation and subsistence are based on the use of buffalo skin tipis by “Upper Kootenai” and tule mat tipis and semi-subterranean pit houses among the “Lower Kootenai.” While I am familiar with tule mat tipis, and with their use by my band, I have never heard of nor seen evidence for semi-subterranean pit houses, outside of Turney-High’s book. Turney-High states that Upper Kootenai primarily hunted big game, while Lower Kootenai relied mostly on fish (Turney-High 1998); I believe this evidence to be too generalized to create entire cultural divisions. Especially when several anthropologists, including Turney-High, turn around and discuss Lower Kootenai joining in Upper Kootenai buffalo hunts on the Plains. Traditionally, their subsistence patterns overlapped, their homes were created and covered with the materials at hand in their different environments, and travel among the groups was common. It may be time to either abandon or re-examine these cultural distinctions applied by anthropologists and rejected by the Kootenai.

One reason anthropologists use this division may be that most anthropological research was conducted in communities above Kootenai Falls, the site of demarcation between Upper and Lower Kootenai. Most Kootenai live in the “Upper” territory, with only two communities of Kootenai below Kootenai Falls today; in Creston, B.C., and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. These two groups rarely appear in anthropological studies, and anthropologists usually relied on one member of a “Lower” group for information on entire communities. This is most likely why there is only one published work about the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, besides their self-published book *Century of Survival: A Brief History of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho*.

The Kootenai first met white traders in 1792 (Brunton 1998:232), and soon began trapping for them in exchange for guns, steel knives, axes, needles and other material goods (EKNMT1990:5). Soon after contact with whites, and perhaps before, smallpox, diphtheria, and later, influenza decimated the overall Kootenai population, resulting in “major social consequences” (Brunton 1998:232). Brunton writes of growing distrust of whites after the first epidemic hit the tribe; they knew the disease came from whites, yet no medical assistance was provided to the Kootenai people (Brunton 1998:232). Soon, missionaries came to tribal communities. In 1845, Father Pierre DeSmet the Bonners Ferry area; “We let him put up a cross on a hill above the river” (EKNMT1990:6), and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho adopted Christianity.

In 1855, Governor Issac Stevens was sent to make treaty with several tribes at

Hellgate, Montana (Elders of the Kootenai Nation and the Members of the Tribe 1990:7).

This treaty established the Flathead Reservation in Montana, where the signatory tribes were to move in exchange for their aboriginal territories.

“Our Kootenai Head Chief, Michel, sent his men to hear what Stevens had to say. When they returned and told him the plan to put us all on a reservation in return for giving up all of our Aboriginal Territory, Chief Michel was horrified. He said that would be impossible. It would be against our Covenant. So no Kootenai ever signed that Hellgate Treaty. Someone forged the Kootenai marks on it. We kept our Covenant.” [Elders of the Kootenai Nation and the Members of the Tribe 1990:7]

The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho never went to the Flathead Reservation. They remained along the Kootenai River, even ferrying the United States Boundary Commission surveyors across in 1860. “We helped them, and then they drew a line through the middle of our house, and said we couldn’t cross it. You call that line the U.S.-Canadian Border” (EKNMT 1990:7). In 1889, Major Ronan tried to get the Kootenai to move to the Flathead Reservation; seven joined him in the roughly 170-mile journey by foot (EKNMT 1990:7). Eventually he returned, and began allotting lands to individual Kootenai men. “We understood that we had to have enough land for the generations unborn. But Major Ronan and your government wouldn’t give it to us. So we took what we could get, and hoped that was the end of it” (EKNMT 1990:11). Despite the allotments, the Kootenai still lost land; white settlers would move survey stakes, the land could not be passed down to the next generation if the heirs were Canadian, and “unused” land was taken away by the government (EKNMT 1990:12-13).

In 1926, “the Senator from Idaho got a bill passed through both Houses in Washington, D.C., that allowed the Secretary of the Interior to sell allotments and use the money to pay for the diking,” (EKNMT 1990:13) that was needed to stop the seasonal flooding of the Kootenai Valley. The tribe did not like the bill, and did not want to sell land, “But it happened anyway, in 1928” (EKNMT 1990:13) Around this time, the State of Idaho banned the Kootenai from hunting and fishing, their source of food in this remote area. Some tribal members tried to farm their lands, as “it was almost impossible for an Indian to get a job” (EKNMT1990:18). Overall, life for the Kootenai was a struggle.

“It got to the point where we would have to choose between seeing our families go hungry because we didn’t hunt and fish, or seeing them go hungry because we did and got sent to jail for it” [Elders of the Kootenai Nation and the Members of the Tribe 1990:1]

The tribe repeatedly asked for help from the BIA, “to help ourselves but they just ignored us. Finally it got so bad that some kindly people in town noticed. There was publicity, and the BIA hates publicity” (EKNMT 1990:20). New homes were constructed (these are the homes in my mother’s story), to replace the log cabins built before the 1900s, and a well was dug so they did not have to drink out of the Kootenai River, polluted from upstream mining. However, life was still not easy for the people.

In 1946, the tribe filed a claim for the loss of lands before the Indian Claims Commission. The tribe was awarded \$425,000.00, “not very much, considering what we lost” (EKNMT 1990:23). The tribe wanted to use the money to buy back allotments they had lost, but they never saw that money. Court costs were taken out, and the BIA held onto

the money for years, finally stipulating that \$70,000.00 had to be used to fix up St. Michael's Mission, the plot of land where the Kootenai live, "and to run the affairs of the tribe" (EKNMT 1990:23). The rest of the money would be put into trust accounts for individual tribal members, to pay for social services, or purchase a house in town. Most of that money was never seen again. "The Bureau of Indian Affairs explained that by saying they had made bad investments with our money" (EKNMT 1990:24).

This ushered in a "lost" time in my tribe's history. In our book, we jump from 1946 to 1974. All I knew for years was that alcohol had taken over Kootenai community and lives. Growing up, no one ever really spoke about that time. I discovered that Paul Baker, a sociologist at Boise Junior College, conducted fieldwork at St. Michael's Mission in the 1950s. He describes the community (rather paternally) in his 1955 book,

The Forgotten Kutenai:

“In the region of northern Idaho, at Bonners Ferry, there are now approximately 76 members of the tribe (Baker 1955:7)...The Kutenai still hunt, fish, gather roots, and pick berries for food. They at the present time do not grow crops, fruits, or vegetables. Most of their farming lands are leased to white farmers who pay rent for their use. They work for the white man, on the highways, in the shops, and in the forests for daily wages...None of them seem to have shops of their own in the towns and villages where they offer goods or services to the public. The services that the Kutenai need themselves are not rendered by other Indians but by the white man (Baker 1955:30)...The older people have been taken care of by the government until they are now dependent on help from the government. However, the young people can be taught to stand on their own two feet and participate in normal community life. They are aware that they are out of step with their elders. They feel throttled and held down by the old people...One of the greatest problems is the fact that the Indians do not trust each other and seem to have great hostility toward each other...If the young Indians get drunk, they get into great brawls and often kill each other. A check of the Kutenai deaths for the past few years indicates that about one-third of the deaths were due to violence, some were due to shooting, some stabbing, some were deaths by means of clubs, while a number were due to accidents, mainly car accidents. In most cases there was heavy drinking when the deaths occurred. The drinking may be an effort to forget their troubles. They no doubt have great hostility to the white groups. The fights they have among themselves when intoxicated may be a outlet for the emotions they have against the white man. Anyone who talks with them is bound to see how deep the resentment against the white people is. These feelings have been piling up for generations. They are given expression against each other since they cannot “get back” at the white people. We wonder if their suspicion of each other may come from their suspicion with the white man.” [Baker 1955:55].

This is the world my mother was born into. This thesis grew out of my desire to learn about this lost time.

Chapter 4

“Before I can understand what independence is, I must break the chains that imprison me in the present, impede my understanding of the past, and blind me to the future.” - Lee Maracle

“They Said I Would Never Amount To Anything”

The interview portion of this thesis was conducted between January 1, 2013 and January 5, 2013, at my home in Philomath, Oregon. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder with a handheld tape recorder as back up. Handwritten notes were compiled into three composition notebooks. The interview sessions totaled nearly thirteen hours, not all of which appear here. The interviews were initially transcribed in paragraph style; only materials used in this thesis have been formatted into the style found here. All digital files, tapes, transcription, and notes are currently in my possession. No plans for permanent storage have been determined at this time.

My intention in this text is to preserve my mother’s words as she spoke them, though I chose to only focus on the early part of her life. With great hesitancy, I eliminated redundancies and clarified persons she refers to as “she” and “he” in her stories. My writing technique is inspired by Loeb (2012: xii), and is intended to capture the rhythm and emphasis of my mother’s speech. Readers can feel free to move through the stories at a natural pace. Words spoken in Kootenai are italicized, and are translated into English when possible. Within the text, my mother’s words are in regular font and mine are in bold. I have chosen to capitalize my mother’s Great Aunt, Grandparents, Mother and Father to emphasize their roles in my mother’s life. To protect confidentiality, I have changed the

names of all living individuals. I have not changed the names of ancestors my mother recalls, to connect my mother's story with the larger story of my tribe and to re-name and re-member our ancestors who may be forgotten.

My mother, Eileen (Abraham) Wheaton, was born September 26, 1951 to Abraham and Louise Abraham. Her brother was Chief Raymond Abraham. Her Grandfather was Eneas Abraham and her Grandmother was Ann Mary Abraham. She is a member of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and was raised at St. Michael's Mission near Bonners Ferry, Idaho.

Jyl Wheaton-Abraham: So...what are your earliest memories?

Eileen Wheaton: When I was about,

less than about

three years old, I remembered we had a terrible winter,

and it was in January.

The house was really, really cold all the time because we had no insulation. We had wood floors.

And we just had one

stove,

wood-burning stove in the living room.

And a wood-burning cooking stove in the kitchen. We had no running

hot water.

We had one bedroom.

Our Grandmother,

our Great Aunt made quilts.

The floors were always cold.

And it was in January,

and I remembered,

it had snowed and snowed and it covered the windows.

And being small I didn't think

the windows

were that big

but they went really high.

And I remember standing there looking at them because the
snow keep getting deeper and deeper.

And then

one morning there was a lot of commotion.

My Grandfather came in with my Grandmother
and told my Great Aunt
they were leaving.

They had to shovel.

And I remember looking out the door when he left and all these men were walking by
they all have shovels I wondered what was going on.

And then

I don't remember anything.

It must have been maybe a week later,
but it's seemed like, because I was small, it seemed
like a long time.

And my Grandmother
told my Great Aunt

“They'll be coming back today.”

And I kind of remembered they said they were leaving but I wondered where they went
because I didn't understand time.

But my Mother came in the door and she was carrying something.

And she put it in the
bed on the living room
and it started crying. It was my
brother, Silas.

The reason that they had
been shoveling was because the snow was so deep, they couldn't drive the car to the
hospital.

It had taken them all day to shovel
that far.

It's about 2 1/2 miles.

And then my Mother had to stay there until
the snow could be shoveled again
so she could go home.

And that's the last thing I remembered for a while.

And then I remember
one day they told us to go into the bedroom,
my brother and sister, and I,
to go to the bedroom.

So we did.

It was during the night. We didn't have electricity.

They had coal oil lights.

And they wouldn't let us have one in the bedroom.

They had one in the living room.

And all of these,

we call them old ladies. They were probably in their 30's and 40's. All of these old ladies kept coming in, going out,

and they'd talk and we couldn't hear what they were saying.

And so we went to sleep, and sometime during the night I woke up and I could hear talking

Kootenai to my Mother.

And I really wanted to open the door and look out and I couldn't. All of a sudden I heard a baby cry.

And that was my second brother, Samuel.

And it was in

February

of the next year.

They couldn't get her to the hospital so she had to have a home birth.

And they had no place to put him.

So there was this

rocking chair without a back

that my Grandmother used to sit in.

And they covered it with blankets and that's where

he lived for
a while.

And then

I remember,

I must have been about

four and my sister Libby was three years old,
my Grandfather raised chickens.

He raised cows, he had horses.

He let us go out to the barn.

It was quite a ways out in the field.

Go to barn and watch

while he threw hay in and

took care of the horses and

hitch up the team so they could go to town.

But he never let us go to see the cows. We could see them from
a hill near the house.

We could watch while they went out there and they worked with the cows.

We didn't care about the cows,

but we loved the chickens.

It was funny to watch them. All they did all day is,
they scratched with their left foot and

scratched with their right foot.

And they chased each other around.

If one hen got too close to another hen,

that hen would chase her off. And we always thought that was so funny so we

gave them names. They were Indian names

like, "*Laki*."

Because, *Laki*, she was the one that

had a big part of the yard.

And one day, this one would be called "Momma,"

because she was always with chicks,

we hadn't seen Momma so we figured, "She's gonna bring back some chicks."

And she did.

And as they grew my sister and I were fascinated because she would be scratching and

they would be right behind her like,

just picking things up.

And so one day we were watching her and I said,

"You know what, we should catch one of the babies and play with it."

Libby thought it was a good idea.

My hair wasn't as long as hers.

But she had

hair down to her waist. And our Grandmother would

braid our hair every day.

And we both wore overalls.
So I told her,
"You stand over there
and I'll go this way and I'll shoo Momma that way,
back towards the chicken house,
and all the babies will follow.
And the one that doesn't
keep up, you
catch it
with your bare hands.
They're gonna come right here by this tree."
So she did and
I clearly remember
she had on blue overalls
and her hair was outside of her overalls.
And at the bottom it was tied with
a string
to keep the braids together.
And so I
started shooing that hen.
And right away,
Momma started walking faster and faster.

All the chicks started following her.

And there was one that kind of stayed behind.

And I told her,

"Now!"

All of these is in Kootenai,

so I'm translating it into English,

because we didn't speak

English at that time.

Our language was Kootenai.

And

I told her, "Now!"

and she ran over and she grabbed the little chicken.

She caught it and

I said "Run!"

So

we're gonna run around the north side of the house

and run through the front and play on the porch.

She didn't get far

and mother hen grabbed her and knocked her down

and climbed on her back.

She let go of the little chick.

And

mother hen grabbed one of her braids
and started pulling and pulling and wouldn't let go. [*She laughs*]
She was trying to pull away.
And I ran over.
I was trying to hit Momma.
And she turned around and she tried to peck me!
And Libby was screaming so I didn't know what to do.
I was gonna go get my Mom
so I ran to the kitchen door
and she was coming out with a towel
and she
flopped it
like that. (*She makes flapping gestures*)
And mother hen let go of my sister's hair and ran to her chicks.
And they ran behind the
chicken shed.
And I remember my sister got up,
she was all dusty.
She was full of dust.
And most of it was
chicken poo.
Her hair was just full of dust.

And

the only clean part of her
was where she cried, the tears
came down her face.

And even her clothes were dusty. So
I went over and I was trying to dust her
and made her cry more.

Mom brought her in and I could hear them talking.

After a while she told me, "Go sit on the porch."

So I sat on the porch.

And I was waiting to
get in trouble.

Pretty soon she came back up.

Her hair was clean.

And she had on clean overalls and she sat down
and I said,

"Are we gonna get in trouble?"

She said, "No,

Great Aunt said 'Leave her alone, at least it didn't peck her.'

And she told me, 'You and your sister leave those chickens alone.'

So we can't play with them anymore."

I don't know if you could call it play because

all it did was attack us.

We had a cellar.

And from the time I was about,

probably about five,

my Grandmother always

canned.

She canned apples,

cherries,

berries,

peaches,

apricots.

There's a berry, it's called *Yuke*.

I don't know what the English name is.

There were

shelves and shelves

in the cellar.

And

all summer she canned

with my Great Aunt.

And they filled it all up.

And my Grandfather had planted three apple trees.

We were allowed to eat the apples
but most of it went into
bins.

And he grew potatoes.

And I don't know what else.

But in the fall,
we had to help
when they dug the potatoes.

We had to shake the dirt off.

And he put them into gunny sacks
and put them in the bins.

And from the time I was very young my Grandmother would say "Go to the cellar."

And she'd tell me what to get.

And there was no light in the cellar.

Sometimes she'd tell me I can use the flashlight.

But

most of the time she just said, "Just go in there and feel around." Because she
kept certain things in certain places.

And she'd say, "Just go in there and take the one that you touch." And so I would.

I'd bring it back.

And I remember sometimes when I brought
some back there'd be a little bit of mold on the top.

And she'd tell me,

"Don't shake the jars when you walk in because
that spreads that."

So I wouldn't.

And I'd get home and she'd take it back in the house
and she'd scrape it off and taste it
to see if it's okay.

And

in the wood shed next to the chicken shed,

we had,

it was amazing in the spring.

We could play in there before the snow melted.

And there was bark and sawdust on the floor of the building.

And we'd play and we wouldn't get wet.

And then over summer we wouldn't go in there.

But in the fall we'd go to Q'Awiss¹² and she'd say,

"You kids need to bring in wood."

We had a wood box

for the two houses.

There was a need to fill up wood boxes.

¹² Q'Awiss is her Great Aunt.

We'd go in there and from floor to ceiling,
wall to wall
was filled with wood.
We don't know where the wood ever came from
until later I realized
that's what my Grandfather and the men of the village did.
They'd fill everybody's wood shed.
We don't know when they did it,
where they got the wood.
Because
we never saw them carrying wood.
But that's how,
that's a matter of survival.
So they did it.

I think that if it hadn't been for my Grandfather,
and these older men,
life would have been harder.
Because
our father,
my uncles
didn't help.

They were into drinking,
sleeping late,
always looking for that next bottle,
going to the pool hall,
shooting pool to get that next bottle.

Or
if they worked a little bit for the farmers,
they would buy a car.

It's like they didn't care.

The older men, we always saw them.

They had gardens,
they had chickens.

And they always were working with them.

And the women,
the older women,
they worked hard.

There was no washing machine.

You would see clothes lines full of clean clothes.

I remember my Grandmother
and my Great Aunt,
even in the winter time,
boiling galvanized pots of water.

And in the summer time
they'd take it outside and they would wash.
And winter times they'd wash inside,
and they'd hang them on the clothesline.
And we always thought the best part was
when they brought the jeans and they were all so stiff.
And they'd hang them over the wood stove.
Sometimes our living room was just one
big
clothes hanging thing.
And we never knew how they got soft and dry again.
But we like to get up and go
hit them with our fingers
because they were just,
they wouldn't even move.
Diapers,
there were never,
I don't think there was ever a time
that we didn't have diapers.
Cloth diapers,
baby blankets.
And in the summer,

you'd see lines of clothes.

My mother paused for nearly half a minute; the look on her face as she stared at the table told me not to speak. It wasn't until she made eye contact again that I asked my next question.

JW: Can you tell me the names of all the people you remember and a little bit about them?

EW: Most

names

of the old people

like my Grandmother

and my Great Aunt,

they all were named,

I would say they were named after saints.

Because when the priests came,

they gave everybody

almost

the same name.

My Grandmother's name was Anne Mary.

Her Indian name was

Anma.

My Great Aunt,

her name was Mary Anne.

And her

Indian name

was *Q'Awiss*.

Other women,

there was a

woman named

Theresa.

There was,

Anne,

Sophie,

another Theresa,

another Mary Anne.

Then there was Helen.

Catherine,

Alice, I don't know if her name was Alice.

Eliza.

Marilyn.

Pauline.

Her Indian name was

Ma' Ma'kukx, which in English means...*(She laughs, near tears and pauses for several seconds.)*

To other women her age it was a term of respect,

because,
for generations,
the women in her family
were cooks,
for large gatherings.
And they taught
young women
what to cook.
Traditional foods and stuff.
She was so heavy.
All of us kids thought
it meant um,
“Cooks too much” and that’s how she got so fat.
Because she
she ate
so much of her own cooking.
That’s how she got so
big.
Where,
to the women she was valuable
to us
it was just,

you know,
she just ate too much and so we thought,
that's what that word meant.
And she had a sister named Catherine,
Catherine was equally big.
So we called her,
"Eats Too Much Too." (*We laugh together*)

And I remember one time,
Catherine broke her leg,
and she came to see my Grandmother and my Aunt,
and she had a cast on her leg.
And we thought it was so funny because we
we thought she,
her weight,
had caused her leg to break.
And those,
I think were,
how many old
Grandmother and Great Aunt women there were.

And their husbands were named after

saints also.

There was Eneas.

His Indian name was *Neas*.

There was Simon,

and I can't remember his Indian name.

There was

Baptiste.

And his name was,

can't think of it.

There was

David,

and I can't remember his name.

But what's funny is at that time I knew

their Indian names

and I didn't know

their white names.

And now it's reversed itself.

There was Moses,

his name was "Caterpillar."

When you say "Caterpillar"

it's *Chukayute*.

There's a bird

that says,

“Chuu kayute”

and

we thought it was neat (*She is crying and sniffing*)

because the

the bird knew him

by name.

And it was amazing,

because,

sometimes there would be

one

way over one the east side,

“Chuu kayute,”

and there'd be one on the west side,

“Chuu kayute,”

and we always wondered

why they wanted him.

And we'd go looking for those birds,

they'd be so close

and we couldn't find them.

And as kids we were told not to follow those birds because they can lead you away.

And you'll get lost.

There was a man

I don't know what his name was.

But his name was

Pik.

I don't know what his English name was.

But there's a bird,

a night bird

that comes on

just

after

dusk

and it goes "*Pik, Pik!*" (*She laughs*)

We were fascinated

because

that bird knew his name (*She laughs*).

My Great Grandfather's name was

Three Moon (*unintelligible*).

He had a brother named

Temo.

But

I don't know what that means in Kootenai.

So when the
Catholic priests started
I don't know if it was a census
or baptism.
They called him Tamia.
There was
a
man and his wife.
They were called,
the two of them were called,
"Iron Kettle" (*She laughs*)
"*pathki* Iron Kettle"
"*pathki ichkini*"
which
he was called
"*Ichk* Iron Kettle,"
which meant "man
kettle pot." (*She laughs*)
And the reason
they called
them that is that
they were

going to a berry picking site
and along
the
trail
they found
a Dutch oven (*She laughs*)!
And he brought it back to their village
and he showed it off! (*She laughs*)
And from that day on
they were called
“The Kettles!”

When my Grandfather was about
ten
they started training him.
His Grandfather was a chief.
They started training him
to be a runner.
They needed runners to
go from
one village to another village
to deliver news.

So we lived,
our
band lived
in the
Bonners Ferry area,
and
we used the Kootenai River for transportation.
And his route was to run from Bonners Ferry
to
what is Elmo, Montana now¹³.
He never ran
during the day.
When it became dusk,
they'd send him off and he'd run all night.
Sleep during the day,
and run all night. It would take him two days.
Pick up news and run back.
And then he started running by himself when he was twelve.
And he didn't
take anything with him.

¹³ A distance of approximately 175 miles.

No food he just drank water.

And even

as he got

older,

even though he had cars,

he would walk from the Mission to town

everyday

and back¹⁴.

When he was

in his

twenties,

he met a white woman.

And his

mother made him marry her because this white woman was rich.

I don't know what "rich" would mean.

So he gave up his running.

And he tried to

live

like a white man.

¹⁴ A distance of approximately 7 miles.

It lasted about four years.

And he left because he couldn't take it anymore.

And he was single for a long time.

A lot of women wanted him to marry them.

And he wouldn't.

When my Grandmother was sixteen,

there was a gathering.

She went

and she met my Grandfather.

And she knew that

she would marry him someday.

And a year later they did and they stayed together. (*She starts crying*)

I remember when we were kids

we didn't have a lot of toys and stuff.

In the summertime,

of course we weren't allowed to touch the hatchet or a knife,

my uncle Pasco

who was four years older than me,

and my friend Adrian

he was a year older than me,

and Richard was about four years older.

We'd go to the woodshed and Pasco would steal the axe.

And he'd get a knife

and all around us there were

wild rose bushes,

snow berry bushes,

and Pasco showed us how to

make tunnels.

So we played

war.

We'd make

tunnels

inside of these bushes.

Sometimes we'd pull all of the root up

so that it went down to dirt,

and other times we'd just

chop off enough so you wouldn't get scratched and

rake up the dirt with our hands.

Pack it down

and

that's where we'd play war. We'd crawl around inside these bushes.

And we didn't dare let anybody know because,

"How did you chop those roots? How'd you chop those bushes?"

And at the entrance

we'd leave some growing.

So it looked

natural.

We must have had hundreds of feet of

trails going every which way.

And we were always working on it!

To keep it from growing back.

And we climbed trees.

There was one growing outside of our Grandfathers house.

And I think I must have been about twelve.

And we'd always climb this tree.

And we'd always get yelled at.

Pasco decided we should get way up and build a fort.

So we

went around and got

any kind of scrap

wood we could get.

And we kept hauling things up there.

Finally we got enough wood

to build a platform.

It must have been about two feet by three feet.

We thought that was the neatest thing we ever built.

One day,

I knew my Grandfather was looking in the tree and I thought,

“Did he see that?”

And I knew that he did.

I saw him go back in the house and

pretty soon my Grandmother came out of the house and

she’s standing on the porch and

she was looking.

They went back in,

pretty soon my Uncle Lee came out and

climbed the tree and all of our fort came down.

We only had it like one day.

But that was a good fort because

we really put a lot of time

into that one!

We had to go get nails.

We had to go find wood with nails,

pound out the nails,

straighten the nails,

and then we had

to get wire

to wrap the wood around because we didn't have enough nails.

We played cowboys and Indians.

We had to pick sides

“Are you going to be a cowboy or an Indian?”

And we knew who was the best

so you always wanted to be on the best side.

Most of the time nobody wanted to be an Indian because,

if you were an Indian,

you were probably going to get killed early.

Then you'd be out of the game.

My sister and I had dolls for the longest time.

They were rubber dolls.

One day

we cut one's back open

to see what's inside and

it was like spongy material.

Because it was soft,

we wanted to know

what was in there.

It wasn't cloth.

So we got the knife and we cut it open
a little bit and it was yellow.

So we were happy that
we knew what was
in there.

Our Grandmother made us
baby boards.

And they were authentic baby boards.

And she taught us how to wrap our babies.

There's a baby board then there's a carrier,
and she made us those so we would learn how to use those
and showed us how to tie them up.

Make the baby feel secure.

And she made little dresses
for our dolls.

It didn't do any good
to make us
moccasins.

They were made of material
and we'd always lose one.

So she quit doing that.

The babies just had to,

their dresses had to be long enough to cover their feet.

And we learned how to put scarves on them.

Tie them up.

I don't know why (*She laughs*)

we tied them the old ladies' way.

And we always played on the front porch

of Grandma's or Q'Awiss' house.

Or else, if we were really daring we'd go play on the
porch

of the church (*She laughs*)

until we got yelled at.

I remember one time

Libby's baby was sick.

And this is before we spoke English so

everything is

in Kootenai.

I remember

I was going to be the doctor.

So she came,

told me the baby was sick so I

checked on it and

I told her to take it home and

make some *I-ute*¹⁵.

And I told her

“Maybe it will make baby better .”

She said, “Okay.”

So I became me again and I was

sitting down with my baby,

and she came back and I said,

“Did you go to the doctor?

and she said, “Yeah,” and I said “What did he say?”

“He said to make some *I-ute*,” and I got up

and I said “Oh, I can do that,” and I went over

to the pretend stove and I boiled up some *I-ute* and we gave it to

the baby and the baby got better.

There’s this plant, I have no idea what it’s called

but

we used it as perfume.

It smelled so

good,

¹⁵ *I-ute* is a root used as medicine by the Kootenai people.

we'd take it and

we'd

mash it.

And we'd put it on our dolls

so they wouldn't stink because

they were always pooping and peeing.

In the summertime

we'd go to Buck Horn¹⁶

or we'd go to Pack River¹⁷.

Those were

the two

berry picking campsites for the Bonners Ferry area Kootenai.

And we'd build a dam

every year.

Same place.

Close to our camp.

That's where we were supposed to stay.

We'd build it and somebody would usually tear it down when the

water

¹⁶ A traditional camping area in the Purcell Mountains northeast of Bonners Ferry.

¹⁷ A traditional camping area in the Selkirk Mountains south of Bonners Ferry.

got too deep.

And then we'd rebuild it.

One time we decided to

walk up this creek.

I'd heard my Grandfather talking about,

years earlier

there had been an iron mine there.

And they had used that river

to divert some water

to the mine site.

So I told Pasco and he said "Where?" and I said,

"Up

there." And I pointed toward the place and I said,

"See where that mountain comes down? I think that's what he's talking about."

So

we decided to walk up there.

We walked near a stream and sure enough

we found a

man-made

wooden dam.

And the water was like five feet deep and it was just clear.

We didn't want them to know
that we had found it cause nobody had ever let us know,
so we'd sneak up there and go swimming.

One day, I guess we didn't make enough noise,
they sent my Uncle Lee to go look for us and
boy did we all get whipped.

Oh we were whipped so bad because
we could have drowned.

We could have went
under the dam.

Next thing we knew
they had come in with saws and
they had sawed our dam down. (*She laughs*)

And sometimes we'd have to walk up the mountain
on this trail.

It's a road now but,
we'd have to walk up there and about
a mile up
there's bear grass
and a few
small bushy plants.

And I'd always hear
people talking about it.
So one day I told,
Pasco and
Libby and Silas,
"We should go up there."
So we did.
We walked all the way up there.
And I said, "This is what they talk about."
And it looked like nobody ever went there.
But there was this trail that went above it.
I said,
"There's a trail."
So we went up there
and it was a beautiful
spring.
And that's why that grass grew there.
It
completely
surrounded it.
And they had one spot where they would dip the water.
So we learned when we were hiking up or hiking down,

we'd stop and drink ice cold clear water.

Another time I heard

my Great Aunt telling

somebody about

this one

down towards the other creek.

And the worst thing she could have said was,

"Don't tell the kids. We don't want them down there."

So of course we'd go down there.

When we were kids,

because our grandfather was Chief,

we had to go to church

every Sunday.

And he gave the sermon.

They were,

I would have to say

some of them were

more exciting

than the English sermon. (*She laughs*)

He was so stern.

He believed in his religion.

And sometimes,
we'd have to go like
one other day a week
depending on if it was a holiday.
We went
from the time I was a little kid.
I can
remember going to funerals.
It was expected of us.
Because we were the Chief's grandchildren.

I always
went to Jumpdance¹⁸ in January.
I didn't
think of it like that,
I just loved to dance.
When I was about
maybe four or five,
my Grandmother gave me my first
dress regalia.

¹⁸ Jumpdance is a Kootenai winter dance to make your "path" for the year.

I always had moccasins.

And she gave me my first dress regalia. It was made of

black,

some kind of cloth.

Maybe wool.

And there were rows and rows of elk teeth.

And between the rows of elk teeth

there were little shells. *(She begins to cry silently).*

And I had it,

I would say I wore,

it was large enough to wear till I was eight years old.

And she always kept it

in her trunk

until it was time to take it out.

And then

I got a shawl.

And I had that.

I don't know

what happened to it but I'm sure my Mother had something to do with it.

They probably had a falling out,

that was the end of my dress.

My shawl

and all my moccasins.

(She is crying.)

My Mom took away my

enjoyment

of

what I know now is

*Nupika*¹⁹.

And I didn't have another

dress

until I was about fifty.

My mother gave me one of hers *(She begins to cry silently again)*.

And I didn't have moccasins until about

four years ago.

I had a pair made.

My sister,

¹⁹ *Nupika* is our Creator and the essence of all things.

made my belt.

My Mom made me ashamed.

that I didn't know

the songs.

I don't know how to drum.

She made fun of me.

That I couldn't dance.

I had to learn all over again.

I still can't drum.

I don't bead.

I make a hell of a poor Indian (*She laughs but is near tears*).

When I was a kid,

I remember

being very young.

All around me in the village,

I lived most of the time

with my Great Auntie.

Sometimes

I lived with my Grandparents.

Most of the time my brothers and sisters lived with my Great Auntie.

My Grandfather used to tell us

all the history,

all kinds of stories.

What's expected of you in your life.

Why you have to go to school.

Why you have to be a good person.

Why you have to be generous.

Why you have to help others.

Share things.

And Mom took most of that away from me.

Because of jealousy.

She was mad at my Grandfather.

She thought they were taking me over.

Well,

what had I been doing all these years?

Since I was small

I'd been living with

either one.

Q'Awiss or Grandma.

I remember

all around me at night,

this went on.

My mom and dad

most of the village

of their age

would

find some money for the bottle.

And they would get drunk.

And I'd wake up at night and I'd hear them singing

songs.

And it became

scary.

Because these were songs I'd hear my Grandmother and my Grandfather sing.

And I saw things happen.

And I wondered, "What's happening out there with these drunken people?"

And to me

they shouldn't have been doing that.

That was there to help us.

It helped our people.

But I'd hear it all around me at night.

Years I heard them.

I remember one night
we had to go to my Grandma's house
because my
Mom and Dad
and a whole bunch of people came home
to Q'Awiss' house
and they were partying.
And she gathered us up
and she said,
"We'll go out the back door and go to Grandma's."
So we did.
That night I woke up and I heard them singing.
And I heard Grandma and Grandpa and Q'Awiss talking.
And I knew
that they were talking about
that it was wrong. (*She begins to cry.*)

The next afternoon we got home.
There's a
medicine dance called
the Blanket Dance.
When the Indians are in dire need

they call on the

Dance.

They'd hung a blanket across the living room
and they were practicing that.

Q'Awiss tore it down.

And so that's what I knew they were doing when they were singing.

It was like a mockery.

And that's when

I got so scared of this²⁰

that I

I buried the songs

inside of me.

Because I was so afraid of them.

And my Grandmother told my Grandfather,

"Someday these people are going to pay."

By then

when I was eleven.

My Uncle Lee had just gotten back a few weeks earlier
from Germany,

²⁰ She is referring to our Indian religion.

he was in the Army.

He had just gotten back

and my Dad was very jealous of his brother.

Because my Grandparents had made a big deal of him coming home.

He'd been gone for two years.

I was glad to see him.

And

of course they got him into

heavy drinking.

That was the norm.

When Uncle Lee wasn't drinking,

he would play with the kids,

be with his parents,

be with Q'Awiss,

be with

other people.

And he'd talk about

what he did there.

And so one night,

they were having a party.

I could hear it.

And the next day we went to school.

When we got back,

we pulled in,

and there were all of these police cars,

other cars,

parked all around

in the middle of

what we call The Circle.

The road goes

around the village,

but in the center there is a

grassy area.

And at that time,

in the middle of that there was a

building.

It was called the Community Building.

On either end of the building

were

showers for men and women.

And in the center there was a

room

that's where they held

funerals,

dances,

things like that,

meetings.

And

when we got out Pasco said,

“We’re not going to Grandma’s. You guys
are going over to Q’Awiss’.”

So he took us all over there

and we went in.

We could just hear her crying.

So, he told us to “Sit down,

be quiet.”

So we did.

He was talking

then he said,

“Just stay,

don’t make any noise.”

So he left.

He was gone for a while.

He came back and he said,

“We need to talk.

Uncle Lee was killed

this morning.

They found his body.”

And it was so shocking because

we’d seen him the day before.

Two days before that,

my Dad had come home drunk

and he was going to raise hell.

And Lee had come from his parent’s house

and herded us out the back door over to his Mom and Dad’s to keep us safe.

And Pasco said,

“That’s all I

can tell you so,

you need to,

just be quiet now.”

There was no explanation or anything.

When it got dark,

all of the cars left.

The next day,

we didn’t go to school.

And all Q’Awiss did was cry.

And we never saw

our Grandma and Grandpa,
but my Mom was lying on the bed.
I figured she had hangover
and I kept the other kids in the bedroom and
we didn't do anything.
There was nothing to do.
Finally Pasco came in
he said,
"He was killed.
He was sitting in the car over there by the Community Building.
It was
late at night and
he was sitting on the
passenger's side in the back seat.
They think somebody reached in with a knife
and cut his neck
and he bled to death."
And for us kids to be that young and think of that it was just like,
"Wow."
And next day
our Grandmother came and took us to her house and they talked about it.
And then they

had the wake
and then the funeral.
And the FBI kept coming
and questioning people.
What I kept hearing
was,
“This was bound to happen.
This was bound to happen for what they’ve been doing.”
They never did find out who killed him,
but they all speculated.
So then,
we went back to school.
Life went on.
And I remember my Grandmother
and Grandfather talking,
and they said,
“You watch for one year.
The next 12 months when we make our roads,
we ask for 12 months,
you will see the people who are guilty.
They will be gone.”
And I understood it,

because

I had been a part of that.

So about

three months later

Mary Cecile,

I don't remember what her last name was,

it was in Kootenai,

she got sick and

before the day was over,

she passed away.

A couple of months went by.

Moses Isadore

was run over by a car

and he died.

Before winter that year,

somebody else died

and I can't remember who it was.

And then they said,

"It's finished.

Those were the three."

But did it cut down the drinking?

No.

The next thing

the government did for us,

they brought in

electricity.

But only to the Community Building.

And they

put in a

TV.

And they would set up benches.

And children could go in

only on Sundays and watch Lassie.

And I think that was the only program.

When that was over, we would get shooed back out.

But that TV

was on all the time.

And they were drinking

in there.

You could hear them.

I remember

I must have been about 10.

That's what was happening.

And my Dad got mad at everybody,
chased everybody out.

Everybody left
except my mom,
she was passed out on the floor.

I don't know why he let us stay,
but he told us,
"You're going to learn a lesson."

There was me, Libby, Silas and Samuel.

Damon wasn't born yet.

He went to his Mom and Dad's house
and he got Pasco.

When Pasco came in he looked at me,
and I could just tell by his face,
this isn't good.

And I just,

I didn't know what to do.

And Dad said, "None of you can leave."

And he took my Mom,

by then my Mom
walked with one leg,
and one arm.

He told Pasco, "Help me."

He dragged her
into the shower room
and he turned on
the ice-cold water.

And it must have shocked her
because she started screaming.

And Libby grabbed me,
and he said, "Let go of her!
You're going to learn a lesson.

This is what happens to women."

After a couple of minutes
he put it on red hot,
you could just see the steam.

She couldn't get up because she only had one leg and one arm.

When she got to a kneeling position,
he kicked her
and knocked her back down.

And he turned it back to cold.

And this must have went on about 15 minutes, but it seemed like a lot longer
and she was screaming.

And he kept making us watch.

When he got finished, he just started laughing this horrible laugh.

He said, “Well, I’m going to get some more booze.”

And he told Pasco, “You,
you’re older than them.

You help them put her clothes back on and drag her back to the house.”

So we had to.

We got towels
and we tried to help her,
and brought her back to Q’Awiss’ house,
and he didn’t come back for a couple of days.

When he came back it was like
nothing happened.

Mom didn’t say anything,
but...

if there was a god, he should have killed him right then. (*She begins to cry silently*)

My Dad was in prison
from the time he was about 18,
for just
petty
things.
Stealing a car.

Couldn't stay out of jail for anything.
He started learning very young what to do,
to torture.
That's how he survived in prison from a young age.
I remember when I was about seven.
He came home from prison.
And we couldn't leave,
of course,
and we had a coal oil lamp
and there was a hair curler,
it belonged to Talan's²¹ girlfriend,
Hanna.
And you had to put it into the chimney of the lamp
to heat it up to curl your hair.
He saw it,
he put it in there,
and then he said,
"Time for our branding."
And I remember that
"Time for our branding."

²¹ Her father's brother.

And he told us,

“You’re going to watch.”

When it got red hot,

he put Mom’s arm out like that,

and he put his knee on her wrist,

and he took that red hot thing,

and he rolled it several times,

and she was screaming.

It raised a welt that big

that she still had it when she passed away.

“Now you’re my woman forever.”

And he told us,

“You ever try to get away from me,

I’ll do it to you guys too.”

There was no doubt in my mind he would do it.

Later on,

they did it to Hanna,

because she was Talan’s woman.

Why these women ever stayed,

I will never know.

We

were always on welfare,
because he never worked.
He was most of the time in jail.

And I remember being as a little kid
late at night,
when everybody went to sleep,
I laid there
and I watched
I mean, that's why today I am a listener.
I am a watcher.
I know things are happening and I listen,
to see what's happening.
I'd lay there
and I'd pretend I was asleep.
Pretty soon,
Mom's flashlight would come on,
and she'd open her handbag,
and she'd take out
wads of cash.
And she'd started making them into piles.
Piles.

Piles.

Piles.

Then she'd count it over.

Then she'd count it again.

Then she'd take it,

then she'd put it back in her purse and cover it with stuff.

This was the welfare money we were supposed to use

to buy clothing and food,

necessities.

But no,

we never got anything.

If we got anything new,

it was from our Grandparents.

We never went to eat any place.

Once in a while,

in summertime,

Anne would come back from town, she'd

call us over and give us each a Popsicle.

And she'd tell my Great Aunt,

"What is the matter with that woman?

What does she do with all that money?"

And I'd think,

“I know.”

And she would save up
money.

And when he got out of prison,
she'd have money.

And the first thing he'd do when he'd come, he'd go,

“Where is it?”

And she'd come over and sit down.

He'd start counting and say,

“You did good, you did good.”

Then he'd go to the liquor store.

That night there would be singing.

And sure enough I would hear her screaming.

He'd be beating her up.

And

it went on for years.

I remember a couple of times hearing my Grandmother telling her,

“Before you die, or something worse happens,

go home to Canada.

You know,

you have a mother and father in Canada, go home!”

She wasn't leaving unless we were with her.

And my Grandmother would tell her,

"No,

you have no way of taking care of them.

They're better off here with us. There's two of us women that take care of them.

They'll be all right."

And she wouldn't leave

because

we were her bread basket

you know?

Her bread and butter.

She wasn't going to let us go.

They probably destroyed it after she passed away but,

I remember she had this huge file.

And it was full of pictures

of her just beat up all over her body

black and blue,

rib cage,

between the legs,

hair pulled out in clumps,

face just beat up.

God, her lip would be so big you couldn't even recognize her lip!

She'd come home from the hospital,
stitches all over.

Do it again.

That's when I decided
no man is ever
going to do that to me.
It's not worth it.

We never had new clothes.
At the beginning of the school,
we could get new clothes,
because it was harvest time,
so we'd get new shoes,
one set of clothes.

The rest of time we wore either last year's
or
whatever we could get.

My Grandparents used to go to Troy, Montana dump
and go through the dump
and find clothes for us.

And Grandma would wash them and sew them up.

And that's what I and Libby and Silas and Samuel wore

for years.

We always wore shoes that were too big.

I had to wear Pasco's hand-me-down shoes

because

they couldn't find me a pair of shoes and here Mom had all this money.

Sometimes Q'Awiss would get crop payment and she'd
get us something.

And she and my Mom would get into arguments about

"What do you do with all that money you get every month?"

And I'd think,

"Don't Q'Awiss, she's going to kick you out."

But it was Q'Awiss' house you know and she was an *old* woman.

I remember when Damon was born.

Dad was in prison.

He was born.

Most of the time he lived in a diaper

or one of

Samuel's t-shirts.

One day my

Grandparents came home with a little pink coat (*She laughs but with tears in her eyes*)
with a collar.

It was clearly a girl's coat.

It had a little skirt.

But he loved it.

Because it was winter yet

and he had nothing to wear

and he was just learning to stand up.

And he loved (*She laughs*)

his coat.

But we always knew it was a girl's coat,

the poor little thing.

So,

we lived like that.

It went on and on.

We never knew where we were going to spend the night.

We never knew when we were going to eat.

We never knew,

if we were sleeping,

they were going to come home and start fighting,

and we were going to have to run out the door and run to Grandma's,

or somebody else's house.

There was this

very

old

couple.

She was almost blind and

she had a chair.

She could barely walk, but her husband took off the back of a chair

and that's what she used.

She'd push it ahead of her and take a step,

push it ahead of her and take a step.

And I don't know why, (*She laughs*)

but I thought she was so neat because

she never hit the wall.

She could go to the bathroom by herself,

she could cook,

clean the house.

But the most important thing,

the best thing was

they slept in the living room.

But in their bedroom

they didn't have a bed,

they had a bear skin rug.

And when we'd go to their house
and she tell my Great Auntie,
"Put them on the bear skin rug."

That was the warmest
that we could get.

And she never asked for anything.

When we were smaller,
I and Libby,
we used to
go to town and
there's a slab behind the post office,
it's still there.

That's where my Grandfather would park the wagon.

He'd parked the horses back there so they could eat.

And then we'd walk over to,
it was a shop or a gas station
where Safeway now is,
and wait while they ran errands and stuff.

And right across from there,
there was that same restaurant.

Me and Libby would go over there and scrounge for food.

You could get,
like,
a half eaten pork chop
for free. (*She laughs*)
Bread.
Buns.
Sometimes we'd race
because
somebody else might get the better part
or the bigger piece.

But one thing we knew,
was never
disobey.
If you were told to do something, just go do it and get it over with.
Because you were never asked for too much.
They just wanted you to know,
“This is what you have to do, so just go do it.”

On the other hand,

there were Mona and Laura²².

They were babied.

They were our age and they were babied.

And they were kind of

snobbish I guess you'd call it today.

We'd be playing and here they would come with like,

ham sandwiches,

ice cream bars,

bags of chips,

bags of candy.

Never share with anybody,

just sit there in front of us.

Just sit in front of everybody and eat,

and giggle around.

And they always wore nice clothes.

But their sisters weren't well taken care of.

Their brothers weren't well taken care of.

They were just kind of shoved aside.

Dolly²³ had a

²² Two Kootenai girls in the village.

very

old grandmother.

Her parents had died of alcoholism years ago

and she still lived with her grandmother.

Mabel²⁴,

her

parents died,

she lived with her grandmother.

There was so few kids but

there were no parents.

I remember when I started school.

I didn't want to go.

Man did I fight my Grandfather.

He told me,

"You have to go to school!"

Adrian had already gone through one year

so he knew some English,

because we didn't speak English.

²³ A Kootenai girl who lived in the village.

²⁴ Another Kootenai girl who lived in the village.

He had learned some words,
but they kept him back in first grade.
So they put us in class together.
And all I knew
were “Yes,”
and
“Toilet.”
I don’t know why,
somebody thought those were the two words I really needed to know.
Because
you can’t answer “No,”
you have to answer “Yes.”
No matter what they ask you, you have to answer “Yes.”
The other one is,
“You have to go to the bathroom.”
I remember my teacher.
I think we probably had maybe,
12 students in class.
So they put Adrian next to me.
Because
he could translate
what we were doing,

and then he could translate for me

and the teacher hated it because,

“I should know English. I’d better start studying English!”

She’d shout at me in class.

And he’d say, “I know you’re trying, but

you know,

try a little harder.

On the bus, I’ll try to teach you something.” And I’d say, “Okay.”

And he would.

Sometimes I’d get it,

and then I’d forget it.

And then he’d ask me,

and I’d remember it. And he’d tell me I was right but

the first few weeks...

it was horrible.

When I started first grade,

I had long hair.

Long straight hair.

Well,

a couple of weeks before school started,

my Mom went and got a perm kit

for little girls.

She cut off my hair.

She cut off my hair and

she put

a permanent in my hair and

because my hair is so fine,

it just basically rolled my hair into one big curl. (*She laughs*)

It was ugly and my Grandma asked,

“What did you do to her?”

She could wear braids!”

“Oh, no. She can’t wear braids to school.”

It was so ugly.

So, my Grandmother was washing my hair

trying to at least get it to...

And so she said, “I’ll go and boil some water.”

Then I had to get down on my hands

and she combed it out. (*She laughs*).

And she’d say,

“Oh we have to do it over.”

For days

she fixed my hair.

And it just didn’t work.

It was so bad.

So,
the first day of school
I went to school,
and my hair was just so curly,
I don't know what people thought! (*She laughs*)
My first grade picture is funny.
You can see
the insecurity about
when the photographer told me to smile.
"You can do better than that!"
"I'm trying." (*She laughs*)
And
my Mom had
combed it out,
and she made it peak right there. (*She laughs*)
And then she combed my bangs out
and put a barrette right there.
I see that picture and I think,
"God that's the worst picture I've ever seen."
But it was awful.
It stayed in like,
the whole year

before it ever started

to come out.

And

the next year she's going to do it again.

My Grandma says,

"No, you're not,

her hair is longer, I can braid it just a little."

She wanted me to be a *siyupi*²⁵ kid.

But I

had one dress.

I must have worn that four days out five.

And I had

Pasco's shoes

from the year before.

That's what I remember about first grade.

And I remember one day,

maybe it was like,

the third day of school,

and I really had to go to the bathroom.

So I told Adrian, he said,

²⁵ *siyupi* - White person

“Put your hand up and say ‘lavatory’”

and I couldn’t say that word.

I didn’t know what the heck that meant.

So I put up my hand and the teacher says,

“Yes?”

And I said,

“I - toilet?”

And she came

storming at me

and she said,

“We don’t say that!”

And I didn’t know what she was saying.

And Adrian said,

“Don’t say that.

Say ‘lavatory’,”

and he said it again and I couldn’t.

And she just stood there with her hands on her hips

looking down at me

and I really had to go.

And she said

“I’m not allowing you to go until you learn to use that word.”

Later on,

I knew
that's what she had said.
And so I peed in my pants.
And...
every kid started laughing.
So she told Adrian
take me to the bathroom and help me.
So we went in there
and he told me,
"You're going to have to take off your dress
so I can wring it out."
So he did.
And then he wrung it out,
and he said,
"You're going to have to take off your panties. I'm going to wash them in the sink."
And he did.
And he said, "Okay. We can go back to class."
And the janitor was in there sanitizing the room.
And it went on all year long because I,
when she got mad at me,
she was so angry,
that I automatically peed

and she would just get,
that would just make her double
and triple and (*She laughs*)
quadruple angry at me.

“Can’t you learn?”

And I’d think,

“Well, I you wouldn’t yell at me I could,
why can’t I just get up and go, you know?”

I don’t

know.

Then she wrote a letter to my Mom
and I get beat for that.

Then,

she went to Adrian’s grandma
and told her,

“Adrian’s not to have anything to do with her.”

So, now

they moved Adrian,
and I was surrounded by white kids
and

I had no idea, you know?

Mom didn’t even give me a pencil

or paper to take to school.

No crayons or anything.

That's why Adrian sat by me,

because he would share things with me.

So most of the time I just sat there,

flunked.

Because I couldn't learn English

and I couldn't do the work

because,

I had no tools.

And I flunked. (*She laughs*)

And boy

when I got home,

Mom was mad.

And my Grandmother told her, "It's your fault."

Mom got mad at my Grandma

and Q'Awiss told me,

"You can go back next year."

I thought,

"I'm not going back there next year." (*She laughs*)

But I did.

The next year

I learned more.

The next year

it was Libby's turn to start,

and I just felt so bad.

By then

I could teach her

some things.

I didn't want her to go through

the kind of

torture that I had gone through.

Because it was torture.

I mean what's the point of going there all day long?

So,

she started school.

And I remember I was down the hall

and all of a sudden I could hear somebody crying really loud

and I knew it was her. (*She laughs*)

And I thought,

"What are they doing to her?"

And I'm just sitting there

and there's a knock on the door.

Somebody comes in,

gives the teacher a note.

She comes over,

says, "You need to go out in the hallway."

I thought I was in trouble and I thought, "Oh, man."

I went out there,

and it was Libby's teacher holding her by the arm.

"We're putting your desk out here and you are
going to sit here with her."

And then she said,

"You're not to hug her,
or touch her."

And Libby just sat there and sobbed.

And they came out with my work,
they came out with things for her.

And she just cried.

And that went on for a week.

The next week

they wouldn't

let her

out in the hallway with me.

And sometimes I'd hear her crying.

She got out of first grade.

I think they just pushed her on. (*She laughs*)

All summer we played school.

That

year

I went into the next grade.

Libby picked it up fast.

I could see that she could do it.

In the middle of the year when we got back in January,

they had promoted her

to second.

At the end of the year,

they promoted her to fourth grade,

which was my grade.

Jesus Christ, my Mom made such a big deal out of it.

“She is so smart, she is smarter than you. You’re nothing but a dummy!”

And I thought,

“Who taught her?”

You know what?

I’ve been working with her so long.

Adrian has been working with her.

Pasco makes her memorize things.”

Pasco would have these poems, (*She laughs*)

I don't even know why we had to learn, like,

"The autumn is coming."

It had, like,

ten stanzas

and he'd make us learn things like that. (*She laughs*)

Because,

"You have to learn. That way you'll recognize these words,

that's what's going to help you."

So he'd make us learn all of it.

And we learned poems like nothing.

And it helped.

Oh, when Libby made it in fourth grade, God, you could have thought she had
you know...

So then we were in the same grade,

and boy did she make it rough for me.

She's always say,

"I'm better than you."

And I'd think,

"No, you're not." (*She laughs*)

And Adrian was in the same grade, and on the bus he'd tell her,

"You know, I'm not going to help you anymore.

I'm helping you because you need help.

I helped her.

You're not smarter than us.

You,

we helped you,

all of us helped you."

But she wouldn't listen.

And, boy, she was horrible.

Still we had no clothes.

We had no crayons.

We had nothing,

because

our Mother was saving up

more money

for my Dad,

because he was back in prison.

Well,

when he had left,

because he was going to be gone for one year,

one day

I overheard

her and my Grandmother

arguing.

And I heard my Grandfather say,

“That’s enough.”

And then they came over and they got Q’Awiss so

now I couldn’t listen anymore.

They went to their house.

That spring,

we were sent over to somebody’s house.

When we got back,

there was a new baby.

And my Grandmother was so angry.

But my Grandfather said, “It’s our baby.

We have to keep it.”

Finally, Pasco told me,

“You know what? That’s not your dad’s baby.

He was already in prison

when she got pregnant.”

Then it occurred to me that’s how babies are made!

And I said, “Whoa, why?”

I said, “What are we going to do?”

And he said,

“Well, Grandpa said we’re going to keep it.”

Well, that year

Dad got out of prison.

It was in the summer.

Everything was okay for about
three weeks.

They started drinking really heavy.

We were at Buck Horn.

He took us

down to

the Moyie Store

and bought more beer.

Then he took us up towards Deer Creek.

And there’s a bridge there.

And they started arguing and I kept hearing her say, “No!”

He turned around,

he looked at us

and he said, “I have to take the baby down to the water and change her diaper
she’s all,

you know,

dirty.”

And Mom started screaming and crying and we just sat there.

All of a sudden you could hear the baby scream.

Then there was no noise.

He smashed the baby.

He took it back up to camp.

He told Q'Awiss, "The baby has diarrhea."

Left us there.

At four o'clock in the morning, I woke up.

I could hear Mom crying

and I thought, "What is she crying about?"

Then I heard

a car pull up it was my Grandma and Grandpa.

And I heard

Grandpa come in

and,

he took the baby out then Grandma came in,

told us to all get up,

we're going back to the Mission.

And we still didn't know what had happened.

He had killed the baby

because it wasn't his.

And he was never convicted.

Later on,
he was again in prison,
this was when I was about 13.
He was gone
and one
evening
Mom told me to call the County Nurse.
Her and the County Nurse
were *always* in cahoots
about
something.
She told me to call her so I did.
I said, "My mom wanted me to call you,
could you come to our house?"
And she said,
"I'll be there."
Because by then
Mom was walking with a cane.
She got there.
And she told us all to go to the bedroom.
And she told Q'Awiss, "Please don't let these kids out."
We went into the one bedroom and she just

started telling us stories and stuff.

And you could hear her listening but she's telling us the story
and she's listening.

All of a sudden, she got up and she said,

"Eileen, don't let them out."

And she went in there.

Mom had

inserted a wire coat hanger

and aborted

a little boy.

Because she knew it wasn't Dad's.

So

she said,

"I have to go call the taxi

and go to the Mission

and get Grandpa."

Because Grandma was in the nursing home.

And she said,

"You're going to have to stay here

with the kids and

don't worry."

They took Mom to the hospital.

She came back

two days later like nothing had happened.

I remember...

I had a

really

easy

childhood

as a little kid.

I loved making forts.

I mean, I was, like,

an expert fort maker.

Trail blazer.

And we'd always play,

making these

trails

under the bushes.

And if kids from other reservations came,

we could hide from them, they'd wonder where we went. *(She laughs)*

So we always played, and I must've been about

seven years old,

I couldn't have been older than that.

My Dad

came back from prison,

it was in the summer.

He brought this man along with him

and he said,

when Grandma asked him,

“What's he doing here?

He doesn't belong here.”

He said, “Well, you know, he's going to go home, but he needs a place to
stay right now

for his parole hearing and then he's going to
head out.”

And Grandma said: “No.

He can't stay here.”

So I don't know whose house he went to.

One day we were playing behind the chicken house,
and he came around

and he's talking, you know,

and I was the only girl there.

And all of a sudden Pasco said, “You want to go play cowboys and Indians on the Hill?”

I said, “Okay.”

And he said, "You're going to be on
his side."

I said, "Why?"

I want to be on your side!"

"Come on,

let's just play!"

"Okay."

I would say he was 50, but he was probably about 21.

So, Pasco said,

"You know that

needle trail we always use?"

I said, "Yeah." Because it led up
to the orchard.

We used to go up to the orchard and play there a lot
because there was an *old* house.

And we never knew

that we could die in that old house,

but we'd go up there,

and we'd fixed up one room that was like a living room,
bedroom,

and a kitchen.

We'd go there and play.

He said, "Go on that needle road."

I said, "Okay."

So, I'm running ahead of that man,

all of a sudden he tackled on me.

Threw me on the ground,

pulled down my panties

and

masturbated on me.

And there was nothing I could do.

He covered it,

helped me

get dressed,

started walking down.

He was gonna hold hands *and I wouldn't*.

That's my feistiness.

"I'll run," you know?

So we got back down,

and he goes over to Pasco

and Adrian,

and he takes out a hand full of change and he gives them each some money

to keep quiet.

And Pasco came over and he gave me a dime.

He said, “Don’t tell anybody, or else we’re going to be in big trouble.”

The next day the man was gone.

Later on, Pasco asked me what happened.

I said, “I can’t tell you.”

That was the man

that

my Dad brought

into the village.

When I was about 10,

we were still living at Q’Awiss’.

We went to school,

and we came back

and it was slushy.

We went into the house

and there was this guy, his name was Sam.

He’s sitting

in the living room,

and Pasco walked over and he said, “What the hell are you doing in the house?”

And he’s just drunk.

And he was going to raise hell.

Pasco ran into the kitchen,

came out with a great big knife
and told him, "Get out!"
And he's going to get up and fight.
And Pasco just started swinging at him.
And we all
worked and pushed him out,
pushed him off the porch.
He started staggering up the road,
there was nobody home.
And it was just dusk.
Where the mail boxes are now,
we saw him fall down,
and we were watching for him to get back up.
And here came Q'Awiss and my Mom in the taxi,
and the taxi ran over and killed him.
And we blamed ourselves,
but we never told anybody that we were the ones that pushed him out of our house.
Because Pasco said, "We're going to get in trouble."
But we had to do that because,
what he was going to do to us?

So,

when I and Libby were about seven and eight,

Mona and Laura came home for the summer,

for the week,

of summer vacation.

And they had brand new dolls,

and they were being snotty at us.

And they had these same rubber dolls. *(She laughs)*

And so they had these beautiful clothes on and they were like,

“How come yours has a

wing dress?”

“Because she’s an Indian doll!”

“Oh, look at hers!”

And then Mona got bad about it and Libby and I went,

we each grabbed a leg

of the doll

and we tore it right up to the head. *(She laughs)*

She ran home crying.

And Laura’s shocked, looking at us like,

“Why did you guys pick on us?

I’m going to tell.”

“Go ahead!”

Pretty soon

here came their grandmother
yelling about, “We owe her money!”
And Q’Awiss sits there and says,
“I was watching out the window.
They did the right thing.
Teach your children
to be respectful of other people.
This is *our* village.
They belong here, but they just came back.
They need to be respectful.
You need to teach them that. You’re their grandmother.”
She just walked out,
mumbling and mumbling. And boy,
did my Grandfather spank us. (*She laughs*)
Then he said,
“But you were right.
You should have done that,
but I have to spank you because
you can’t get away with things like that.”
But that felt good. (*She laughs*)
We didn’t know we could tear a rubber doll up the middle! (*She laughs*)

When I was six,
there was a pond.
There were two ponds
and it was
still early in the fall,
and we weren't supposed to go down there.
We could go down there and skate when it got thick.
And we weren't supposed to go down there.
Well, one morning, it was before the bus came.
I had on a dress.
And my boots and jacket, and Pasco said,
"Adrian,
let's go."
Because we waited up by the silos for the bus.
He said,
"Let's go down and check the pond.
Come on!"
So I did.
He came from one side and he skated halfway across and back
and he goes, "Go ahead,
step on it!"
I took two steps and went under. (*She laughs*)

And, boy, he came running over, “Adrian, grab her other arm!”

And they pulled me out.

And I was soaking wet. (*She laughs*)

And he takes off my

stocking cap and he wrings it out.

Adrian takes my mittens

and they wring out the bottom of my dress and my coat.

“The bus is coming, we’ve got to go!”

So he goes,

“Act like nothing happened, okay?” (*She laughs*)

So, we get on the bus, and the bus driver said,

“What happened to you?”

Pasco said, “Oh, she fell down over there.”

And he keeps looking at me and he said.

“You’re

soaking wet!” He says, “Come on!”

And I thought, “No.”

Takes my hand,

takes me to my Grandpa’s house

and Grandpa says,

“She’s not going to school.”

Boy, did I get in trouble!

Because I had gone down to the pond.

Grandma said, “You could have drowned!”

And I thought, “The water wasn’t even that deep.”

Ooooh, I got in so much trouble.

That taught me,

“You don’t have to listen to those guys

all the time.”

In the summertime

there was a 50 gallon drum, I don’t know where it ever came from, but

we rolled it up to the silo.

Get somebody to sit in it, *(She laughs)*

and roll it down the hill.

It would go round and round.

And you had to kind of move your body because there was this stump about this high.

If you hit it,

BOING!

It hurt so bad. *(She laughs)*

But if you moved,

it would slide right past.

That was so much fun but boy, did it hurt. *(She laughs)*

And the worst thing you could do
was ring the church bell. *(She laughs)*

I don't know how old I was.

We decided to ring the church bell,
because nobody would hear it,

So we rang it BONG!

Jeez, my Grandfather was out the door. *(She laughs)*

We really got switched
bad.

We used to play
baseball in the church
lot.

And you had to hit it straight out.

And I remember two times

I hit it and it went to the
left

and both times

it broke the

very top window

and the window was shaped like this. *(She makes a diamond shape with her hands)*

And it had to be specially cut. *(She laughs)*

And I and Libby liked to sneak into the church
and play the organ.

We always got in trouble for that. (*She laughs*)

We always played church because Samuel was, (*She laughs*)

Samuel was the priest

because he could sing,

Kootenai mass

and Latin mass.

And he could say it perfect.

I don't know if he said Latin mass perfectly but it sure sounded good.

And so for Holy Communion he would,

one of us would

get money

and go to town and buy a thing of *NECCO*²⁶.

And we'd keep it for a long time.

And so he'd give us Holy Communion and we got caught.

That was big trouble.

NECCO was a,

you could buy *M&M's* or something,

²⁶ *NECCO* is a brand of disk-shaped, thin candy.

but you had to buy at least *NECCO*. (*She laughs*)

Middle school didn't go that well.

Because the same kids that I went to
elementary school

were now

11, 12, 13, 14.

And they loved

to stand in the hall and say,

“WOOO WOOO WOOO.

Indian.

Squaw.

Where is your tomahawk?”

Things like that.

You learned to ignore it.

You couldn't go tell a teacher

that they're harassing you,

or one student is harassing you all the time.

They wouldn't do anything.

You couldn't go to your mother or your father,

because they were not going to go to school

and help you

because, “You’re going to school.”

Grandma and Grandpa

couldn’t go because they didn’t speak that good English.

We had no

person

that you could turn to, to help you,

so you just learned to ignore it.

About that time on the bus,

we had a bus driver.

Oh, this is disgusting²⁷.

But,

that’s how hard it was to ride the bus.

I remember sometimes in the spring,

because it was a dirt road,

there was a

muddy spot.

[The bus driver] would stop there

²⁷ My mother told me about how the bus driver and a white boy on the bus would masturbate in front of her and her sister while on the bus. She states, “And there was no one to tell. Who would believe a bunch of Indian kids?” Because the story is so graphic, and to protect confidentiality, I chose not to share it in this thesis.

and flash his light,
and that meant we had to walk from the Mission all the way out there²⁸.
And it was muddy,
so we'd have to walk in the field.
Winston was still living
there and he had palsy.
He was in crutches.
I and Mona would help
each other carry him
on our backs so he could go to school.
Somehow,
they found out and they put him
in foster care.

High school was just like that,
same kids
until one day Libby got mad and she said, "You know,
today
when that Randy guy starts that,"
because he always did it everyday

²⁸ About a mile.

just right after lunch,

“I’m going to take,

I put a book in my bag.

When he walks by I’m going to hit him right in the back.”

I said, “Go ahead,

you know?

Use an edge.”

He comes by and he goes,

“Indian squaws!

Go home,

Indian squaws!”

She took that thing she hit him

right in the upper back

and he just stumbled.

Oh, man, you should’ve heard the uproar,

but nobody told it was Libby. (*She laughs*)

I told her, “Come on,

walk away.”

But it didn’t stop,

it just got worse.

And that’s when Libby started acting out.

She got in with these

girls that
smoked,
so she was one of the ones that went across the street.

Next thing I knew,
she got our younger brother started.
He was leaving
and I asked him, “Where are you going?”
“Up to the school.”
“What are you going to do?”
“Watch a game.”
He’d come in
one,
two o’clock in the morning.
You could smell the beer.

Meanwhile,
I worked
at the County Extension Office as a clerk typist.
I earned
very
minimum wage.

When I was about 14,
I got so disgusted with my Mom
because she was accusing me of,
“You don’t listen to me!
You have no friends!
What are you going to do after high school?
You’re nothing but lazy!”
And she just went on and on like that for a while.
So, one day, I thought,
“I’m going to leave.”
So, I packed
a few clothes,
walked out the door,
walked up to Cones had a Coke,
and decided where am I going.
I said, “I’m going to Grandma and Grandpa’s.”
Just when I walked out the door there was a police car.
It was the sheriff and he goes,
“Come here!”
“Why?”
“I need to talk to you.”

“About what?”

“You’re a runaway.”

“What did I run away from?”

“Your mother said to come and pick you up. You’re a juvenile delinquent.”

I thought,

“I’d go to jail for that.

I’d rather go to jail than go home.”

Because that day she had hit me across my ear

and

my back with her cane

for

being lazy,

having no future.

That was the day I decided

I’m gone.

I’ve been watching you

spend my money,

spend my brothers’ and sister’s money.

I’ve been seeing you with Grandma and Grandpa and Q’Awiss.

I’ve been seeing you do all this shit.

I just, I

don't care.

So,

I went over and I said, "Do I have to?"

And he said, "Can you get in so I can talk to you?"

"Only if you tell me you won't take me back."

"Let's just sit and talk."

"Okay."

So, I got in.

He said, "What happened?"

I said,

"Want to see my bruise?" (*She laughs, but is near tears.*)

He said, "Would it help if I talk to your mother?"

I said, "No.

She's going to deny it.

She's been hitting me for years.

She takes that cane and she beats me with it.

You know what? I work.

I baby-sit.

When I get home, I've got what?

\$2.50 and she's waiting up,

'Give me your money.

I need it for coffee.’

How much coffee do you drink for \$2.50?

‘You lazy

good-for-nothing!

Do the laundry!

You lazy good-for-nothing, cut the grass!

Do this, do that!’ And I would do it,

just to shut her up.

She’d find something else to say.”

He said, “Well, I have to take you back.”

I said: “Okay.”

We got there and he said, “If there is anything can do,

call me.”

I thought,

“She’s going to unplug the phone.

She’s not going to let me get to the phone.”

Sure enough,

she unplugged the phone.

As soon as I walked in she started yelling at me,

“You’re nothing but a whore!”

And I thought,

“Jesus Christ,
why did you bring me back?”
“Where were you going?”
Finally when she shut up, I said,
“I was going to Grandma and Grandpa’s.”

And that’s
when she got so angry.
She went
to court
and put a
one year
restraining order against Grandma and Grandpa.
We couldn’t talk to them.
We couldn’t see them.

A few nights later,
she was in one of her *damn moods*
and I think it was a carry-over from that.
Q’Awiss was in the kitchen making dinner.
And Mom went in there and they started arguing.
And I was trying to figure out what they were arguing about, when Mom told her,
“You

get your stuff and you

get out of my house!”

Because we lived in that yellow house on the South Hill.

“I mean it! You go get your stuff and you get out!”

And Q’Awiss says,

“Well, I’m making dinner for the kids.”

“I don’t need your help!”

Q’Awiss came out of the kitchen,

she went in her bedroom.

I went in there and I said,

“You don’t have to go.”

She said, “Before she hits you.” (*She begins to cry silently.*)

I told her, “Should I call you a cab?”

She said, “No,

I’ll walk.”

“Where are you going, it’s almost dark?”

“I’m going to go down to the Commercial Hotel.”

“I can walk with you.”

She said, “No.

She’s gonna beat you.” (*She begins to cry.*)

So I rolled up a quilt.

I put two

or three sets of clothes in there.

Walked to the door

and then Mom came,

“Where are you going!?”

I said, “I’m not going anywhere.”

She said,

“That

God

damn

bitch!

She’s out of my house

and she’s never welcome hear again!” (*She begins to cry*)

And I thought,

“What did she do?

You’re mad at me.

What did she do?

She’s been taking care of me since I was a baby!”

So I helped Q'Awiss off the porch.

She told me, "Go back in, but be careful when you go back in,
because she's going to hit you."

And I said,

"I know."

Sure enough when I opened the door to go back in

Mom was standing right there in the little hallway.

And she was going to hit me in the forehead. (*She laughs*)

And I ducked in time and she hit the wall.

It was a big chunk.

And I just jumped to the middle of the room.

I told her, "You hit me again..."

"What would you do? I'll call the cops and put a restraining order on you!"

I said, "Do it now.

Because if you hit me again..."

and she didn't,

but boy,

for about a month,

we were on war.

We were on war patrol against each other.

I didn't dare go to sleep.

Very much.

I slept very lightly because I knew she would come in and beat me
while I was sleeping.

So I slept very lightly.

And you know what was the worst thing about this shit? *(She laughs)*

She told me,

“I’m going to tie you up

and I’m going to let your brothers do anything they want to you.”

And I thought,

“You can’t do that.

I won’t allow that to happen to me.

That’s you.”

That’s why I slept very lightly.

One night,

it was morning because it was getting daylight.

It was four o’clock,

because I looked over,

I was asleep and

I could feel something,

like looking at me and when I looked over it was four o’clock.

And I thought,

“What is it?

What’s after me?”

So, I just kept my eyes closed.

I heard a rustle at the end of my bed and I thought,

“There is something in here.”

I thought, “It’s not

a spirit. It’s a

human being.”

So then I just barely opened my eyes,

it was my brother.

Slowly,

he reached up and he reached under my night gown.

He was about 15.

Man,

you talk about shooting upright and jumping off the bed!

I knocked him into the hallway.

And then I slammed the door and I leaned against it.

I don’t know what he did,

but I knew

she told him to do that.

Later on that,

a couple of days later I said,

“You do that again,
you’re not going to stand up for a very long time. Believe me,
I’m not kidding.”

And he acted like, “What did I do?”

But I knew the hate, the total hate, was there then.

After that I never trusted my brother.

I never trusted my sister.

The only one I really trusted was

Samuel.

When Mom would do

things,

he’d say,

“Heeey!”

And you know what?

Mom never said anything about,

like,

she didn’t know anything about it.

But the noise he made, I’m sure the next door neighbors heard.

I’m sure they did because he hit the one wall and fell right into the door of the other one.

Meanwhile,

Libby was perfect.

She

was

a

pep club cheerleader.

She didn't smoke or drink.

Why didn't I have more friends like her?

So, I just struggled to get

better grades so

I could get out and do something.

I still worked at the

courthouse.

By then I was making, like,

I started off at \$1.25

and by the time I graduated from high school I was making, like, \$1.95 an hour.

Every week when I'd got paid, she'd be parked outside.

"Give me your check."

Jesus Christ.

And for a long time I did until one day,

during lunch hour,

I walked over to *Penny's*

and they had this really nice dress

and I thought, “I should buy that.”

It was only, like,

\$10.50.

And I tried it on,

I thought, “I am going to buy it,

it’s my money.”

So I told the lady,

“I’m going to put in on lay away.”

So it took me three weeks and I got it out.

When Mom found me wearing it she asked me where I got it.

I said, “I bought it.”

“With what?”

“My paycheck.”

“Take it off right now!”

I thought she was going to

shred it.

She just looked at it

as I took it off. She said, “Libby,

she bought you a new dress.”

And gave it to my sister.

Shoes.

She'd take away shoes.

One year I got a dress

from my boss.

It was a Nehru dress,

that was the fashion of the day.

And I got to go to the seamstress and I got it shortened because it was too long.

She asked me,

"Where did you get that dress?"

I said, "Rebecca

and Jim

bought it for me

for Christmas."

"Take it off and give it to Libby.

You don't need new clothes."

So, after that,

I took new clothes to school and changed. (*She laughs*)

Libby never worked for anything.

But she loved to tell on me about things.

We had this neighbor,

and we'd always go up in the

woods and play.

And I was about 14 and

I don't know what go into her.

All of a sudden,

she started getting mad at me and I thought, "Well, I'm going to go home."

So, Scott said, "Are you going home?"

I said, "Yeah,

it's not fun anymore."

He said, "I'll walk with you as far as the road and then I'll go home."

Next thing in knew,

Libby and Silas come running by

and they go back to the house and I thought, "What was that about?"

When I walked in the house, Mom was totally mad because,

I and Scott had been kissing. *(She laughs)*

I said, "Do you want me to call Scott's mom

or do you want me to call Scott?"

"Libby!

Why don't you call Scott?"

I said, "You know what?

We were sitting on rocks,

talking.

You guys were right there.

When did this happen?"

“Well he told you he was going to walk you home.”

I said, “Because we went down the same trail.

He went that way and I went this way. He was tired of playing.”

Oh Mom just knew I was going be pregnant. Shit. (*She laughs*)

That’s the stuff that made me leave.

Stupidity.

She always threatened to me,

“I’m going to send you to juvenile hall.”

And sometimes I prayed,

“Please,

send me to juvenile hall

until I’m 18 so I’m safe!

I can take care of myself there,

but I can’t take care of myself here.

I don’t have a chance here.”

So, I didn’t earn any money.

I still had to borrow.

I had a best friend Peggy.

I would slip her money so she could buy us both school supplies so we could split it

because she didn’t have a lot of money.

So I’d give her some money.

I'd say, "Go

to the store

when you can and buy

200 sheets of paper,

some pencils,

pens."

And she'd say, "You know,

my dad works at the mill.

Sometimes we just don't have enough money."

And that worked for us.

And I tell her: "Don't ever let Libby know that we do this.

Because if she does,

we're out."

So, we took piano lessons.

It went on

and on

and on.

By the

first couple of weeks

I knew I had no talent.

I couldn't make my fingers do that.

And I just went and took it,
because the lady was being paid by the Bureau of Indian Affairs
to teach us.

And as soon as I'd sit down,
she'd take her nail file
and started doing things with it.

Dink, dink, dink.

Dink, dink, DONK! (*She imitates the sound of playing a piano poorly*).

"Don't look at your fingers!

Look at the thing!"

And I'd think,

"Okay."

It went on for years.

And she'd always praise Libby,

"Oh, she's a beautiful player."

And I think, "So, teach her!

Take my share of the money and teach her more!

You know?

I don't care."

And she'd tell my mother,

"The only reason she can't play,

because she has the talent,

she is lazy.”

When I was getting ready to go in the Army,

I had to have three

teachers’ references.

Libby’s first grade teacher called my mother

and told her,

“I want to be

one of Eileen’s references.”

And my Mom agreed

without even asking me.

So, I had four references.

When I brought them in my recruiter said,

“These envelopes,

are

they issued?

We’re going to open them.

And we’re going to read them.

And if they’re no good, we’re going to back for more.

And the ones that are bad, we’ll leave them out.”

I said,

“Can you do that?”

He said,

“Everybody does that.” *(She laughs)*

“Okay.”

Opens the one from Libby’s teacher,

“She won’t make it.

She’s lazy.

You know, she is just

lazy.

She

doesn’t do anything

to further herself.”

And he said, “You know, when you filled out your
application,

I didn’t see that.”

I said, “You know what?

I just graduated from 12th grade.

I never even had her as a teacher.”

So, he

took that out

and the other three were good.

One was from the president of First National Bank,

the other one was the President of JC Penny’s,

and the third one was from my
priest.

“She is a very hard working girl. (She speaks in a deep voice.)

*She’s quiet, she is very
nice.*

She works hard, she will be a success.”

And he said,

“What happened to that one?”

And I said,

“She’s my mother’s friend.”

He said, “I’ve heard that one before, Eileen.

Don’t worry about it.

You only need three.”

And that one would have kicked me out.

When I was in the Army,

Mom would call me asking me for money.

In the Army you don’t make a lot of money.

You have enough to do things,

and then you have all these things,

your essentials,

your dry cleaning.

She'd call me and she'd say, "I need money."

And I'd think, "I'm the only one who left.

Libby's still there, you're still getting four welfare checks what do you need money for?"

And then she'd

play the guilt .

And I'd think,

"How much money do you have stashed away now?"

One time

she called me.

I had been in about eight months.

I had a really good job.

It was easy enough,

and I liked the company I worked for.

I liked

my

commanding officer.

I worked well.

Mom called,

"Libby is being a real problem.

We're going to buy her a bus ticket.

She's going to come and live with you."

I lived in the barracks with 50 women. (*She laughs*)

So,

I said, "She can't.

I live in the barracks with 50 women.

And civilians aren't allowed inside our building."

"Well, you're going to have to do something because I can't handle her."

And I thought,

"I could have told you that years ago.

You know?

What happened to your perfect daughter?"

And then my sister called,

"Well, I'm going to go down on the bus.

I'll get a job."

Doing what? (*She laughs*)

In desperation I called my Grandmother and I told her.

She said, "That's what she said.

She wants to borrow the money from Grandpa.

And I already told Grandpa,

'No, you're not giving it to her.'"

I said, "Well,

I'm going to work on it."

She called again,

"Well, I'm getting the money together.

She'll be coming."

So I went to my commanding officer and I said, "Look, this is what's happening."

And she said, "She can't do that."

I said, "I know."

She said, "Let me give her a call."

And she did. She said, "You're going to have to leave the room."

So I went and sat outside.

She nodded at me to come back over.

And she said, "Taken care of.

She's not coming."

"Thank you!

Thank you so much!" (*She laughs*)

Well, Libby always said,

"Everything is so easy for you.

You get everything that you want."

I'd think, "It wasn't."

“You got a job
when you were 16.”

Do you know why? Because I needed money.

And I really, I had good competition.

But I really wanted this job
and I had a friend who helped me
and I was grateful to her.

JW: What was that job?

EW: A clerk typist
at the
cooperative
extension office.

And I stayed there until I was 18 when I graduated from high school.

I was glad.

About five months
before it was graduation time,
this guy from the Bureau of Indian Affairs,
who was supposed to be counseling us
all these years, finally shows up,

“My name is so and so. I came to talk to you.”

And I thought, “Okay.”

“What are your plans?”

I said, “For what?”

“When you graduate.”

“Well, right now I don’t have any plans.

But,

I’m thinking about things.”

“Well, I have some paperwork for you to fill out.”

He opens his briefcase,

takes out these forms,

spreads them out and he said,

“You’re only qualified for two things.”

I said, “Really?”

“Yes. You either become a teacher
or you become a registered nurse.” (*She laughs*)

And I started laughing, because I said,

“You know,

I hate the sight of blood.

And I really don’t like children.”

“Well, Eileen,

you’re going to have to go to school

and you’re going

to have to learn.”

And I said, “No, I won’t.”

“What have you been doing?”

“I’m a clerk typist.”

“Oh, no. You need an advance in
your life.”

And I thought,

“Where were you when I needed that clerk typist job?”

So, he stayed all day

trying to get me to fill out these forms and I said, “No.”

He stayed over night.

The next day he got with Libby.

She filled it out.

He funded her to go to Portland
secretarial school.

Mom said, “See how easy it is?

You couldn’t even get
a scholarship.”

And I thought,

“I didn’t even try.”

The guy was just getting her out of the
way.

So, about a week after I graduated.

I opened the paper and there was an article about
Women's Army Corps.

So, I read it

and this

woman,

this staff sergeant at the recruiting office

was taking about,

they are looking for

women between the ages of 18 and 35.

And it listed all the things you could be.

So I thought, "Okay,

that's what I'm going to do.

Otherwise

why

would

I

have found this?

This is what I'm going to do.

This is what I've been waiting for. So,

I'll go for it." And I didn't say anything to anybody.

So then I

called her and she came to Bonners.

We met and she said,

“You know, you have to come to Spokane and take an aptitude test,

plus

other

tests.

And if you pass,

then you have to have a physical and a security clearance.

So, it will take about three weeks.”

I said, “Okay.”

And she said,

“I can’t recruit in Idaho, but I have someone in Coeur d’Alene.

I can send him up in a couple of days.”

Sure enough two days later,

somebody knocks on the door and I answered.

He goes,

“Hi, my name is Samson.”

I said, “Wow! you’re here early!”

And Mom said, “Who is that?!”

I said, “He’s a recruiter.”

“What does he want?!”

He steps in and he says, “Ma’am,

I’m here to

talk with your daughter about
joining the Women's Army Corps,
being a new recruit."

"Well, I'm not going to allow it!"

And I thought,

"I'm 18."

"So, is there somewhere we can talk?"

I said, "Yes, there's a restaurant."

He said, "We'll be right back."

Oh, Mom was so mad, because she couldn't get to me.

So we went down, sat down, talked about two hours.

And he said, "Are you going to have problems

having your mother sign your

papers, because you have to be 21?"

I said, "No."

He said, "If she's willing to sign them,

then you can go.

But if she isn't willing to sign them,

you have to wait until you're 21."

I said, "Then I'll wait until I'm 21.

But, I don't care."

So,

he left.

He said, "I'll be calling you when

I'll pick you up to go to Spokane."

So instead of going home I went out to Grandpa's.

Grandma was in the nursing home and I told him.

He said, "Well, you know, that's what happens.

What you've gone through,

that's what happens.

You get help."

So I told him that I have a problem.

And he said, "We can take care of that."

So, he said, "Well, spend the night and then we'll go see Grandma."

So the next morning we went to see Grandma,

and I thought, "Oh, God, she's going to yell at me!"

So he started talking to her.

And she said, "Yes.

That's what we'll do."

So, she told Grandpa,

"Go in the taxi.

Go up to her house and tell her to come down."

I don't know what happened

when he got up there. (*She laughs*)

Poor old man.

Finally they got there.

Mom came in and Grandma said,

“Sit down.”

She sat down and Grandma said,

“You know,

for years

we’ve been asking for help for her.

It came today.

She’s being helped.

There is no other way...

for her to get ahead,

and this is what’s going to happen.”

Oh man, Mom was mad.

“You know I’m never going to sign don’t you!”

And so finally I said, “You know,

if you don’t sign it now,

when I’m 21 I’m still going in.”

“They won’t take you!” (*She laughs*)

And I thought, “There’s something else there.”

Then she dropped a bombshell.

“There is a man in Montana
that wants to marry her.” *(She laughs)*
I looked in my Grandma like... *(She makes a shocked face)*
and my Grandfather yelled at her, “Shit!”
She said,
“It’s Pete Stasso.
He’s a mighty medicine man!”
Then my Grandmother got mad.
They were all mad.
I shut the door.
One of the nurses poked her head and said, “Eileen,
is everything all right?” I said, “Yes,
it will be over in a minute.”
Finally, Grandma told her,
“She is right,
if you don’t do it now,
she’ll wait until she’s 21.
And we’re going to help her.”
And Grandpa reminded her,
“She’s no longer on welfare.
You’re going to have to be
taking care of her.”

“She can’t live at my house!”

And I said, “Then why shouldn’t I be in the Army?”

It took,

like,

a week

and she finally said she would.

And so I called, I said, “Get up here

with the paperwork.

She said she’s going to sign it.”

So he came and she was mad and she signed it.

And 14 days later I was gone.

She wouldn’t even give me any money.

I needed money for

at least shampoo and stuff like that,

and for some food on the plane.

And so she

got mad

and she threw \$5 at me.

She said,

“Pick that up.

That’s all I’m giving you!”

And I just looked at her and I thought,

“What happened to all your money you’re stashing?”

And I said, “Okay.

I’ll get by.”

When I got to Fort McClellan,

I went to supply and I said, “I’m not assigned yet.

I won’t be assigned for, like, five days.

Is there anything I can do?”

So I got free stuff, you know?

Got along with everybody.

And that’s how I knew I could make it

because,

I don’t need you.

You can’t do this to me.

Three weeks before I could get in,

I had to loose three pounds,

at least three pounds,

so I thought,

“I know how to do this.”

I started living on hard boiled eggs.

And in the morning I’d get up at five o’clock.

First,

I started off by running a mile.
I would run half a mile and come back.
A few days,
I went mile and a half.
Made up to five miles a day.
And then I knew that I had
lost enough weight,
but I just kept doing it.
It was a good thing because
when I got into basic training,
those extra muscles really helped.
And Mom would tell me,
“You’re going to get down there, they’re not going to take you!”

One time, when we were about,
I must have been 17 and Libby was 16,
Haas²⁹ came down and they were all drinking.
Haas got really drunk,
so, we put her into one of the bedrooms
so she could sober up because,

²⁹ Haas was her aunt, her mother’s sister.

she couldn't cross the border to go home.

I said to Haas' daughter,

"Well, come back tomorrow.

I'll get her ready to go home."

I don't know what happened.

Something happened all of a sudden.

Libby was in the bedroom and she was yelling at Haas,

about

"You're nothing but a whore!"

And I was like,

"Jeeez!"

And I jumped up and I ran

and I said,

"What's going on?"

"You stay out of it!"

I said,

"She's drunk!"

"Yes, but she's talking."

"She's drunk. Shut the door."

Within a few minutes,

it must've been like two minutes,

Libby got some rope and she tied Haas'

arms and legs to the bed,

spread eagle.

And I thought,

“You know what?

If she throws up, she’s going to die.”

We got into a good fight.

Libby ran out.

I told her,

“You go get a knife and you cut her down.”

“You can’t tell me what to do!”

I said, “Never mind.

I thought you were human.”

So I got the knife and I cut Haas down.

Put her on her stomach.

I don’t know what happened,

but I know that’s how Libby can be.

I was just shocked.

See?

She got that from watching Dad

do that to Mom in the shower.

I couldn’t believe it.

It was just so...

I don't know what the word would be.

God, I remember seeing that
and I remember Haas had a dress on.
She had tied her
to the bed like that,
because it was a double bed
and I thought, "What the hell?"

When Mom made up her mind to move to town
she decided,
"No more Indian."
But you know,
we still went to church³⁰.
She wanted us to be more *suyapi* or something.

I remember
so many young girls.
One man,
he beat his girlfriend,

³⁰ Church was out at the Mission, where Mass was held in Kootenai and in Latin.

almost to death.

She was about 16.

Another girl came to live with Talan,

she was about 16,17.

At 18 he killed her.

Shot her in the stomach,

drove around with her for two days

with bullet wounds.

He took her back to the Mission.

My Grandfather took her to the Sheriff.

This happened when I was small.

A girl about 16,

she worked as a nurse's aide at the hospital.

She got off late.

She walked back to the Mission.

They found her body in the middle of the road.

She was raped,

strangled.

Nobody ever got convicted.

I was about five years old at the time.

So I learned to stay away.

My Grandma told me when I was seven

to stop playing cowboys and Indians.

By nine,

I totally stopped playing.

If these things happened to me,

what happened to the other girls? (*She is near tears.*)

The most influential person in my life was

Father Biat.

He was a French-Canadian Priest.

He stayed about three years.

You couldn't trust the County Nurse.

This was the end of our first day. Looking at my notes, I wrote, "I cannot believe all this happened to her. I knew things were bad, but I had no idea. I feel so bad for her." There were many people my mother spoke of that I wanted to know more about, and I wanted to get a better sense of St. Michael's Mission when she was a child, so we planned on discussing those topics on our second day.

JW: Can you describe the Mission when you were a child?

EW: Well,

the village

was more or less shaped like a circle.

When you came in

from town

there was

a

well maintained gravel road,

from the main road all the way to the dike.

And we always thought that was pretty neat.

Later on, we found out that

they kept it

nice,

because the Corps of Engineers would come and drive along the dike to look at the water.

It wasn't about

anything else.

And when you first got to the top of the hill,

if you went to the right,

you went up a road that took you up to the silo sites

and it would take you all the way to the orchard.

When you
came into the
village,
right from
the top of the hill,
it was very
brushy.

Most of it was
wild rose
or
snow berries.

We used to have wars with both of them,
in the fall when school started,
and everybody would go to school crying
because: "You hit me!"

There were places
that
we were told not to go.

There was a trail
that came from the
north part of the circle and it went to the silo roadside
and we were told never to take that trail.

We never knew why.

We were told to stay away from the
cemetery.

Sometimes we'd
go close, because there was this
huge
white statue of an angel. (*She laughs*)
So we'd go up there to see if it was real.

To the south of the village,
it was really sandy soil,
easy to
work with.

So my Grandmother and a bunch of other women went there
and they started clearing it.

And they planted.

And they did really well.

So after that for years,
that's what everybody did.

When we were younger all we had to do was
pull weeds,
but as we got older,

we had to carry water from

Moses Joseph's house.

All the way to the garden

where we'd pour it into a bigger

container.

And then they would go and they would water

if it didn't rain enough.

I don't know, but

it really would produce good.

And that was

a time when

not only the old women, but

my mother's generation,

they got involved in that

garden.

One of the things that they would do,

when they got

time for lunch,

they'd come to Q'Awiss' house

and

there was a cast iron stove in the back.

They would start it up

and they'd make potato chips,
with the potatoes they'd carry
from the garden.

Or else they were trying to use last year's supply.
But, that was something that they shared.

So, in my memories
it wasn't hard work what we had to do in the garden.

But we never realized
that Jim
and Theresa worked very hard
for their little tiny garden. *(She laughs)*
And we'd steal from them! *(She laughs)*

And up at the orchard,
there was a mulberry bush,
a huge gooseberry bush,
different kinds of apples.

Down
farther there were
pear trees
and then beyond that,
there were

plum trees.

In the

fall they'd tell us not to go

up there anymore.

Because somebody had spotted bear.

So every year

they loved the plums.

They would just take the plums. *(She laughs)*

All the plums were gone. *(She laughs)*

And then,

there was an old house there.

We'd go there and play.

It had beautiful wallpaper.

But we noticed there were holes in the ceiling where people,

when they were up there they fell through. *(She laughs)*

But we still went there and played.

And there were some old pots and pans

in the kitchen,

so we'd cook,

cook,

cook. *(She laughs)*

So, in the spring there were beautiful
yellow roses.

I can't remember their name.

I knew what it was, but I forgot about it.

But they're about,
maybe four inches across and they're just pure yellow.

So, that was the whole orchard.

But we'd always make a big deal about it because
it was a good place to eat apples all year.

In the spring,
there was an old man,
his name was Joe Chiqui.
And every year he'd
walk around with these green traps,
and we'd wonder what they were.

And he'd say, "I never talk about my business."

And finally we found out
he'd go to all of these
gopher holes and set them and kill them
and then take them in.

And he got 25 cents a mole. (*She laughs*)

And we couldn't play on the dike,

because

we were told not to.

But it was such a fascinating place.

But nobody ever did

disobey about that,

but

there was a place called the Fishing Hole,

and the dike was really high then.

And so, they made a trail down there

and we'd go down with our

Uncle Lee or sometimes

they'd let Pasco go,

and we'd just go down there

and we would swim.

Sometimes we'd go down there and fish.

And at that time,

trout were so easy to catch.

One time,

I and Silas went fishing

and I said,

“Okay, whoever catches the biggest

rainbow,

gets to buy the other one

a

sundae when we get home.”

So he caught this and I thought,

“Darn!”

Because we had to lean out

of this cottonwood tree to be able to

toss far enough. (*She laughs*)

So we’re both leaning out of the tree and he goes,

“I got one!”

And he brought it

and it was huge.

And I thought, “On, no!”

And so I said, “Let’s fish a little bit more.”

So we fished for a while.

And all of a sudden, I got one on

and it was like

a quarter of an inch bigger. (*She laughs*)

So, he had to buy me that sundae.

And then in those days,

we must have been cheap,
or poor,
because Sundaes were only 18 cents. (*She laughs*)
We'd go down there and,
we'd watch Pasco and
all of these older guys
swim across the river and back.
And they'd tell us we couldn't because
we'd float away. (*She laughs*)
So for a long time we believed them.
And then, finally, Pasco said, "Who wants to swim the river?"
And I said, "I will."
And so he told me,
"Okay.
I'm going to swim with you.
When do we start we are going to try to go straight,
but when the current takes it feels funny, it will start taking you.
Don't fight it."
And so we did,
swim all the way across.
It was a long ways down. (*She laughs*)
When we had to get on the dike and walk back,

he said,

“We have to walk that high so we can head back over there.”

So we walked all the way over there,

got through the bushes,

started swimming and landed

right at the spot.

He said, “If you go down that far,

that’s how far it is from

the same spot.

So, you have to go all the way up there.”

That was a good lesson to learn. (*She laughs*)

And then,

for all of the crazy things we did when we were at the Fishing Hole,

my brother’s

son was killed there.

He drowned.

And I think,

“Jeez, all of us. There was so many of us and it,

we never thought it would happen.”

It was like, “They just said that to scare us.”

That’s

what we talked about.

There was an old school house.

It had been

built in 1930s, but

they

used it only a few years

and then they were told they couldn't.

It was a day school,

and the B.I.A. told them they couldn't

continue going there because

they needed to get

out into town

and with the civilized people.

So, they were moved

and they were brought to town.

So [the Kootenai children] started going to the public school.

And.

they didn't know what to do

with the building.

Because the

teachers had left.

And it just deteriorated.

But inside,
when it wasn't so bad
inside,
you'd go in
and there was a storage room.
And you'd see just
beakers.
And you'd see
blackboards.
Anything you'd want to see in a school.
And there were
boxes of books and there were Dick, Jane and Sally
and they hadn't even been opened yet.
So, we used to play school.
And then one day we got the idea to
break one of the beakers.
So we set it up on this wall and we
started throwing rocks.
And finally, when it broke,
it just sounded
so incredibly neat. *(She laughs)*
So we set up another one. *(She laughs)*

It took a long time,
but we broke every one of them.
There were
science kits.
We didn't know what they were,
so we played with them. (*She laughs*)
And in the main kitchen,
they had left their
pots.
We'd go in there and play house,
play school.
But,
that's where we played school a lot.
And we were using the actual material
they used in school
and we didn't even realize
that. (*She laughs*)
And then, today
I think about all of those things we broke,
we could have made a fortune. (*She laughs*)
But, that was a good place to be,
because we played school.

And actually,
it helped us with reading and stuff.

The vacant house on the right,
that was the favorite place
to play cowboys.

Because right behind the house
and along the house,
because it was a vacant place,
nobody took care of it,
so we could build trail. (*She laughs*)

And one time we were playing
and Pasco told me to run because
they were after us.

And he made it through the window,
like I said, they were, like, 24 inches tall,
so I was really small.

I watched as he jumped through the window and I got there and I
jumped,

I got my one leg over

and the

back one

hit the sill,

and I fell out.

And it

raised a bump about two and a half inches high. *(She laughs)*

And it hurt so bad.

So, everybody is sitting there watching me if I'm going to cry

and I think, "I'm not going to cry." *(She laughs)*

And so I guess when I

missed it,

it just

cracked my leg! *(She laughs)*

So Pasco said,

and it was summertime and I was wearing shorts,

and he told me,

"Let's just go home.

They won't notice it." *(She laughs)*

And he said,

"Don't limp. *(She laughs)*

When we go in,

just go sit down."

And so we go

and it hurt so bad. *(She laughs)*

Just like that,

“What happened to her leg?” (*She laughs*)

But we always thought we’d get away with things.

But near the back road

and behind the church,

and behind Jim’s house.

that was all bushes.

To the north of the church

they kept it

mowed.

That was the only mowed yard.

Some guy came out every week and mowed it. (*She laughs*)

But right across from

the church was called

the

Chief’s House.

And the

last chief

that remained there

was

Simon David.

And his wife’s name was Sophie.

I remember, *(She laughs)*
I might have been
seven years old and I was staying
over at Q'Awiss' *(She laughs)*
and I could hear all this
yelling
and she said, "Who's yelling out there?"
And I went out on the porch and I looked. *(She laughs)*
Simon David,
he was yelling at the priest. *(She laughs)*
And they were arguing. *(She laughs)*
I didn't know what they were saying.
I went back and I told her.
"Shut the door!" *(She laughs)*
Whatever it was,
they must have all talked about it,
because that was it.
And that's when,
they took him off as a chief
because he,
they said he was just old. *(She laughs)*

And he did look old,
because he never cut his hair really good
and then he slept,
and it was always... *(She laughs and gestures hair sticking up from her head.)*
But,
they were very,
they were a very nice couple.
After that nobody lived
in
Chief's
House.

The road went round
and made the circle.
But on one side
it was kept well
and on the other side it was just so brushy.

The Community Building
wasn't used
for a long time.
I remember as a little kid,

I always wondered what it was,
because nobody ever went in there.
And then,
they would hold meetings in there,
and Jumpdance
and those were the times that I
got to go in there.
And then,
one day they brought in a TV.
And that,
at first it was good because
you could go in there and you could watch TV.
And pretty soon
kids were banned,
they could come one evening and watch TV.
Then,
I could hear
arguing and stuff
and my Grandfather told my Grandmother, "I told them
it was a bad idea.
That's what was going to happen."
And at that point I think he just kind of

gave up,

because these guys were never going to

grow up.

And these were people like my Dad.

They still

wanted to go out and drink and fight.

Things like that.

And so they took over the building and pretty soon,

all it was it was a place to go and get drunk.

Then we just never went there anymore.

And I think

that's why my Grandfather didn't care what happened to it, because

it had been our

spiritual place

and

they destroyed it.

So, he didn't care.

The inside of the church was

kind of a

light blue

and I would sit there

and I'd look up and I'd think,

"I know why it's blue,

because heaven is blue." (*She laughs*)

My Grandfather would get up to give his sermons and

I don't know how many times I'd heard them,

but they always

sounded

good.

And he didn't preach

as much as he just

told you what you should do.

When

Lee was found dead,

he was found right between

Simon Francis' house

and the Louie house.

There was

[a] shed...

I remember one time

I could hear

all of the boys in there.

I don't know, I might have been, maybe not even six.

But I could hear them all laughing and I was gonna go and see what they were doing.

And finally,

this guy named Richard came out.

He saw me and he said, "What are you doing here?"

And I said, "What are you guys doing in there?"

And he didn't say anything.

One of the older boys came and

grabbed me.

And they opened the shed door.

And this girl was being gang raped.

And he said, "Look!

Look at that!

Doesn't that look like fun?"

He just kept yelling at me.

And then I guess I made enough noise,

he just threw me on the ground

and I just took off running.

But see,

that's where the danger was.

That's

when my Grandmother told me,

“Don’t go there.”

And I never did.

At Cass’ house,

that’s where all the partying was.

Sometimes it’d go on for

two days,

and that’s when we couldn’t go out to play or anything because

you never know what the drunks will do.

And that’s how much I know about the village.

One time

it was in the summer

and all of a sudden Mom was there and she said,

“Get up, we’ve got to go.”

So I did and she had blankets

so I said, “Where are we going?”

And behind Ann Andrew’s house,

there used to be this

elderberry bush

and because it spreads out so wide with leaves,
that's where we were going.

Because my Dad had come home drunk
and we were told to be quiet.

So we did.

We went there,
and of course it started raining but
the
leaves helped.

JW: You slept under the elderberry bush?

EW: Mm-hmm.

Before
the Church was here,
it was down here near the Old School.
They
decided to move it from there to where the new site is.
So, they put it on rollers
and they were going and
they set it up.
And within a couple of years
it burned to the ground.

So then they started building this church.

It took them

about five years to build the church.

And all of the pews were hand carved.

I think there were

12 of them.

And from the Vatican we had

statues of Saint Michael,

Mary,

and Jesus.

And then there was an archangel.

I think the

neatest

part about the church is that

they also had

the Twelve Stations of the Cross and

all of the frames were hand carved.

And someone donated an organ and

somebody learned how to play it.

And they would play on

Christmas Day,

Christmas night.

I remember Grandpa would say the mass in Kootenai
and then he'd say something to somebody
and they would start playing the organ.

And my Dad,
Archie Big Head,
Simon Francis
they sang *O, Holy Night*
in Latin.

And they'd sing
Ave Maria in Latin.

And they sounded great.
You would just feel the
vibrations.

It was neat.

That's the only reason I liked Christmas mass. (*She laughs*)

Because it was late
and we'd keep getting hit
because we were almost asleep. (*She laughs*)

The houses were built
in a square
and I remember we had a

wood stove
in the living room,
and that was to heat the whole house.
One morning I woke up,
it was just getting daylight
and I saw movement by the fire (*She laughs*)
and I thought, “What is that?”
So I sat up,
I said, “What are you doing there?”
And it was my brother Silas.
He was sitting by the
fireplace,
which wasn’t even on,
and he was reading a comic book. (*She laughs*)
It wasn’t even daylight.
And I said, “What are you doing?”
He said,
“I’m cold.” (*She laughs*)
I said, “But the fire isn’t on!
Get back in your bed.”

Sometimes

they'd throw potatoes
on the stove,
and then they would just leave it there.
And when it was getting close to bedtime
they'd let us eat
baked potatoes with
salt.
And that to me,
was the best thing.
Because when you're cold,
and then you get a hot potato. (*She laughs*)

I remember a lot of times,
my Grandmother would get
bricks
and put them at the end of the bed
for the warmth.
And they would hang quilts
in the window
to try to keep the cold out.

We always had enough wood.

But,

one year

I must have been about six,

because I remember,

I had to help Libby through the deep snow.

They talked about how we needed wood.

None of the men would do anything.

One day,

this woman came over and she was talking to my Mom.

She said,

“Well, it’s not very far

and we could take the kids with us.”

Then next day

Grandma said,

“Everybody is going to go

wood cutting.”

They took three saws along.

I remember three of them were carrying saws across their shoulders

and I thought that was so neat,

because I thought only men could do that.

But,

they had found a tree

that fell down in the storm.

And so,

even though it wasn't going to be dry

they said we needed the wood.

So, we had to go along to

guide the sled when it started to come down.

And we got there and they were talking

and finally,

two of the women took the saw and they started cutting.

And it was a thick tree.

It took them long time.

But they cut enough to

load one sled

and

told us to run alongside it,

if it started to turn,

and try to keep it from turning.

And we worked

all day.

We made three loads.

So we went to enough houses to make

enough for three loads.

No men.

The women were there all week,
working on that.

And we were there.

And the men never came.

And it was these women.

They were the ones that
saved everybody.

It seemed like

the men never had any responsibilities.

Because my Grandfather took care of his
three sons.

And it happened
all through the village.

So, they had no responsibilities.

I don't know what would happen if the women had said,
"No more."

Because they would have nowhere to go to work.

My Mom worked at Fleming's Laundry,
and then a Chinese restaurant opened and she worked there.

It seemed like
there were just
a few guys who,
to me now I would call normal.
I don't know what I called it then.
But they went to work.
They didn't drink.
They were seen all over the Mission,
visiting people and stuff like that,
helping somebody.
And you wonder, "How can
you turn out that way,
and you turn out that way?"

But
Indian men are babied,
even to this day.
They are babied from the time that they are born
and usually end up
spoiled
rather than...
I don't know what they think.

Girls on other hand,
so much is expected of them.
The one thing I knew more than anything,
when I
must have been about 11 or 12,
was that no matter what I do
I will always be known
as an Abraham.
And what do you expect of the Abrahams?
That was the saying.
And finally,
I asked what it meant
and they told me,
“They’re afraid of what will happen.”
And I never understood that.
Today I do.
If you don’t control the Abrahams they’ll take over. *(She laughs)*
You know, and to me,
that’s sad.
Because when we were kids,
instead of playing together all the time,
there was always that

separation.

JW: What do you mean, take over?

EW: That we would be able to
be the ones that govern
the village.
That's what they thought of it.

JW: So, who was in charge when you were little?

EW: My Grandfather
was the chief.
So he was the one they went to.
Simon Francis, to me
was a lucky man.
Because he could speak English perfectly.
And he could speak Kootenai so perfectly.
And he could write.
That fascinated me as a little kid.
He'd carry around a little notebook
and put it in his pocket.
All of a sudden he'd sit down and just scribble along.
Now, I look at his diaries

and he was writing down what he was observing happening, you know?

And he tried everything
to help the tribe during the
land settlement.

He was very smart.

And I remember many, many nights,
I'd have to go to sleep in the bedroom because,
my Grandpa's going to talk to somebody.

And I'd stay awake to see who it was.

And a lot of nights it was him.

And he'd come in
and he'd tell him all about these things.

Later on,
a lot of it was what was happening in the village.

Because he'd tell him,
"This is what happened over there."

And then
when it came to the land settlements,
he studied everything.

And I don't think he got the
credit

that he deserved for his hard work.

The

woman, I think

should have been recognized,

but never was,

was

Simon Francis's wife,

Catherine.

Because

she stood by him in everything.

She couldn't speak English,

but she could understand it.

And she,

Simon died of

alcohol

poisoning

at a pow-wow.

And she said

she wasn't going to let that stand in her way.

If she was going to go ahead,

she was going to pow-wow.

She was going to do everything.

Because before then,

you were expected to mourn

anywhere from one to three years

when your husband died.

Where a man

could

marry again the day after you died, you know?

And the mothers didn't care.

That's how it's always been.

But, I wondered why?

Why do you want to get married if,

you know you're not going to like your wife enough to

be faithful?

Those were the things that I used to wonder about,

when I was...

I must have been 13.

I don't even know how it happened.

We were sent

to clean the Community Hall.

And I saw Pasco go into the closet.

And I wondered,
“What are you doing in there?”
So I just kept on cleaning.
Pretty soon everybody was leaving.
He said, “You can’t leave,
you’ve got to help me finish.”
So I did.
And all of a sudden he grabbed me,
brought me to the closet,
took off my panties and,
he didn’t penetrate me,
but we had sex,
and I couldn’t believe it.
It was just like... (*She makes a shocked face*)
you know?
And it didn’t even matter,
it went on and on.

When I turned 14,
I went to school
and all of a sudden I realized I was bleeding.
And I was sure

I was having a baby.

So, they said,

“We are going to call the County Nurse.”

So she came and she said,

“This happens to a lot of girls,
you’re not sick.”

So she brought me home

and she said,

“Why don’t you take a shower?”

And so she started talking to Mom.

And before I turned on the shower I heard Mom say,

“Well, I didn’t think it would happen this soon.”

She never told me about menstruation or anything.

At that point I could have said something about Pasco.

But if I did,

she wouldn’t have believed me.

So, the next year I gave my sister a Kotex and I told her,

“You better have that with you,

because you’re going to need it.”

I didn’t want her to go through what I went through

even though she smoked. (*She laughs*)

And all Mom kept saying was, “Don’t get pregnant.”

I didn’t understand how you got pregnant.

JW: You said you were a sickly child. Could you tell me about that?

EW: Well when I was small,

my Grandmother told me when I was very small

I always got chest colds.

So many times I ended up

in the hospital.

And she said I had ear aches.

But I outgrew

all that stuff.

I never broke a bone.

I remember,

maybe I was four and five,

it seemed like I was always in the hospital.

And nobody ever came to see me.

But I liked being in the hospital because

I got to eat.

I got to take a bath.

That to me,
was so much fun.
And every morning,
a nurse
would bring me a
really warm wash cloth,
and a towel,
and she'd wash my face,
and my hands,
and then she'd wipe them down.
And then she'd tell me I was ready for the day.
Her name was Elvira.
I think I knew her before I was born.

When I was
nine-years-old,
I started to feel sick one afternoon.
I felt like I was gonna throw up
and all of these things,
and I thought I was okay.
So that night I told my Great Aunt
that I didn't feel good.

And I don't know why,
but she was in a really bad mood.
She told me, "You will be okay. Go to sleep."
During the night,
I woke up and I was just burning.
And I don't know,
because we still lived at the Mission,
I guess my Grandfather drove me to the hospital.
But, the night before,
when I was telling my Great-Aunt that I was sick,
she told my Mom and my Mom said,
"Nothing's wrong with her."
Then she was gone.
I didn't even know she had left.
When they took me to the hospital,
they determined I had appendicitis.
And so, they said,
"We have to operate before it ruptures. They waited too long."
So, they couldn't find my Mom or Dad.
So, the only thing left to do was go to the notary public
and have her sign my papers so that I could be operated on.
My Mom and Dad never came to see me while I was in the hospital.

Q'Awiss came in with Grandma and Grandpa.

And she said, "It's my fault.

When you told me you were sick,
you looked sick.

I should have told you
to lie down or something.

Or I should have
told

Grandpa early.

They said you almost died last night."

When I was five-years-old,
we were camping at Buck Horn.

And every day all the
adults went picking except
this one woman named Anne.

She'd stay and she'd keep the
fire going

and she'd make the food and stuff like that.

And so, she took care of all the kids.

And she had a tipi.

And outside of the tipi

there was this

fire pit.

But it was built above ground

and it was

kind of flat.

So they evened it out

and they made this huge ring.

And it was burning because she had to heat,

that's what she used for cooking.

So she kept it burning.

And I remember

it was kind of chilly,

so Libby had on

an overcoat with a fur collar. *(She laughs)*

And I had on just a jacket.

And so, Anne went back to the tent and

we were sitting on the rim.

And we kind of rocked it like that,

and it felt funny

And I told her, "Do it again!"

After a couple of times,

it went backwards.

And it broke and we fell into the fire.

And I can remember screaming,

and Anne

coming out and grabbing both of us,

and throwing us on the ground.

And she had no way of

contacting anybody,

because everybody was out picking.

But,

she knew a couple of campers

that were a campsite away.

There was somebody there

who knew where they were picking.

She told him what had happened and he drove up and got them.

And all that time

what I remember is,

she laid me on the ground,

on my stomach.

And she kept bringing bacon over

and covering my back.

And

I could even hear the bacon fry. (*She laughs*)

And it melted.

As soon as it melted a little bit,

she changed it.

And started all over again.

It was cold,

and I felt it warming it,

and I knew it was cooking on my body. (*She laughs*)

And I remember looking for Libby.

And she was lying on her stomach too,

but she didn't have her coat on.

Anne was covering her with blankets.

Later on, they said

what saved Libby is,

she had on the fur collar.

So it only scorched the back of her hair.

They said it could have been a lot worse.

So going down to Bonners,

there was this woman from Elmo³¹.

³¹ Elmo, Montana.

She kept telling my Mom, “Don’t let her go to sleep.

Keep her awake.”

And I don’t remember getting to the hospital.

But all of a sudden,

I remember terrible pain.

They had touched the

stuff.

For the next,

I don’t know how many days,

I was out because,

they were taking off the

burnt skin

and cleaning me up.

It seemed like I was always being

dipped into something.

Later on when

they let me look,

I had no hair on the back of my head.

And that was a shock to me.

To me, that was a bigger shock

than falling into the fire. *(She laughs)*

I was in the hospital for about six week while they
tried to heal it and
every single day,
they had to change the bandages.

And they had to put the new ones on
and they had to clean all these burns.

Oh, it was horrible,
because of the pain.

It seemed like no matter how much medicine I took,
I couldn't get enough.

And every day they'd come in,
they'd have to pull it off.

And it seemed like
for as much healing that it did
in those 24 hours,
they just ripped it back out.

And I'd just bleed.

Finally it started to get better.

I could feel where
there were ridges,
but it wasn't exposed like,

most of it was red meat.

So when it would grow out,

it felt good.

It took six weeks

just to put one layer on.

So at the end of six weeks they let me go home.

They said I'd be okay.

Nobody

really took it serious,

about changing my bandages,

and pretty soon it got infected.

I was in the hospital for about

two weeks.

I went home,

back to the hospital.

I must have done that for months.

They took me to the medicine dances and stuff.

But one day I heard them talking about me.

And it was the infections.

Not the burn itself,

it was the infections that could have killed me.

When we were still at the camp,
Anne kept,
she'd shake me to wake up and she'd talk to me
and then when they were taking me to the hospital,
I had to kept talking.
Otherwise,
at some point,
I would have figured out I'd just fell (*She laughs*)
into a fire,
and I would have died of shock.

I had scars on my hands,
and Libby had scars on her hands.
We must have reached up like that. (*She raises her hands above her head.*)

JW: So who took care of you, afterwards?

EW: I went back to Buck Horn
with my Grandma and Grandpa and Q'Awiss.
So the second time,
they said we should move back to the Mission,

so I could get help getting cleaned up.

Nobody

would do it.

So it got infected again.

My Grandmother

would do it.

And then afterward she'd cry because

it hurt.

And then she'd have to put the medicine on,

which hurt.

And put the bandage back on,

which hurt,

to remove tomorrow.

Q'Awiss took care of

everything else.

I told her I had to keep,

I guess they meant hydrated.

And so she was constantly

feeding me

soup.

She made fish head soup.

Fish tail soup.

She made

wild mushroom soup because we were at Buck Horn.

And she'd make me chicken broth.

She'd just take a little bit of chicken

and she'd make me chicken broth

and always made me drink water,

made sure of that.

Because she,

at that point she'd

never lost a child. (*She is almost crying*)

And she had no children of her own.

Once

it healed,

I got over it.

Boy, did I get I trouble for that. (*She laughs*)

I'm never going to do that again. (*She laughs*)

But she raised so many children.

And she always

knew who needed
something.

She never threw clothes away, because she always knew somebody else,
some other kid,
would need it.

And she just didn't give them things.

In the spring,
she'd tell the kids,

"You put on your socks and then you take (*She laughs*)

a plastic bread bag and cover your foot
and it won't get cold."

They found that she was right.

And she'd,
do things like that.

She showed the girls,
how to quickly take out a needle
and make a quick repair.

And I don't think she
ever
yelled
at a kid.

As far back as I can remember,
when I had ear aches,
my Great-Aunt... (*She laughs, but is near tears*)
This may sound funny,
but it's true.
She would quickly
get some
chewing tobacco and start working on it.
Then she'd get a washcloth
and clean out my ear.
Then she would
spit
the tobacco into my ear. (*She laughs*)
Because they believed that the,
I think it's called tannin
in the tobacco.
will cure it.
I hated it
when she did that. (*She laughs*)
But most of the time it worked.
She might have to do it two or three times but...

I guess I suffered from
near-sightedness (*She laughs*)
from a very young age.
But my Great Aunt thought (*She laughs*)
I had an illness in my eye.
So she'd chew tobacco (*She laughs*)
and spit it in my eye.
And I'd scream. (*She laughs*)
Because she couldn't wash it out.
I don't know how long it took
to quit hurting. (*She laughs*)
I don't know
if she liked to help me, (*She laughs*)
or she liked chewing tobacco. (*She laughs*)
When we were kids we watched
our Great Aunt
and our Grandmother
chew tobacco.
Then there was this other thing
called snuff.
You stuck it

in your lip
on the outside of your teeth.
And you suck out the tobacco juice.
We used to be fascinated by that.
And in the summertime
they would harvest
choke cherries.
And then they grind it up.
And they use it
for cooking in the winter time
for food.
And so,
we'd always sneak into the pouch, (*She laughs, but is near tears*)
and we'd get enough
to make
snuff. (*She laughs*)
We'd always be stealing it and
it was ground with the
pits,
so it didn't have much of a taste,
but we liked it,
because we could spit. (*She laughs*)

Along with going to the doctor,
when I had these
chest colds and stuff,
they would give me,
we have a root,
we call it *I-ute*,
and they dry it.

And in the winter time when they need it
they make it into a
tea.

When your a kid you can,
they'll let you add honey.

But when your an adult,
they don't want you to do that. (*She laughs*)

Because you're
diluting
what you need.

But to me that worked.

You could feel it.

It was just like a decongestant.

It worked good.

Those are the only medicines I can think of now.

But there were so many things.

This was the end of our second day. We spoke of many things this day which did not make it into this thesis, because my mother did not want to share them with the outside world. My mother has scars on her upper back from falling into the fire, and while I knew a little bit about this accident, I had never heard the entire story. In my notes, I wrote, "I am glad she is sharing more about Q'Awiss, I have always heard about her, and all I want now is to hear more."

EW: I want to tell you about

some of the

food

we depended on,

when we were so poor.

And later on it became like,

a delicacy because,

nobody had to go get it.

If somebody came and they had one of these,

we knew, we were not going to be late for dinner.

From the time
that I can remember,
we ate a lot of broth.

In the
summertime,
I watched my Uncle go trapping.
And I always wanted to go trapping because
it looked like so much fun.
And I could never go with him because,
I could get hurt.
I'd watch and they'd come home and
Grandma would take
whatever they were carrying and
go
into the tent.
And usually it was,
they had gone gopher trapping.
And they brought home
their gophers.
And they would go
hunting for muskrat.

And they would

get

different wild birds.

They didn't use a gun on that,

they would use

slings.

Once I watched

one of them sling

a grouse.

Talk about your head flying off!

So, I wanted to learn how to sling.

I didn't get to learn how to sling because,

they told me

I was a girl.

But I learned how to trap

muskrat,

rabbit,

gopher.

I'd go with

my Grandpa and my Uncles

when they would go duck hunting.

And I always wanted to be one of the people
that wrung the neck.

So when they let me,
and I couldn't wring it,
I realized that ducks were heavy!
But they'd let me try
and they'd wring them behind me
as we went back to the car! (*She laughs*)

And I loved plucking ducks
with my Grandmother.
Because I knew
the different layers we'd be plucking.
And then pretty soon
she'd get another basket and she'd say,
"Okay, now put those in there,
those are gonna be pillows."
Geese and everything she'd tell me.

When they'd make
either muskrat,
gopher,

we knew it was going to be good.

Because early in the day

Great Auntie would start a fire,

and get her biggest pot.

And she'd bring out the,

whatever it was.

And she'd put them in there,

and she'd throw in onions,

salt.

Then she'd cover it.

And she'd cook it for like four hours.

And it was just soft.

And to the broth

she would add

some potato chunks

and

she'd make fry bread.

And then it would be finally time to eat.

And all of the bones had been taken out.

We never knew.

But that's how hard she worked.

Same with the birds.

She'd make one meal,

we called it *wass*.

It's a dumpling.

And so that would be one meal,

and she'd save the meat for the next meal.

For all of that work,

I think one of my favorite meals was,

she'd make a big pot of macaroni

and tomato sauce.

When

she would be cooking these,

we'd walk by and

if it was a muskrat,

there'd be two yellow teeth sticking above the water line! (*She laughs*)

Any meal she would have at least seven,

and she could cook for

fourteen.

She always made sure there was enough food.

And she never wasted anything.

As she got older,
she started cooking turkeys
from the grocery store.
And she could make
the most juiciest turkeys.
And she was already in her seventies
when she started doing that.
And she could
dress a deer by herself,
skin it and dress it.
And she was one of these women
who never
made a hole
in her
skins.

And she'd always talk about that. (*She laughs*)

When I was about eight,
was the first time I went
to muskrat trap.
And it scared me.
I don't know why but it scared me.

I'd always watched them deer hunt,
duck hunt and everything,
but I'd never seen
an animal trapped.
And I was just so shocked.
And then I got over it
and I started learning how to set the traps.
The first traps I ever set were
gophers.
Because the trap is only about
six inches long,
and it's the spring type
so I could step on it with my foot
and I could set it.
I'd put the bait on it
and shove it down the hole.
The next thing I learned was
the muskrat trap.
That was hard because
they have a heavy spring.

The first time I ever shot a gun,

I was seven years old

and it was a .22 single shot.

My Grandmother decided she was going to teach me.

She was

the tribe's

spiritual leader.

And since Helen's mother had been one,

that woman inherited that.

So we had two.

They were

skilled.

And whatever they did

it seemed like it worked.

So when I was seven my Grandmother decided

she should at least train me

something.

So at New Year's

we have a,

like a nuts and fruit exchange at every house.

The men go in one group and the women go in another group.

They used to do that a long time ago.

But today because there are so few of us that do it,

and we only have maybe four singers,
our Chief started telling us to do it
in whatever group you want to be,
so at least we have equal numbers of women
and equal numbers of men.

You go to each house,
they have mixed nuts,
peanuts,
hard candies,
oranges.

And after you pray for the house,
to protect it for the coming year,
and to protect who lives there,
then we sing some songs
to welcome the New Year.
and then they're³² sitting
in the middle of the
ceremony.

And then when everything's finished,
they bring out whatever they're going to pass out.

³² The family of the house sits in the middle of the living room

And so each person
goes by and you take a handful,
and a piece of fruit and you put it in their bag.
And it goes through all the houses.
The last person
in line
has to take everything that's left over.
And I always wondered why this one man had to do that because,
he had no children. *(She laughs)*
He got everything.
The bags were heavy and that's why he did it,
he was strong. *(She laughs)*
But I got the idea that,
"He's gonna have a lot of food." *(She laughs)*

EW: What are we talking about?

JW: You said your Grandmother wanted to train you.

EW: Oh yeah.

So she wanted to train me to be one of these women.

JW: Which women?

EW: They're the women that lead
spiritually.

So these are the women that,
as they go from house to house
they fire a shot,
to welcome the New Year.

When I was seven,
my first time,
she gave me a .22
single shot.

And Helen was my Grandmother's helper
so she was there.

And so she told Helen to shoot first,
then she would shoot,
then I would shoot.

It scared me so bad when Helen
shot

a shot gun.

My Grandmother shot
a .22.

And then she loaded mine and she gave it to me.

And she told me to hold it up
by my shoulder.

And I couldn't get it high enough

so she told Helen,
“Lean her back,
have her hold it like this,
put her finger in there.
But lean her back,
that will
point it up.”
And so she prayed.
And then she said *Dahas*³³.
Helen pulled the trigger
and it went BOOM!
And she said,
“You can’t fall down.”
So that was the first time I ever
did anything.
And then years went by,
probably three years.
And she told Helen again,
“I’m taking her with me
to train her a little more.”

³³ *Dahas* - finished

So I still got a .22 single shot that year.

The year I turned twelve,
she told me I'd be going out just with Helen.

So I went out,
we prayed, sang.

She asked me if my gun was loaded

I said, "Yes."

So she said,

"When I say *Dahas* you shoot."

"Okay."

"Hold it high."

And I did.

And I shot,
it hit the church bell. (*She laughs*)

And I didn't fall.

She shot, then she prayed.

We went back in and she told my Grandmother,

"She did it."

So my Grandmother started teaching me that year.

More things.

Why

we do these things.

And I would have gone all the way with it,
but my Mom
decided I wasn't going to do it.
She had taken away my dress,
moccasins and my shawl.

She told my Grandmother I wasn't going to do it.
I wasn't allowed to see my Grandparents
for almost a year.

I don't know what she thought
was going to
happen.

I guess she thought if she kept me away from them
I wouldn't,

I guess she thought I was babied.

I guess she thought if she did this,

I would get away from it and I,

I'd see they were trying to take over me,
or something like that.

And she'd always tell me,

"You'll end up just like your Grandmother."

I never knew what that meant.

I just thought she was a nice old lady.

She was a cripple but she still worked
on her bead work, sold it.

When people would come
from far away and they needed to go home and they needed money
she would reach in her
purse
and get it.

“You’re gonna end up just like her.”

But she let the other kids
go see them.

Which to me was good.

Once in awhile

Samuel would come back
and he’d give me something,
even if it was a package of gum.

I’d say,

“Where did you get that?”

“I had some money.”

And I knew it was from Grandpa.

I don't know what Mom thought
the outcome was going to be but
it wasn't
going to be something
that would make life worse.

Because
sure she was my Mom but
I felt closer
to those two old woman
than I did
to my Mom.

When we were kids we could go over to my Grandparent's house.

We always did.

And they would tell us stories.

And it wasn't just like
bedtime stories,

it was

the history.

Where our family came from.

How long

the line of Chief had been

in our family.

One of the things that I

know now,

there were almost no

role models.

There was one girl,

from the time that I was really young,

I always thought she did such a good job because,

she took care of her dad,

her husband,

two kids.

And she still had time to

visit people,

cook.

You would see her and to me,

it was amazing to watch her.

She wasn't like everybody else.

Because so many people were like,

I don't know if it's hate,

or a type of jealousy,

or just

not caring

but,

they wouldn't even say hello to each other.

And by the time teen-age girls were

fourteen, fifteen,

they practiced

what I call "Indian Princess Syndrome."

They'd be happy girls and

all of a sudden

they get bashful.

And they go into

a shell.

And they know you but,

even if you say hello to them,

they just say "hi." (*She looks down and slumps her shoulders*)

And they

lower their eyes,

they just go through this transformation.

And I don't know where it ever came from

or where it's going to go.

And the only reason I call it "Indian Princess Syndrome" is because

I think of Pocahontas. (*She laughs*)

Girls

don't get a lot of encouragement about
things that are educational.

And for so long I think that it was mostly expected that
they would get married.

If you were a young woman,
and you got pregnant,
you were the worst thing that could happen.

No matter what
your mother and father were like when they were younger,
but now,
you were so bad.

You think
these things are
a long time ago and stuff.

Most kids lived with their grandmother
or the old people in their family.

When I was probably five
because I remember going to the
train depot,

a bunch of the Indian guys were getting on a train,
and my Dad was one of them.

So I asked,

“What’s going on?”

He didn’t say anything.

Then Q’Awiss told me,

“He’s on his way to Chicago.”

I didn’t know where that was.

“They’re going to teach them how to work.

Because he’s

an Indian.

So they want him to go there so they can

teach him how to work.”

So I understood it and I told Libby

so she’d know and

she knew where Chicago was! (*She laughs*)

So I said,

“You know,

he’s going to Chicago.

Do you know where Chicago is?”

And I though,

“No you don’t,

you're only four."

And I told her,

"He won't be back

for awhile."

And I don't know if it was relief

that he wouldn't be coming back for awhile again

or knowing that he was going to come back.

But what happened was,

he got to Chicago,

registered,

at Indian Something Job Opportunities,

he got paid

money

so that he could buy his supplies.

He went and got back on the train and came home. (*She laughs*)

There was nothing they could do.

He said he wasn't going to live there.

JW: You said that Father Biat was one of the most influential people in your life,

why was he?

EW: Well,

I received Holy Communion

when I was seven.

The priest that we had

had to retire

just before I turned nine,

and they sent this priest.

We didn't go to

church in town.

We went to our own church.

And they said Mass there

on Saturday.

One Saturday we were playing,

we didn't know he was coming,

so we were still playing in the church yard,

and all of a sudden this car pulls up

and parks,

and we just keep on playing.

All of a sudden Pasco yells,

"Priest!"

And everybody just scatters! (*She laughs*)

And he walks around the church

looking at the windows and stuff.

Finally he says,

“Is anyone here?” (*She laughs*)

“My name is Father Biat.

Don’t be afraid of me.”

Finally I told Libby,

“Let’s go.

Because

he’s not going to leave.

We might get in trouble.

He might go to Grandpa.”

To us,

that was the thing.

“Let’s just go out there and talk to him.”

So we go walking out there.

He says,

“Oh, were you playing baseball?”

And I didn’t know if I should say yes or no because,

this is your lot.

Finally he says,

“I saw you kids playing baseball.

Why did you stop?

I would have loved to play.”

Pretty soon,

one by one
everybody came back out
of the bushes! (*She laughs*)
So he started playing baseball for about half an hour then,
“Oh I must say Mass.”
And he goes
and he took Silas and another boy
to start training
as altar boys.
And for the first time in our lives
he let all the kids go
to see what was in
the back of the church.
And to look behind the altar,
because nobody had ever seen that side of the altar.
So he invited all of the kids to do it.
So all of us did it and you know what?
It’s where they stored the Nativity! (*She laughs*)
And I thought,
“There is no heaven
back there.” (*She laughs*)
Because I always thought that was heaven

and that's why they never wanted us to
go up to the altar. (*She laughs*)
And in Confession
he could
understand
and tell you why it wasn't your fault,
and you're not violating
God's commandments.
And he liked the kids.
He'd get there
and sometimes he'd gather us on the porch
and tell us a quick story or
tell us what's going to happen at Mass today,
what I'll be praying
so you can follow along
and you can practice.
And he'd encourage us to learn Latin.
By the time most of us learned enough,
it had become English.
And that was one person I could tell anything to,
what worried me and stuff,
and he would

never
say something in the order of
“try harder”.
He’d say,
“Pray to God.”

When I was sixteen,
they opened a
Candy Striper training.
So I went for orientation to see what it was.
And it was working
at the hospital just doing simple things.
So I thought,
“Well I’ll do it.”
So on Wednesday afternoons I would go there
and just feed them,
talk to the babies and feed them,
if they needed a walk help them walk.
And one day I found out my Grandfather
fell down and broke his hip.
So they were admitting him.
When I got there they just made me work with him

because,

“He won’t talk to us.”

A nurse said,

“I know he talks some Kootenai because

I talk to him all the time.”

So I went and asked him why.

“Because I want to go home.”

So for six weeks

that’s all I did.

Just once,

they brought soup

and I didn’t think to test it.

And I gave him a bit,

it was super hot.

And they would hang him.

They would tie him

to a gurney

to lie flat.

And then they would flip him over

so his back could have a rest.

And they said he would probably never walk again,

because of his age.

I told him and he didn't say anything.

By the sixth week

he took his first therapy.

And within

the next two months he was walking again.

When

I left to join the Army,

my recruiter told me, "There'll be another girl on the flight with you from

Troy, MT.

And another girl from

Walla Walla.

I think you and that girl from Troy,

you'll be friends.

She is fun.

You guys will like each other.

And the one from Walla Walla,

she just finished two years of training as a practical nurse,

so she'll have nothing in common with you." (*She laughs*)

So, we had to go in the night before.

We had tests done.

They assigned us roommates and I got the one from Troy.

I said, "You know,

I'm glad I have you."

She said,

"I'm glad I have someone from the area

because I don't know anybody.

You know, the only thing I can say I am proud of in high school,

I was a straight "A" student.

I was a cheerleader.

I was really popular."

We just sat there and laughed.

She said,

"I feel like I know no one in the world now.

I am so far away from home.

What did I do?

My mom was right!" (*She laughs*)

So, we became friends.

And it was good to have a friend on days when nothing went right,

you were yelled at too many times

for stepping on the wrong foot.

And getting yelled at for not being able to climb the rope any faster than that.

"If you didn't weigh so much!"

They would insult you like that. (*She laughs*)

So
the first day
we flew to Minneapolis.
And then we were supposed to connect into
Atlanta
the same day
but it ended up being at night.
So we're waiting and it comes on,
"All waiting military personnel,
the flight to Atlanta has been cancelled.
Please come to the
soldier's lounge."
We go in there and they give us a voucher.
And it wasn't even a good hotel. (*She laughs*)
They put us on buses
we filled up the busses and
we hoped nothing else was this bad! (*She laughs*)
The next morning
we were up really early
bussed back to the airport
and we can't get out until after
two o'clock.

That put us into a dark landing.

Pretty soon it was announced,

“All military personnel report to the
lounge.”

We go in there

we get vouchers

get our duffle bags and line up.

And we went back to the same place! (*She laughs*)

Because it was storming

and they wouldn't let us take off from there.

The third day,

we can't stay here another day!

We get up, they feed us, send us
down.

And we sit around.

And all of a sudden they call all of us
to get up,

line up,

and we flew to Georgia.

And they flew back for more.

So we just barely got off,

and we go in,

and this airport is small.

Smaller than Bonners Ferry.

So we go in there and look around because,

this can't be where we need to be.

All of a sudden,

“SOLDIERS!”

And it was this drill sergeant.

God! I never heard anybody yell so loud,

and he's just,

“FACE FORWARD!”

And everybody just faced wherever they wanted (*She laughs*)

because forward, where's forward?

He's telling everybody to get in line, (*She laughs while she speaks*)

“LINES! LINES!

DID YOU HEAR ME I SAID LINES!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING OVER THERE?!”

Oh man in about

three minutes everybody finished

juggling around, (*She laughs*)

shuffling,

trying to figure out whose beside me,

which way are they facing? (*She laughs*)

And he said, "A bus
will be coming to pick you up
and take you out to the Fort.
When you get there,
go stand in line for your mattress,
your sheets,
and your blankets.
And then you will be given a number.
That's your
bunk bed
for the next eight weeks."
It must have taken two hours to get your mattress and stuff.
We go to bed.
Five o'clock,
ba, ba, ba ,ba,ba (*She simulates a bugle call*)
And it was like that,
and here comes someone,
she's yelling and I'm thinking,
"What?"
So everybody
jumps up and she says, "STARTING FROM A TO Z,
YOU ARE ON A TIMER.

YOU WILL GO INTO THE SHOWER.
YOU WILL LATHER YOUR HAIR.
THE SHOWER HEAD WILL TURN ON.
YOU RINSE OFF YOUR HAIR.
YOU QUICKLY WASH YOUR ARMPITS.
YOU QUICKLY WASH YOUR FEET.
YOU WASH YOUR EYES SO YOU LOOK DESCENT.
AND IT WILL TURN OFF.
IF YOU ARE NOT READY
TOO BAD.
IF YOU ARE STILL SOAPY,
YOU WILL BE OUT OF LUCK.”

Sure enough,
you were *barely* finished and it turned off.
So that was how we lived for eight weeks.
Three times a day you could take a shower.
And it only lasted like five minutes,
not one second later,
not one second earlier. (*She laughs*)
And so,
that was the beginning.
The first day they sent us to

get uniforms.

And then they gave us lockers.

And a really small storage unit for your duffle bag.

And you were allowed three sets

of civilian clothes.

So then they came in,

started showing us how to fold

our shirts,

socks,

underwear,

how many inches apart they should be and everything like that.

And then they came in

they cleaned

under the lockers,

under the beds,

and still

there were dust bunnies.

Dust bunnies *really* counted against you.

So they showed us how to,

the very last minute before you leave,

put a damp mop head on

and just quickly go around over.

And then,
don't put your mop head up,
leave it down,
so they won't know that it's full of dust! (*She laughs*)
So then they told us how to iron,
sew buttons and things like that.
This went on for a week.
All of these little things.
How to polish brass.
Then we went for haircuts.
And the next Monday we were in basic training.
And we were there for seven weeks.

Everyday we got up at four
to start taking showers.
Then putting on your uniform,
fixing your hair,
at least making your bed a little bit so it's presentable.
And then go line up for breakfast.
And we sat four to a table.
When everyone was seated then you could start eating.
And that's when you ate fast. (*She laughs*)

Hurry up and eat because you were going to need all that food for
energy
till you ate again.

And every day you were issued a
salt tablet,
and they must have been almost the size of a quarter. *(She makes a loud sigh)*
And then when you finished
with breakfast,
you went back and started getting your area ready.
And then, at seven o'clock they had bugling.
And raising of the flag.
And then you had your first formation.
This was where they would catch the AWOLs or the ones that
weren't up yet. *(She laughs)*

And then we started
the marches,
and everyday was exercising.
It was really
nothing like high school exercise.
And you sweat *all* the time.

And you'd get finished with your day and,
have enough time to wash up,
get back in line,
make sure you had a clean uniform for the next day,
and if you didn't then you had to do your laundry.

And iron everything,
and polish everything.

And go to sleep early because your going to get up early.

And start it over.

The only thing that would change once in awhile was
we wore green shorts and t-shirts.

On other days,
we would wear
blue shorts and t-shirts. (*She laughs*)

When we went out in the field
they built
tent cities for us.

When you got off your truck,
you had to grab a sleeping bag,
throw it on the bed.

And already they'd have your schedule, what your going to be doing.

And usually you didn't get back until six o'clock.

And then you just had enough time to eat.

You were always dirty.

The worst part about the sleeping bags was

I didn't need a sleeping bag, I slept right on the mattress,

but they would come and check (*She laughs*)

on you.

I think the worst was,

you could always tell when someone got a cockroach in their sleeping bag.

They had to turn it inside out, shake it.

Turn in the other way, shake it.

And you could just hear, "Oh man!"

And I'd think, "I know, there's probably one in mine."

And it never happened until,

we were getting close to finishing,

that part of our classes,

and I kept thinking,

Oh, one more night and we're done."

Opened my sleeping bag,

and I wasn't going to turn it out, and I thought,

"No, I'd better turn it out."

A cockroach about that big³⁴ took off running!

And I, what would I have done,

if I hadn't done that? (*She laughs*)

As much as we were afraid of cockroaches,

it never occurred to me for twenty years,

there were snakes in the area³⁵. (*She laughs*)

And we were always

belly crawling through the leaves and everything.

I don't think we ever ran into snakes,

I'm sure they avoided us but,

when I thought about it later,

"Oh my gosh, could you imagine

crawling along

and having a snake crawling over your hand?" (*She laughs*)

The first couple of days when I was in there I was okay,

because I really worked hard at it.

After I started noticing

not everybody works hard but no one is getting yelled at,

I decided to do it.

³⁴ She holds her fingers about two inches apart.

³⁵ My mother's biggest fear is snakes.

And all of a sudden a staff sergeant wanted to see me.

And to me, that is the worse thing that can happen, you know?

And so I waited until it was my time to go in.

And she says, "What's going on?"

"I don't know."

And I almost said "ma'am," but you never say that
to a non-officer.

And I thought, "Man..."

"Something's going on."

"May I please ask why I am hear?"

And she said, "You.

You know, the first

few days you were one of our hardest workers.

We keep an eye on the new recruits

and we mentioned several times that you were doing very well.

You are well organized.

Now this week,

this is the second day I've seen you

do a couple of things that

I know

you shouldn't."

And I knew they were both in marching. (*She laughs*)

And I said: "I'm sorry, I'll try better."

"No,

we want you to know that we have an eye on you.

And we're going to keep an eye on you.

You show so much potential.

And we're not going to let it

go out the window.

How were you in high school?"

I said: "Well,

I never did make good grades,

but towards the end I

decided I better do something,

because I'm not going to have anything to do after school.

So then I brought my grades up a little."

She said: "You knew you could do it all the time."

And so, she lectured me

about

responsibility.

The next week

was the first time we were going to be

assigned squads, because at this time

we were arranged according to height.

So now they were going to assign us to different
squads.

So they started naming people to get into,
we had four squads.

And my name never got called,
and I thought,

“It’s because last week I got in trouble.”

And the staff sergeant said, “Now
I’ll announce your four squad leaders.”

And she named this girl
from California.

She named a second girl from California.

The third name was me.

And then the fourth one,
she was from South Dakota.

She was an Indian.

And I know that’s how I got chosen,
because we were very good at what we were doing.

We lived it the country!

And after that things got harder, because we still had our regular
eight hours of
training

and then we also had two more hours of
leadership training.

And we would just go home so tired,
but at least by that time
nobody was using the washing machine,
nobody was using the iron.
And I was so surprised.

Then, when I got into my advanced training,
the same thing happened.

I couldn't keep the momentum going because I thought, you know?

I look around and I see some of these girls.

They can carry two suitcases, they're carrying one.

You know?

They could be using a bigger rake,
they're barely raking.

They're the smokers,
that we have to clean up after.

That's why we're out here again today.

And my sergeant called me over and asked me if I was happy.

I said, "Yes."

And she said, "We can put you in a different company."

And I said, “No.” I thought, “What did I do?”

And she said, “The first time you got off the bus,
you and Liana³⁶ just started unloading suitcases,
duffle bags,

you started unloading boxes of supplies.

And you were both doing good and now both of you are more like...
can’t do it.

But both of you can.”

So, I knew Liana got the same lecture,
because the next time I saw her she was very pale. *(She laughs)*
She was very pale and I said, “What happened?”

“I got called in.”

“I know, so did I.”

“About what?”

And I told her. “Oh, that was me too.” *(She laughs)*

I said, “Did it hurt your feelings?”

“Yes.”

“Me too.” Because it’s, like “Why are you picking on me?” *(She laughs)*

I don’t want leadership.

I juts want to, you know,

³⁶ A friend of hers in the same company.

go along.

And it was good.

It was something I needed

to grow up

and to

know

I could change things.

And the teachers at Bonners Ferry High School

were wrong

when they gave up on me.

Even Valley View,

even first and second and third grade.

The Army gave you

15 other women

that you could talk to and...

share ideas.

“I wonder if you’re doing good enough” and things like that.

And they always encouraged you.

You always encouraged them.

At least you had one thing in common,

two more hours of training.

And we became good friends.

And leadership instructors

were patient.

But they were also strict

and they expected you to learn

now.

And for a while it was hard because I always wondered,

how do you tell your whole troop,

“Attention!” (*She laughs*)

And the other thing was

how do you put a demerit on

someone

you’ve just got to be friends with?

And they know you’re the only person who can do it.

Then you think, “Well,

I wouldn’t

feel bad if you gave me a demerit especially if I knew I was going to get it.”

So then,

I got finished with basic and advanced training.

And they said,

“You could go home for

six days.

On the seventh day you’ll be assigned your new post and you’ll fly there.”

So I called Grandpa, he wired me a ticket.

I went home and just the tension I felt

from Libby,

and I hadn’t been home for 16 weeks.

And I thought, “I don’t care. I didn’t come to see you.”

So, I went out to

Grandma and Grandpa’s and just talked

and Grandma made dinner and stuff and

me and Grandpa did some work for a couple of days and then I went back.

Now, my Mother was mad at me because I hadn’t been back.

And I thought, “Well, look at Libby’s attitude.

You know what?

I work hard.

Why should I come home to this?”

So I stayed and then

I got my orders and I

told my Grandpa, “I have to go to the airport.”

So he got someone to drive me to the airport.

But that was the first time

I really saw Libby angry at me,
about nothing.

Because, to me

it was like, if I stole your money, okay, I get it,
but you know what?

I am struggling out there.

You know how many times at night,
you're out there at night and it's scary and you
just hope you get out of it tonight,
you hope you don't wander off and,
wander off the trail and can't find your way back.

You hope you're never taken prisoner,
because you're going to get a whole bunch of
demerits.

And you worry about everybody. (*She laughs*)

Somebody will flunk out and it will reflect on you...

So, then I,

was assigned Fort Sam Houston.

I went to First Battalion headquarters,
because you were through with the hard part,

you're given a one bedroom apartment,
but you still had to go to the mess hall to eat.

But it had washers and dryers
and day room with a TV.

You could have your own TV in your room.

And you had a pretty big closet,
so that meant you could buy things.

And,
it turned out good.

All you had to do was
have a plan and stick to it.

So, then I worked as a clerk typist,
and one of the new things that I hadn't been taught,
twice a month the military got paid.

As part of my job,
when I got to work,
I took off even my watch.

I put on a jumpsuit.

Then I was inspected and I was put in this great big cage.

It was just like a small office.

But there was a

safe in there.

They'd give me the code and for then next eight hours I counted out money.

I cashed payroll. (*She laughs*)

After the first time I couldn't believe how long I was in there.

I asked my captain, "What happens if I'm in the cage

and a security bell goes off

or there's a fire?"

And he said, "We have a key.

We can get in back here."

Because they would go to

parades and stuff.

And I said, "What if you guys are too far away

and I'm still in here?" (*She laughs*)

And then the other thing that I did,

I studied it but I didn't think it would be a part of what I did,

was the post master.

So I did mail.

I issued money orders.

And then after about a year and a half

I got transferred to another place,

because the guy that was the clerk typist there was getting discharged.

So, they sent me over there.

And it was totally different.

We had one small office.

There were four of us all at the desk.

And it was like you couldn't squeeze by the desk. *(She laughs)*

I didn't have to do mail there or cash checks,

but I did lists

For the coming week,

the coming month,

the coming quarter,

and the coming year.

And I kept track of records.

Deleted records,

order,

more records.

It was records,

records,

records.

The first time I was promoted

from private

to private first class was when I was at my first

station.

I'd been there about

six weeks and it was time for promotions.

They...

studied records,

made recommendations.

And then it was sent to another office, and they were the ones

that studied them and then they promoted the ones

that deserved it.

And I was the one that typed the lists,

for security.

And I was going along really good and there was my name.

And you can't tell anybody.

People would start asking,

"Did you do orders today?"

Well, you say no.

"You did." And you couldn't tell them.

You know if you didn't said no, what are they going to do to you? *(She laughs)*

And I saw my name and I was like, "Oh, my god."

And I just didn't know what to say.

Finally,

the next week they issued orders

and my best friend Lynn,

she missed the promotion.

She had to wait six more weeks,

and for a week she was mad at me,

but I'd still knock on her door and say, "Lynn, do you want to go up and get a *Coke*?"

"No!"

"Want to go get something to eat?"

"No!"

"Okay."

Finally, at then end of the week she was friends again.

And you were also the one that

typed orders

to new posts.

It was easy if there was some guy that always talked about wanting to go to Germany
or Japan or something.

And if they got it,

you knew they got it,

but you never told them

and then they would see your name on the thing when they'd get their orders

and they'd say, "Why didn't you tell me?"

And I'd say, "Because

I said I wouldn't." (*She laughs*)

"I wouldn't have told anybody."

“You would have.” You knew they would tell.

But, the hardest ones were the typing orders for
who would be leaving for Vietnam.

Typing their

leave time papers

for 30 days before they leave.

Because these were the guys in your company that you saw all the time.

In the women’s [Army]

you get three choices

before you finish basic training.

You go to counseling and they’ll ask you where you want to go,

how it’s been and stuff like that.

So, I didn’t want to come west,

I wanted Washington DC or

Forth Bragg, North Carolina.

There was another one,

I think it was Fort Devens in Maryland.

So, I asked for those three.

The day I got my orders, I looked at them and I got Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

And I was just going to say something,

and then the captain that signed my orders said,

“That’s as close to home as we could get to you.

We tried,

all the women, we tried to get them as close to home

as we can get them.”

And I was shocked.

What kind of logic was that? *(She laughs)*

So, that’s how I ended up there. *(She laughs)*

But it was a good place.

When you checked in,

you were give forms.

You had to volunteer some place

during all the time you were there.

So I and Liana decided we would be

medical greeters.

You just went

for one hour a week,

if you have time.

You can go either to Brooke Medical Center or Fort Sam Hospital.

And you can talk to the prisoners

that

are there,

or you can choose to pick guys that came back wounded.

We picked the,

came back wounded.

Everybody wanted to marry you. (*She laughs*)

This one guy,

Liana said, "I didn't know what to say."

Because it was so

bad.

He looked at her and said, "Oh, you're so beautiful,

blue eyes,

and no slant."

And she said, "I didn't know if anybody else around me heard.

So I said 'Would you like to go for a walk down the hall?'

And I just started pushing.

You know, nobody has ever said those kinds of words to me."

And there would always be

some man in the company,

no matter,

you don't have a choice, you had to work there.

But you do your best,

they just never liked you.

Because this is a men's barrack.

So what?

One time I misspelled a word.

This always sticks in my mind.

Like when I was in the fifth grade and I misspelled "necessary"

and I was so close to the top.

I'll never not get it right when I spell it.

One time I was typing up

this order and

the officer who handed it to me had

handwritten it

and I kept looking at it and it said "mandantory".

And I thought, "No, it's 'mandatory'."

And I didn't have a book

to look it up in, so I asked,

"Wayne, do you have a dictionary?"

"No. What do you need to spell?"

I said, "Come here."

So he looked and he said, "It's not. Take out that n."

I said, "I'm going to get in trouble."

"Sure you're going to get in trouble. (*She laughs*)"

He's just going to yell at you.

I'll be here, you can come cry on my shoulder."

I said, "Okay." So I did.

I changed it to "mandatory" and I brought it to him for signature.

And he just blew up, "But 'mandantory'!"

And I said, "I'm sorry, sir, but

this is the correct spelling."

"DON'T YOU EVER QUESTION WHAT I WRITE!"

I thought, "Okay. I could have sent it like that."

And that's what kept me from crying because

everything he yelled at me I had answers in me.

And finally,

I don't know how,

he must have gone and looked at it in

one of his old letters.

So he says, "Go sit down, I'll have Wayne do it."

And I thought, "Well, Wayne agrees with me,

but sure."

So I was just sitting there.

And he comes up

and he comes towards my desk.

And I was just sitting there,

and I looked up and I said, "Yes, sir?"

And I was going to stand up and he said,

"Sit down!"

So I did and he passed the letter across the desk.

"You were right."

And I thought, "Shouldn't that be my job?"

And then he said, "Thank you very much.

You saved me a lot of embarrassment."

When he left Wayne said, "Are you going to cry?"

"No."

"Boy, you're tough."

"You know, I was right and he was wrong,

and for him to blow up."

And he said, "Yes."

And that was the only time that I ever got yelled at about my work.

But every two days,

any two days of the week,

they'd come and do an inspection.

Everything had to be perfect.

One time I and Liana

and [another girl] Gloria

went partying and somebody gave us

a bottle of rum at the end of the night. (*She laughs*)

So I said, "Who is going to keep it?"

Liana said, "I will, but I'd rather not."

I said, "I could."

Gloria says, "Oh, I will."

And I thought, "Okaaaay."

And I said, "Hide it someplace good,
because if we have an inspection and you're caught,
they're going to get you."

"I know."

So she kept it overnight, plus one day.

The next day when I got home from work,
she comes and she goes,

"You have to take this." (*She laughs*)

And she hands the rum.

I said, "Why don't we just drink it?"

"Oh, no. You better hide it."

So I looked around and I fixed my
underwear and socks
and I stuck it between there.

Sure enough the next night,
we had an inspection and I hadn't moved it.

And we had to stand up in the hall in front of our door,
because they came through the
bathroom doors.

They were at Gloria's
and next they came to my room.

And I would hear them opening
drawers,

look at my closet,
because everything has to be one inch apart.

Checking your buttons, make sure all your buttons were there.

There's no personal
guns in your desk drawer and stuff like that.

Dust your,
everything.

They said,

"It's clear."

And they walked out.

I thought, "How didn't they find that?"

When it was all over,
here comes Gloria, "Did you get caught?"

"No."

"Where was it?"

“You know”

how you have your row of underwear

and your row of socks like that?

I just stacked the underwear

and then I turned the socks on their sides,

so that it fit under there.

All of the socks were turned in the right direction.

Otherwise they would have taken

a sock and thrown it on the floor,

and they would have seen it.” *(She laughs)*

So we did drink it... *(She laughs)*

So,

I continued to work

and by the time I reached my 13th month,

I had made four promotions.

And that was as high as I could go, unless I re-enlisted

for six years.

And so I worked there for two years,

and then I

was discharged.

I had one friend say, “You know, you should go to Jamaica.

That’s what I’m going to do when I get out.”

I said, “Why?”

“Because they speak English.

Living is cheap.

And how many sets of clothes do you need?

That’s where I’m going and I’m going to learn to be a bartender.

You know what?

You should go down there.”

And I thought about it.

Then my Grandmother called and told me to come home.

So, I thought I would for a while and then go back.

And I didn’t.

Because she told me, “No matter how bad you think it is, it won’t always be like that.”

Because mostly I was afraid,

what am I going to do when I get home and I have no place to live?

Then I found out about

unemployment insurance. (*She laughs*)

And it wasn’t very long when I got here,

but I knew I had made the wrong decision.

Because what really what was there?

And Mom would accuse me of running around.

And I always wondered,
and I will always wonder,
why would I want to marry a farmer
or a logger?

One of the first things,
within weeks that I got here,
Libby is leaving.
She's going to Seattle.
And I thought, "Why?"
I told her, "You know what?
If you want to find work,
we can go to Spokane,
and I can pay the rent.
We can live there."
No, she wanted to go to Seattle.
Finally Silas told me, "She's in love with a guy over there."

So, she came back, and they were broke.

He broke up with her,

so she moved back into Mom's.
And I'd see her once in a while.
And ask her if she needed money.
Somehow it offended her, I guess.
Because one day I saw her and I said,
"Do you need some money?"
"No, I don't need your money."
"Are you getting enough to eat."
"It's none of your business."
"It's getting wintery,
do you want a new coat?
I can buy you a new coat."
And I knew she was living on the streets.
So, I waited around,
when it got to be around eight o'clock,
I drove over to Safeway and I parked there and pretty soon
I saw two guys and a girl coming from Main Street.
I waited until they were close.
I got out and I said, "Hey, Libby!"
And she just started running.
I said, "Libby! I just want to know do you need any money!"
And the guys are just,

“Woo woo woo,”

like that at me.

And I knew which house they went in to.

So I walked over there and knocked on the door.

And I said, “Is Libby here?”

“No.”

“I saw her come in here.”

“Well, what do you want?”

“I want to give her some money so she has food.”

“She said she doesn’t need any money.”

“I thought you said she wasn’t in here.”

So, after that,

Mom would say, “I’m so worried about her” and stuff.

And I’d think, “But she’s doing stupid things.”

So after that,

I wouldn’t deal with her.

Sometimes she’d stop me on the street,

“Can I have some money?”

I’d say, “I don’t have any.”

Because I thought, “You know what?

You were playing.”

In the Kootenai language it’s called [unintelligible].

You were playing wild.

You know animal,
wild.

And I thought,

“No, I will never give you any more money,
for you and your friends.”

Then she’d go to Grandpa,
and he’d give her a couple of dollars.

She’d go to Grandma.

I’d get there and she’d say, “I was lecturing Libby this morning
and she walked out on us.

I told her to quit going with all those white boys,
that she has an education in office,
to go to work at the tribal office,
and she walked out on me.”

I’d say, “You know what?

She’s never finished anything she’s ever started.

She’s never done anything really that’s worthwhile.

That’s how she’s always going to be.”

And she’s still like that.

So, then I knew I had pretty much worn out my welcome.

So I sold my TV.

Because I had left one at Mom's.

So I sold that at the pawn shop.

And then I told Grandpa, "I sold my TV today,

but you know what?

I'm going to have to go find a place to live.

I need to find a job."

And I knew I didn't need a job.

He knew I didn't need a job, and finally he said. "Well,

if you want to go, go ahead.

Where are you going?"

"I don't know.

I will write to you."

But that's how hurtful they can be.

It's not like I wasn't sharing,

I was.

But Libby did that to me a couple times

before that.

She did that to me once.

I was looking for her and I saw her,

and I started following her with my car.

And she started running and she went into the ally where I couldn't.

And I thought, "Why are you treating me like this?"

So,

I started looking for work.

There was no work,

kept getting un-employment.

And then this guy that worked for the

Coeur d'Alene's³⁷ came and told me,

"I want you to go to Spokane and enroll in this program,

you'll be good at it.

It's a welder."

And I thought, "Okay."

Finally, I decided I would.

So, I went and I failed.

Then one day my Mother saw me and she told me,

"You should go to the extension office and try to get your old job back." (*She laughs*)

I said, "Why would I do that?"

You know what?

That's a program for high school students.

³⁷ The Coeur D'Alene Tribe in Idaho.

They are in training there, that's paid by the State of Idaho."

"Well, you could get it back."

And later on I found out that she

had called down there to tell them they owed me a job because I was a veteran.

And I

had to go down and apologize to them.

And he said, "We understand.

We understand. Don't worry about it."

But I thought: "Oh, fine."

So, then it was time to

do something.

Then, this guy who was trying to get me jobs so desperately said,

"I have a friend who's working here.

I want you to meet him."

So, I met him and it was Caleb.

And it didn't take long

and he called me.

I was at the Mint eating lunch and he saw me there.

He said, "Come over and eat with me."

But the part was, every time,

"Do you want to go home with me?"

I'd say, "No.

I don't do that."

So, finally after a couple of weeks,

"We should get married."

I said, "You know what?

I don't get married."

"Do you have a boyfriend?"

"Do you see anyone?"

Finally one day I got super mad.

Here I was, trying to do

the best I could.

I knew no one would hire me in Bonners.

That's...*(She laughs)*

So then one day I said, "Yes.

I don't really drink, but I'll have a beer."

Oh, he was so thrilled.

Within a week he had told his mother he had a girlfriend he was going to marry.

And his mother was so happy.

Later on, I was to find out why.

So, we got married.

He got transferred out of Bonners,
got transferred out to Mullan, Idaho.

And I was glad for that because we were away from everybody.

The first weekend we stayed home.

He was building shelves and stuff,

and the next weekend,

we're going to go to Desmet,

where his family lived.

So we went there.

And Sarah³⁸ made dinner.

And he talked to her privately,

and he said, "I will,

don't worry."

He comes out with his jacket

and he walks out the door.

And said, "Where is he going?"

"He's going down to

Henrietta's."

That was the local Indian bar.

He said for you to stay here.

He'll be back later.

That was the first time.

³⁸ Caleb's mother.

And I thought, “You know what?

You don’t do that.

You don’t sneak out. (*She laughs*)

You don’t leave me with my mother in law.”

There are just certain rules you just don’t break.

Then,

time went on.

And he did it again.

Sometimes he’d

go with one cousin.

Sometimes he’d go with another.

And most of the time I’d have to stay home, for the next nine months.

He didn’t come home until the next day.

And I bought him new clothes,

because he didn’t have new things.

So, with each paycheck,

bought him several new shirts.

When he’d come home,

he’d be wearing something with cutoff sleeves,

too big or too small.

Finally one day I said,

“How can you dress like that?

Where is your shirt?”

“I gave it to someone.

He’s my cousin, I’d give him anything off my back.

He told me, ‘Then give me your shirt,’ so I did.”

And then I thought, “You know,

we should be saving some money for this baby.”

“Oh, we don’t have to save the money.

The union is going to pay for the delivery.”

And I thought, “What about the clothes?

You know, things like that?”

So I called my Grandmother and she said,

“I’ll send you some money and

don’t let him know you’re shopping.”

So I called my friend in Spokane and she came and got me to go shopping.

And she told me, “Don’t buy anything new.”

I said, “Okay.”

So we bought clothes and diapers and stuff.

And then I had nowhere to put it. (*She laughs*)

I realized I didn’t have a house.

So, I asked my friend, “Can I leave this at your house?”

She said, “Yes.

I'll fix up that
extra bedroom,
so when you come,
that's where the baby will sleep.”
And I said, “Don't get fancy.”
She said, “I haven't had a baby in 18 years.”
And so, she did.
Piece by piece,
she
fixed it up
and she brought more clothes at Goodwill and stuff.
So we were prepared.
He never asked
if I needed anything.
So then,
we were going to leave for Bonners,
because this was going to be a Friday.
And we were all ready.
We had already driven into Spokane.
His niece lived near the Interstate.
Every time we were at Spokane,
we had to stop there.

He'd run to *Kmart* and get a case of beer
and they'd start drinking.
And they had five kids,
and the kids clung to me.
It was like desperate love.
And,
even the baby I didn't want to have anything to do with,
because I thought, "You know what?
I can't do that."
And then he'd tell me,
they'd be drinking,
"Give Auntie a kiss!"
You know?
And I thought, "God."
So that Friday that she was going to be born,
I said, "You know what?
We're not stopping anyplace.
I'm not going to Desmet.
Let's go to Bonners,
I want to see my Grandfather before
the baby is born."
Oh, he grumbled and grumbled and grumbled.

And I wasn't going to give in.

"Well, how about if we stay at Candy's³⁹ tonight and we go tomorrow?"

And I thought, "I've heard that one so many times."

I said, "No."

Finally he started driving,

and all of a sudden I started getting contractions and they were hard.

I told him, "We're going to have to go back."

Which made him mad because we had already gotten in the Spokane Valley. (*She laughs*)

And he got lost in the industrial park.

And they were getting close.

Finally we made it to the hospital.

I went in and she⁴⁰ was born 56 minutes later.

And then he went out drinking.

And the next day,

it was about two o'clock in the afternoon,

and they told me I had to stay for three days because she had jaundice.

And they wanted to keep an eye on me.

So I said, "Okay."

³⁹ Caleb's cousin in Spokane with the children.

⁴⁰ My older sister, Eva.

I'll stay."

Well the next afternoon,

I'm laying there half asleep,

and she's in the little glass thing,

and I hear somebody knock *really loud* on the door and I wake up.

I just open my eyes and it's Caleb.

"Look what I brought!"

Libby and Mom walked in.

And Mom had already told Caleb,

"That's not your baby."

Right on Main Street in Bonners Ferry.

"You think that's your baby? She's nothing but a slut!

She's a whore!

It's not yours!"

And he got drinking that night and he was going to do that.

He was drunk enough that I

just walked out the door

and went to another hotel.

I went to sleep.

The next day he didn't remember and I said, "You know what?

Right now,

let's split.

I don't want you.

I don't want you around me."

I told him

what

he did.

He said, "Well, that made me so mad what she said!"

I said, "Did you believe her?

I can't believe you believed her!

That's all she is.

If there's happiness she'll come along and

pour vinegar on it.

If you do it again,

I'm just going to leave."

"You're my wife!"

I said, "Don't start that either.

I don't care about that part.

If you want to see your kid, then you better knock off some of this shit."

And for a little while he did.

So, for a couple,

three,

four days,

he didn't go to the bar.

He didn't do anything.

Just went to work.

So, he wanted her to be baptized by Father Connelly
or Father Burns.

And Father Connelly would be there.

His mom wanted her baptized, and I said, "Yeah,
that's a good idea.

You never know what's going to happen."

So we made an appointment for two o'clock in the afternoon
and he had left Saturday night.

Early.

So,

Mass was over at 12,

I got back to the house, changed her into different clothes,
got her ready.

He never came,

at one o'clock.

It came to almost two o'clock,

and I said, "I don't know what to do."

And Eva's godfather came in and he said, "Eileen,
is there anything I can do?"

I said, "I don't know. I don't even know where he went.

He left yesterday.

I don't know."

He said, "You know, I can run down to the
bar,

see if he's in there."

I said, "If he is,
don't even bring him,

because I don't want him in there."

And Sarah told me, "He has every right to be!"

I said, "But drunk.

She is an innocent baby and that is a church!"

He left,

and within three minutes he came back with,

Idaho State Patrol car.

And I thought, "He must have gotten
picked up."

So they came up to the door,

Sarah let them in.

They talked for a while, and then the policeman came over and he said,
he asked my name and he said,

"I'm sorry I have to tell you,

but between 1 and 1:30 your husband was killed
in a car accident.

Hit a tree head-on
at a high rate of speed
and he died at the scene.”

And I just sat and I thought, “Oh my god.”

And I didn’t ask if
he was with anyone.

Then Sarah came over and said,

“Was he with someone?”

And he said, “Yes,
but she’s alive,
but she’s in the hospital.

When

we got there,
she was yelling, ‘My husband! My husband!’
So we didn’t know.

This was your daughter-in-law.”

And I was just...

so, Eva’s godfather came in and said,
“Let’s go up and get her baptized.”

So we did.

We went up and got her baptized.

Then we went back to the house.

They already made an appointment for me to go to the funeral home,
pick out the casket, do this and do that.

And I thought, "I will,"

because I still didn't know.

I just heard the "she".

So the next day I did all that,

and the next night my Grandmother and Tabitha⁴¹ got there.

And my Grandma said, "I have to tell you what to do.

We are going to take you up to Mullan and you're going to clean out your apartment."

So, we wet up there

and we didn't have very much,

and,

we came back and the wake started.

Must have been about nine o'clock that night,

Libby got there, she said, "I just came from the bus depot in Spokane.

Tell me what happened?"

So I did.

And she said, "Did anybody tell you about anything else?"

⁴¹ A family friend.

“No.”

“He was with a girl. And right now what the family is saying is
that was his girlfriend.

He’s been with her for quite a while,
it's his brother’s wife.” (*She laughs*)

If I was going to cry,
I was shocked enough not to cry.

And I was just sitting there
and she said, “And the worst part of it is,
they thought if he married you,
he wouldn’t go with her anymore.”

I said, “Oh!

So that’s what this get married thing was about!”

So,
from that moment on,
people came up to tell me they were so sorry,

I said, “Thank you.

What’s the use?

Now I have a kid to raise.

I have no money.”

So then,
went to the funeral.

After the funeral,
Wade brought down his car with Amy and Helen⁴²,
and a couple of other people.
And so, Tabitha didn't have enough room in their car,
so Wade said, "You can ride with us."
So I got in [Wade's car].
And he kept talking to this guy.
I had already heard that they were going to try to make me leave Eva there.
And I thought, "She's not staying.
What are you guys trying to hide from me, you know?
How do I know I'll ever see her again?
I don't care if you have money."
So Libby said, "We'll sit in the front seat and we'll put her on the floor between us."
I said, "Okay."
So this guy kept coming over and Wade kept joking around with him.
And I saw Caleb's father coming down the steps of the Community Building.
And I said, "Let's go."
And Libby yelled at him, "Go!"
And he *took* off.
He didn't even know what was going on.

⁴² People from Bonners Ferry.

When we were on the highway,
we were finally driving, he said,
“What happened?”
And Libby said,
“You don’t need to know.”
Then Amy tried to start in, “You know,
he was a wonderful man.”
And she went on an on
and I finally just told Libby to shut her up, (*She laughs*)
Boy, did she. (*She laughs*)
And Wade said, “What happened?”
Libby said, “I said it’s none of your business.”
And that’s how I got Eva home.
And I didn’t visit them for probably four weeks
because
I didn’t know what they would do.
Finally I called Sarah.
I told her we were going to come down for the day.
“Come and spend the night.”
I thought, “No.”
So we did.
We went to spend the day,

then we went over to Spokane and we spent the night,
and we went home.

And that's how I'd work.

We'd go there during the day and go home.

Because I didn't trust them.

And around six months after he passed away,

I brought her down for them to visit
and his brother was there.

I don't know if he's older or younger, but [now] he's got pure white hair.

He's an alcoholic and he lives on Skid Row in Spokane.

And he's there and he says, "Well, hello!

I haven't seen you in months!"

I said, "Yeah,

I work and I'm really busy."

"You should come down and visit us!"

I said, "Well, I'm here," and I just kind of laughed.

"You know, you need to quit isolating yourself from us."

"I'm not

I do have family.

I have friends.

I'm fine."

And he just kind of laughed.

Then it was getting late and I said, “Well,
we are going to go to Spokane.”

So I took one of our bags and I came back to get another bag.

And he said, “Here,
let me hold the screen door for you.”

And when he did,
with the arm holding the screen, he just squeezed my tit.

And I was just like... (*She makes a shocked face*)

And with his other hand
he grabbed my crotch.

So I kicked him
and he just started laughing.

And I left.

I waited, then I
went and told my Grandmother.

And I told her, “I’m not going back down there.

If they want to see Eva,
they’re going to have to meet me in Spokane
or some place else.

But I’m not going back down there.”

And I told her what happened.

And both of those old ladies went, “Ohhhh.”

And Q'Awiss said, "I didn't think we had to tell her.

I thought they were Christians now."

I said, "It was so horrible, Grandma!"

And she said, "Well,

shut the door.

We're going to have to talk to you."

So I did.

And they told me,

"In many Indian places,

that's what they do when your husband dies.

His brother,

older or younger,

gets you,

to take care of you."

And I said, "He's nothing but a drunk."

She said, "It doesn't matter.

The Coeur d'Alene,

they must still practice it.

That's why he was there today."

So I didn't go down there for a long time.

I'd write them letters and send them pictures.

I didn't even call.

That, to me was just
horrible.

Then I got a call
from Eva's godfather.

And he said, "When is a good time to talk to you about this,
because I don't want you to think
that I don't care about what happened."

In my mind I thought, "I don't." (*She laughs*)

I said, "Oh,
thank you."

And he said, "We need to meet.

Can you meet me in Coeur d'Alene?"

I said, "Yes.

So, decide wherever you want to go."

When I and Eva got there,
he came out and carried her inside.

She was asleep and so he said,

"I have some news for you.

When Caleb joined the Union,
they gave him benefits.

It paid off his funeral,

it paid off his, you know, things

that would be yours.

But,

the good news is

he was carrying an insurance policy for \$10,000.

And it's not taxable."

And I was so broke,

I was just like, "Oh, thank god."

He said, "So,

can you leave your car and I'll drive you there?

I'll introduce you to the people.

They'll take you to the accounting and they'll issue you a check."

I said, "Okay,"

not knowing for sure if it was real.

And I got there,

they did all that

and two hours later I walked out with the check.

So, we were able to get an apartment with one bedroom.

And I bought her a crib.

Then I kept the rest of it

because I knew,

how poor we were.

A few months later,
it was getting cold and we lived in a non-insulated little shack.
And I told Grandma, “We’re going to move.”
She said, “You should move to the Commercial Hotel.”
And I said, “Yeah,
that’s the only place we can find.
It’s within walking distance of work.”
So I went and I checked in.
I paid for the month’s rent.
About two weeks went by
and I went downstairs around five o’clock to go get some coffee.
And Dolly⁴³ was sitting there,
and she had a bag,
a paper bag.
And I thought, “What is she doing here?
She’s a minor.”
So I went over and I sat down.
I said, “Hey, what are you doing here?”
She said, “I’ve been here all night.”
“Why?”

⁴³ A Kootenai girl she grew up with, see also p. 128

“I got kicked out of foster yesterday

because I turned 18.

They didn’t give me any money or anything.

And I didn’t know where to go,

so I just came and I’ve been sitting here

all night long.”

“Did you know I lived here?”

“Yes.”

“Why didn’t you call me?”

“Because I was afraid you might not let me in.”

“Don’t be stupid!

Go upstairs.”

I gave her the key,

“Go upstairs,

and leave it unlocked.

There’s two beds,

the other bed holds our clothes.

So, just put them

in the dresser now.

I’ll be back.

Do you want to have coffee?”

“No.

I'm just tired."

I went over,

I got my coffee,

newspaper,

and then I went back.

And I asked the lady, "Has she been here all night?"

She said, "Yes, she got here last night.

Somebody dropped her off right in front of the door

and she got out and she came in.

And she came over and she said, 'How much is the room?'

And I told her, '\$12 a night.'

She said, 'Well, I don't have any money.

I'll just sit here.

Somebody from the Mission will come and I can go home with them.'

So she's been sitting here all night.

And she said, 'I don't know what to do.'"

I asked the clerk, "Could she come up and live with me?

Because we have two beds."

And she said, "Sure."

So, when I back up and Dolly gets up,

she's going to pack up her paper bag.

I said, "No.

You know what?

I need a babysitter.

She's getting too old to go to the office.

She's starting to crawl around and touch things.

You can stay here and baby sit.

When the laundry basket gets full,

you can put it on her stroller and you guys can go and do the laundry.

And you can take her to the fairgrounds or someplace to play.

When you have money,

you buy some food.

But,

that's okay."

About a month went by,

and we were getting along fine.

I go downstairs and there's Mabel⁴⁴ sitting there with a paper bag.

And I thought, "Didn't that just happen?"

And I went over and I said,

"What are you doing?"

She said, "Oh,

I got kicked out of foster home yesterday,

⁴⁴ Another Kootenai girl she grew up with, see also p. 129.

because I turned 18.”

I said, “Do you have any money?”

“No.”

“Have you eaten?”

“Yes, yesterday morning.

I had some oatmeal.”

“Well, come on,

I need coffee.”

So we did.

We came back and I talked to the lady.

I said, “They could sleep together on that other bed.”

She said, “Let them.”

So they did.

So, for a year we lived on two beds.

But we had hot showers,

a big bath tub,

within walking distance to work,

walking distance to the laundromat,

and the grocery store,

and the post office.

When my Mother heard that

I’d gotten this check,

she called me.

She wanted me to move back in.

I guess she missed Eva.

And I couldn't,

even be nice.

I said, "No.

I've already found a place."

Just one time,

this wasn't when I was very pregnant,

but Caleb went out.

He came back about two o'clock and he was staggering around,

gnawing

his

teeth,

glaring at me.

And I'm just laying there.

All of a sudden he's comes over,

he leans over and he says, "You think you're so beautiful.

Well I'm going to fix your pretty face!"

I said, "Don't.

You're drunk."

He came back again.

I said, “Knock it off,
go to sleep before your Mom gets up.”

And the third time

I knew

he was actually going to hit me.

So I got off the bed,
and when he got ready,

I hit him right there⁴⁵.

That’s the one place that you can get in a hit.

And he flew up in the air,
maybe six inches,
and he landed right on his butt.

And it hurt.

And he couldn’t get up.

And Sarah came running out of the bedroom

“What did you do to my son?” (*She laughs*)

I said, “I didn’t hurt him.” (*She laughs*)

And he’s ready to get up and get me and I said,

“You don’t get a second chance.”

⁴⁵ She points to her Solar Plexus.

The next day Sarah wouldn't talk to me.

I said, "You know Caleb,
it's time to go back to Mullan."

But he did it over and over.

It was his control.

Leave me with his mother, you know?

"I can go out and have fun,
you're a married woman, you can't."

And while I was married,

I knew (*She laughs*)

some of the reasons why his mother didn't like me.

The number one thing that she made clear was,

I didn't cook.

And I thought, "Well,

where would I learn to cook?" (*She laughs*)

"Carrie⁴⁶ can cook."

And I looked at her and it thought,

"She looks like she can cook and eat." (*She laughs*)

But she would do that a few times.

⁴⁶ Carrie was Caleb's girlfriend.

Finally one day I said, “I don’t care if she can cook.

I have skills too.”

I cleaned her house. (*She laughs*)

I cleaned her

junk.

Everything was spotless when they came home.

And they’re all speaking in Coeur d’Alene [language] and I thought,

“Yes, somebody came and cleaned it.”

And she said, “My goodness,

the house looks nice!”

Like I didn’t do it.

I said, “Yes.”

I didn’t have anything to do.

I couldn’t go anywhere,

so I cleaned it.”

“You cleaned everything!”

“Yes. I did.”

So every day I would do that.

I’d get up and I would use a dust mop to clean the floor.

I’d clean the toilet bowl

and made sure the dishes were in order. (*She laughs*)

Knives and forks and everything was in order.

Because I thought,
 “Not everybody is born to cook.”

But that was the first bragging I heard about Carrie.
 So that’s how that marriage went.
 I lived on my mother-in-law’s couch.

This was the end of our third day, though my mother’s story continued for another two days. She covered the time from when she met my father and her work with our tribe when war was declared against the United States in 1974, to having me, and our life as a family in Alaska. She spoke of her work as a nanny and owner of her own construction business, and about her move back to Idaho with my dad in the 1990’s. She served on our tribal council for many years, and spoke of her time in office. On the fifth and final day of our interview, I gave her a list of questions about topics we had discussed, which I wanted to know more about. These are the questions she chose to answer.

EW: One of your questions was,
 I described,
 one time,
 my mother got beaten up
 by my father,

and both my brothers and sister were there.

And my uncle was there.

To me that was the most serious,

the most brutal thing,

I had ever seen happen to someone.

Before that,

we weren't shielded from it but

we never actually saw it happen.

We just knew that it happened.

And as soon as it would

begin,

we would be removed.

Q'Awiss would take us

and

we'd have to run.

She always said she never knew what he would do to us

when he was angry.

But I never saw anyone stand up to him

except my Grandfather.

And later on,

Uncle Lee.

And I have always wondered if that's why he died. *(She begins to cry silently)*

You'd run to somebody else's house
and you could hear her screaming.

But every single day,
this is stuck in my mind.

He always expected pressed
shirts and pants.

He expected to have socks,
clean clothes.

He expected food.

Two times before I turned 10,
I saw him
come home drunk.

The first time,
I must have been about,
seven.

He came home drunk and he asked Mom what was for dinner.

Mom had already fed us.

And she said, "It's spaghetti."

And he grabbed the pot and dumped it over her head.

Then told her to clean it up.

The second time,

he came home and he was drunk and

he started pushing her around and asked,

"Where's my dinner?"

And she said,

"We made chili."

He took it and dumped that on her,

and told her to clean it up.

Sometimes, he would be so drunk,

he would keep me and Libby and Silas awake

until

one or two in the morning.

And he'd tell us,

"I'm trying to dummy you up!

You can't understand what's going on in school!

I'm going to keep you up until you learn!"

And he'd be drunk

and he'd,

scream and yell at us.

He'd do the same to Pasco.

"You're nothing but a dummy!"

Q'Awiss would come out, "Leave them alone.

They have school tomorrow."

"They're my kids!

I don't want them to be dummies in school!"

And we'd be up until three or four in the morning sometimes.

And then as a reward,

he would feed us ice cream.

A big bowl of ice cream and we had to eat it all up.

I think the most peaceful times

that we ever had

were the times when he went back to prison,

or went to jail.

But it didn't last because then Mom would pick up where he left off.

She'd always be at war with

Q'Awiss,

Grandma and Grandpa.

Because they'd tell her, "Behave.

You have children to raise.

Behave."

She couldn't because,

to me it meant like,

"Why should I do that?

I have my freedom."

But to Grandma and them,

they would say, "You know when he gets out of jail,

he's going to hear and you're going to get beat up."

This would go on for months at a time.

And I think, "Grandma,

just get over it.

Leave her alone.

All she does is call you mean things."

And sometimes, she'd take off for a week at a time.

So we learned to take care of each other.

And meanwhile,

all this time,

I would try so hard...

not

to bring attention to my self.

Because anything could be set off by that.

But it seemed like the more I tried, things got worse.

One thing,

that I really,

enjoyed

for it self

was,

going to the cellar when Grandma and Grandpa were arranging things

before they closed off the food. *(She begins to cry silently)*

From the time,

when I was about four,

I'd go to my Grandma's and she'd be beading and she'd say,

"Crawl way under the bed.

There's a round tin,"

and she'd tell me what the picture was on it, "and bring it out here."

So I'd get all the ones that she wanted.

And she'd tell me, "One by one,

open them up," and she'd spread a scarf on the floor.

And then she'd say,

"Line them up according to color.

All the green should be together.

All the

red,

that color, should all be together.

And then you put them back in there like that."

And she had

tins of buttons,

and she'd say, "Get that one out and

spill it out,

and in layers,

put them back in colors."

That fascinated me because

I loved those colors.

And thread.

She had all colors of threads to match the beads.

She told me, "Put all the colors,
 all the greens,
 and all the reds,
 and all the browns,
 put them all according to color in circles.
 So when I need one,
 I'll know which one I should get."
 So I would
 and it would last like half a day.
 Later on,
 I realized she must have saved me from so much harm.

Q'Awiss would tell me,
 "I'm going to make *wachkna*⁴⁷.
 I want you to help me all day."
 She would slice meat
 and we use bedsprings⁴⁸.
 She'd tell me, "Go get some more wood and put it away over there.
 You don't want it right under the meat."
 So all day,

⁴⁷ Dried meat like jerky.

⁴⁸ Many Kootenai use discarded bed spring mattress frames placed over open fires to dry the meat.

I would bring wood
and then she'd tell me,
"Flip that.
That whole row, flip it."

Then when we'd get finished,
she'd get string.
I thought it was string,
it was sinew.
And she'd put a great,
big darning needle on it.
Then she'd tell me, "Start on that end because that
is the newest.
Start there and bring it
down to
your
end.
When you're
full,
then you tell me and I'll tie it together."

Then we'd bring it to the

wood shed and she'd string it up,
so they would cool overnight.

Then after that,
she'd put it into gunny sacks
and put it away for when we needed it.

And once again,
it was a form of

keeping me safe.

Sometimes, Anne Andrews would come over and tell Grandma,
"I'm going to take her for the day.

You see I have some
boxes

I want to look into.

She can help me,

fold things and
put them back in."

She would feed me.

And it was the same thing.

There were other people,
who wanted me to come to their house.

“I want her to help me.

I have some things to do.

She can climb high.

She can do this, she can do that.”

And I liked it because it was
time

I didn't have to worry.

And in all this time I have to say,
I never saw my Father go to work.
And he always had money.

And I knew it was money that Mom had been collecting
all the time that he was gone.

And he loved to spend it.

One time I remember I was over at

Anne Andrews' house.

It's quite a ways from the Community Building,

and we were outside

and I could hear screaming and I looked over at the house and I thought,

"Who is screaming?"

And she

just told me, "Hurry,

get that water."

I did and I could still hear the screaming and then I saw Silas running

in a *big wide arc* and he ran right into Grandma's house and slammed the door.

Pretty soon,

I saw my Dad staggering over there.

Then she told me, "There's *nothing* you can do.

You stay here where you're safe."

He went there and he pounded on the door.

They wouldn't let him in.

Finally, he left.

That was the only other time I saw him

try to hurt somebody else,

a child.

But his way of punishing us was to

keep us up *all those hours*.

To me, it was like being interrogated.

My Grandmother on my

Mother's side was totally different.

I didn't know her well but she was one of these very,
very,

mellow grandmother people.

She had three daughters,

and a son.

And her son drowned in the river at a very young age.

So she and her husband built a
small log cabin.

It must be about as big as the
living room of our house,
but they put in a loft
and that's where they put kids to sleep.

And she'd grow a great big garden,
and she grew strawberries,
and raspberries.

She had cherry trees,
and peach trees.

It seemed like any kind of fruit she had a tree for it.

She had several trees.

She had a cellar and hers was like that,

it was full of food.

She'd always tell us,

“Go down and get two jars of this or two jars of that.”

Once a year, we were allowed to go and visit them.

She'd pick us up at the Mission in Creston

and she had a horse-drawn wagon

and she'd drive us to the

ferry.

We'd get on.

go across,

and then

before dark we'd get to their cabin.

And from what I've listened to,

she did her best and so did he,

to raise

a normal family.

Her husband taught Haas to shoot.

And if Haas happened to wake up and look out and there were pheasants
near their house,

she'd kill one for dinner.

Pluck it and give it to her mom.

She went duck hunting by herself.

She went deer hunting.

She went fishing.

And in the summertime,

when they were harvesting,

the local farmers were harvesting,

she'd go and she'd harvest to make money

and bring it home and give it to her mom and dad.

Then she went away to school.

They took her to boarding school.

But she kept

to what she was taught.

It didn't affect her like it affected some people.

Even though she got the education they offered,

she still retained

what she had learned.

She stayed close to her family.

On the other hand my Mom

just kind of hung out

in her younger years.

She thought Haas was the neatest thing.

That she could do all of these things.

But by the time

she was 16,

she moved to Creston.

She got a job,

as a dishwasher

at a Chinese restaurant.

She kind of,

got away from

everything.

She had gone to boarding school.

The same boarding school that her two other sisters went to.

But out of the three of them,

she was the one that,
I don't know what to say, but
grasped the boarding school syndrome.

She didn't learn anything
that she didn't have to learn about Indians.

Then she moved to Washington.

She met a man at the,

Yakima Reservation,

and she married him.

They were married for a while and he
had tuberculosis so they took him to the
sanitarium in Tacoma.

So she went there and she got a job in housekeeping.

And within the year he died.

So she went back to Yakima Reservation,

because she knew this woman,

and stayed there for a while and she'd picked apples and stuff.

Then she went back to Spokane.

She got an apartment.

She went to Sacred Heart Medical Center

and she worked in housekeeping.

She made friends with a few of the girls that worked in that department.

Then she started hanging around,

down at

Skid Row because that's where all the Indians were.

She got pregnant.

She had a friend on the Kalispel Reservation.

So she had the baby,

and she gave the baby to that woman,

and that woman took her home.

She continued to live in Spokane.

Then she met other Indians and I don't know how she ended up
in Bonners Ferry.

I don't know *how* she ended up with my Dad.

A few months later, she was pregnant with me.

And Grandma and Grandpa told him,

"You have to marry her because that is our baby."

And that was the beginning.

That's where the anger comes from.

Because I caused it.

Within a year,

not even a year,

she was pregnant with Libby.

Two years later she had Silas.

Two years later she had Samuel.

Then she had Pearl⁴⁹ and the other little boy.

And then she had Damon.

But I remember before she got crippled,

because we'd walk to town.

She had a couple of

women her age and

they'd all be laughing and stuff and we'd walk to town.

And I don't know where the change came.

Maybe it was always there and I didn't see it yet.

It's amazing.

To me, it's amazing how much you can put up with...

and stay.

What is it?

You don't want to be mocked?

⁴⁹ Pearl was the baby girl who's skull was crushed by Eileen's father.

You don't want to be called a failure?

Hey,

you're walking with,

you're 35 years old you're walking with a

cane.

You get seizures. You fall down on the sidewalk and you have seizures.

They have to keep you medicated, you know?

Where do you draw your line?

I remember my Grandmother had a friend.

He was a friend of

every woman.

He showed up anytime he wanted to.

He was a big guy.

They called him *Moosmoo*.

He was from Elmo, Montana.

And he went all over, everybody knew him.

When he'd show up all the women would go aflutter,

"We're so glad to see you!"

Shake hands with everybody.

Bring things for everybody.

The kids would get things.

The women would get things,

pot holders,

dish cloths,

things like that.

Always brought things or brought snacks.

And pass them out and they would say,

“Do you want coffee?”

“Oh let me make the coffee!”

And they would all gossip.

Not vicious, but,

and then he’d listen to their problems.

Just come for a few days, then he’d turn around.

“Don’t make my coffee, I have to go see mamma.”

Always said things like that.

We’d flock around him,

want him to hug us,

sit on his lap while he gossiped.

He’d fix our hair.

What fascinated me about him was, when he’d open his trunk,

it was *full* of blankets.

I never asked why, but I was always fascinated because

it was so colorful.

I think I was about twelve,
when I quit seeing him.
That was when my Mom
quit letting me go places with my Grandparents.
She sure put a stop to that.

And I never knew anyone else like him.
Yes I do.

On the Coeur d'Alene Reservation.
He was probably 20 or 30 years old.
One night we went to live music in Plummer.
My friend called and said,
“Want to go?
We are all taking one car,
so we get home together.”
So I did.
About eleven, the music stopped, everyone started clapping.
In walks this *really* tall guy with curly hair.
Went to every table visiting.
He gets to our table,

“Oh, you’re new, I don’t know you.”

“Yes you do, she’s married to Caleb.”

And the music started and he started dancing.

He was a great dancer.

For as big as he was,

he was light on his feet.

And he was just your best friend.

He was everybody’s friend.

If you were pumping gas,

“Oh here, let me do it!”

Go to the grocery store,

“I’m not here to buy anything,

I’ll just walk with you and talk,

and carry your groceries to your car.” (*She laughs*)

I don’t know what happened to him either.

JW: You talk sometimes, about not being a real Indian. What to you is a real Indian?

EW: My Grandmother and my Grandfather and my Great Aunt were real Indians.

They learned to survive
in the white man’s world,

but they stayed
Indian.
They never
made the choice that
you could be an Indian but,
had to
be more *suyapi* like Simon Francis did.
Simon Francis was a great person but,
he mocked the Indian ways.
Because they were
outdated.
Anybody who chooses to live that is not a real Indian.
But he
wore his regalia.
He liked being on tribal council and
making big speeches and stuff.
But he chose,
suyapi took over his Indian.
I don't think he ever
recognized that.
Because he still demanded respect as an *Indian*.

You can be a real Indian
without,
I don't know what to call it,
revealing it?
Because,
I met a man when I was 19.
I always wondered about him.
I didn't know that his family practiced
Indian religion.
Because he became a professional accountant.
I didn't know that
he was a medicine man.
And I knew him forty years.
And when I found out I was surprised.
Because he had never
given
an inkling of,
that side of him.
He made a really nice Indian.
But he kept that part of himself hidden.
To me that's important.
But,

you have to be
“*not* an Indian”
to survive in the world.
He did his work, both Indian work and non-Indian work.
And he succeeded in both of them.

When I say I am not a very good Indian,
it’s because,
there’s so much more that I know I could do.
But you know,
to be told for years,
“Don’t be an Indian.
You’re never gonna make it anyways.”
You doubt yourself a lot.
And that’s what makes me not a very good Indian.
I have way deep inside of me,
I can’t let out.
Because
it’s like language,
who am I gonna share it with?
Who’s gonna understand?
I do believe that

the wind talks to you.

I do believe

Nupika works wonders.

And then the jealousies will come out.

If I was stronger I could be a better Indian.

Daddy used to say I should teach you guys Indian and I'd say,

"And who are they going to talk to?

I have no one to talk to,

who the heck are they gonna talk to?"

I don't know,

if there even is a

way

to be a good Indian.

Because you would have to be very strong,

to be able to do it.

Sometimes I need help doing things and I ask my sister to help me.

"I'm not going to help you."

See?

That's how hard it is.

Sometimes you have to help somebody,

but you can't help them because there is nobody to help you.

To me,
I see Mona in her \$1000 regalia,
at pow wows
and I think,
“You know what?
You’re not even half an Indian.”
Because to be Indian it takes more than putting on a dress and dancing out in public.
Where’s your compassion for your people?
Where is your
love of your culture?
What tradition are you carrying on?

Chapter 5

“A new history will only be written by those who would change the course of history.” - Lee Maracle

Conclusion

It was never my intention to write so much, but it did not take long to realize that if I was going to present my mother's life history as honestly as possible, there was a lot of background explaining I was going to have to do. I wanted to create a space where my mother could share her knowledge and her story, in her own words. I realized I had to create a space where imperialism, colonialism, and gendered racism and violence could not silently frame who my mother is, and who Native women are. Our understanding of Native women in dominant culture is limited, to say the least, and as I transcribed my mother's story, I knew I did not want to recreate an image of my mother based on the oppressive conditions which all Native women live under. To do so, I had to decolonize this space.

Decolonizing this space meant making explicit how imperialism, colonization, and racism have framed Native knowledge, Native women and Native lives. It also meant reviewing and re-knowing some of the U.S. Indian policies which have contributed to creating and maintaining the subordinate status of Native people in this country, and have had a direct influence on my mother's, and my own life. The conditions under which my mother grew up in did not create themselves. For centuries, federal policies intended to eliminate, humiliate, and imprison Native people have dictated who has the power and

control of Native lives. Native people, particularly Native men, have internalized these policies to brutalize and oppress Native women. Both of these levels of control and power over Native women are rooted in the seizing of this land, and are manifested in violence, physical and chemical abuse, and silence.

I did not set out to use a decolonizing framework in this life history. I began this project as an “anthropologist.” I made a list of questions, such as “What makes a good Kootenai woman?” and presented them to my mother on the first day of our interview. She read the list and said, “Our lives weren’t like this.” I let my mother take the lead. In the end, I didn’t even ask twenty questions. The stories my mother shared were not what I was expecting. In actuality, I do not know what I was expecting. As I have stated, I did not know much about my mother’s life as a child, or even what was going on in my tribe when she was growing up. But I knew *something* had happened. The stories I was told I had never heard before, and when the interview was over, I didn’t know what to do, or where to begin.

Looking at my grandmother, for example, I struggled to understand the woman my mother spoke of, and the woman I knew growing up. The stories my mother told me of her abusive mother were often in direct opposition to my memories of the caring grandmother who enjoyed traveling and her grandchildren. I knew my grandmother as an old woman who was full of life. She would tell me stories about her young life, and I admired her for her independence and knowledge of Kootenai culture. It was difficult to reconcile this traditional woman with the woman who took away my mother’s dress, moccasins, and shawl, until I recalled that life histories are static accounts of dynamic

lives. Just as my mother's life has continued on beyond what is recorded this thesis, so have the lives of the people around her.

I came to understand decolonization through Queer Studies, and for the first time, I began to understand formal systems of oppression, and how they impact human lives, especially the lives of colonized people. I learned I could challenge knowledge traditions which continue to see Native people as objects, rather than as fully realized human beings. During my research, anthropology gave me few choices of ways to make sense of what I was learning about my tribe and the collective culture we live in today. None of these choices spoke to my experience, or the collective experience, of being a colonized woman. My hope with this thesis is that other Natives, and other anthropologists, can learn about decolonizing research, and see why it is important and needed in the academy and in our daily lives. We all need to decolonize our histories and our minds, to resist perpetuating systems designed oppress entire groups of people, and to withhold knowledge and power from individual lives.

Any effort at decolonization must always return to the land. My mother's life, her history, and the collective history of my tribe are all centered on twelve acres of land my ancestors refused to leave. While their spirit of resistance and resilience survives, our memories of them have not. If I had not collaborated with my mother in this research, I am certain that the collective memory of her generation would be lost. My generation, and those after us, would never have a reference from which to trace names, places, and events we may have heard of in passing but were never sat down and told.

This thesis continues the tradition of storytelling in my tribe. As a woman, my mother's story adds the perspective not only of the racialized, gendered violence she and many Native women experience, but also of the traditional roles of leadership, both spiritually and politically, which Native women have held, and which cannot be lost. Not all of my mother's stories are "bad." Her remembering reminds us that childhood is about having fun, even in the face of crazy, unreasonable brutality. That she finds humor in her past speaks to the collective positivity Native people have. This is usually framed as "Indian humor," but I believe it is more than that. It is our way of saying, "No matter what, you will never defeat me. As long as I can laugh and find joy, I will remain, and I will not be silent."

I was tempted to create grand theories about what I had been told, and what I had read, to answer Bea Medicine and L. Langness' call for more theory in life history analysis, but as I listened to my mother's voice during transcription, I came to the understanding that sometimes a woman's story simply needs to be told, and we must sit back and listen. Because the stories of women who experience life as colonized people reframe our understanding of history, by not leaving out the ugly parts, the parts we want to forget, the parts that stir up shame and guilt. Because the knowledge and stories of Native women can change how Native people are seen, by re-creating ourselves with our own voice, by re-stating our right to live by our own worldview, and by re-claiming our right to and presence on this land. And finally, because the voices of Native women must be silenced for colonization to continue; as long as Native women are invisible, a Native future cannot be imagined.

I wanted to answer Eve Tuck's call to suspend damage-centered research, which reinforces the perceptions that our communities are inherently flawed. I wanted to avoid discussions of alcohol, for example, because I felt it privileged the oppressive stereotypes surrounding Native people and abuse, but I realized I could not; alcohol is a reality in our communities, it has played a large role in my mother's life. I am not sure it is even possible to understand Native communities outside of a damaged context, because we *are* damaged, and the system we live under *is* flawed. Historically, that is not our fault. We must understand though, that it is up to us not to perpetuate nor recreate the damage inflicted upon us under imperialism and colonization. We must be consciously aware of that, if we are to envision a new way of being in this world.

Envisioning in decolonizing research is about imagining new futures, as well as reimagining our past. As Native people, we have been told for centuries that we are bad, that we are wrong, and that good Indians obey and keep quiet. Those who have told us these things have simultaneously invented new ways of oppressing us, as we try to "fix" what they say are our problems. Today, too many Native people have adopted and continue the oppressive ways of imperialism and colonization. To envision a new way of being, a new way of creating our own future, we must accept this to be true. It is time to move beyond survival.

It took reading the lives of other Native women, of looking at U.S. History with a critical, not passive eye, and sitting and listening to my mother speak to make me understand that I embody forces and ideas greater than myself and that I possess the power and re-

sponsibility of influence. I wrote that I began this research as an “anthropologist,” but I end this research as a Native woman, complete, confident, and secure in myself.

Bibliography

- American Indian Policy Center
 2002 Brief History of U.S.-Tribal Relations.
<http://www.americanindianpolicycenter.org/projects/history.html> accessed
 4/20/2014.
- Baker, Paul
 1955 *The Forgotten Kutenai*. Boise: Mountain States Press, Inc.
- Barnard, Alan
 2000 *History and Theory in Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University
 Press.
- Bateson, Mary
 1984 *With A Daughter's Eye: A Memoir of Margaret Mead and Gregory
 Bateson*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.
- Bell, Lee Ann
 2013[2000] *Theoretical Foundations*. In *Readings for Diversity and Social
 Justice*. 3rd edition. Maureen Adams, Warren Blumenfeld, Carmelita Castaneda,
 Heather Hackman, Madeline Peters, Ximena Zuniga, eds. Pp. 21-26. New York:
 Routledge.
- Blackman, Margaret
 1989 *Sadie Brower Neakok: An Inupiaq Woman*. Seattle: University of
 Washington Press.
- Brunton, Bill
 1998 *Kootenai*. In *Handbook of North American Indians Volume 12 Plateau*.
 Deward Walker, Jr., ed. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

Bureau of Indian Affairs

2014 Indian Affairs: Who We Are. <http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/index.htm>
accessed 4/20/2014.

Carlson, Vada

1964 No Turning Back: Polingaysi Qoyawayma (Elizabeth. Q. White) as told to
Vada F. Carlson. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Chaitin, Julia

2008 Oral History. *In* The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research. Lisa
Given, ed. Pp. 583-585. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Chase, Susan

2011 Narrative Inquiry: Still a Field in the Making. *In* The SAGE Handbook of
Qualitative Research. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, eds. Pp. 421-434.
Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Chilies, Bagele

2012 Indigenous Research Methods. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Elders of the Kootenai Nation and the Members of the Tribe

1990 Century of Survival: A Brief History of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho.
Bonners Ferry: Kootenai Tribe of Idaho.

Fawcett, Barbara

2008 Poststructuralism. *In* The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research. Lisa
Given, ed. Pp. 666-670. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Frank, Geyser

1995 Anthropology and Individual Lives: The Story of the Life History and The
History of the Life Story. *American Anthropologist* 97(1):145-148.

Gough, Noel

2008 Life Stories. *In* The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research. Lisa Given, ed. Pp. 484-485. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Healey, Joseph

2012 Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Class. 6th edition. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Jacobs-Huey, Latin

2002 The Natives Are Gazing and Talking Back: Reviewing the Problematics of Positionality, Voice, and Accountability among "Native" Anthropologists. *American Anthropologist* 104(3):791-804.

Kelley, Jane

1978 Yaqui Women: Contemporary Life History. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Kovach, Margaret

2009 Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts. Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Library of Congress

2014 Primary Documents in American History: Indian Removal Act.
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Indian.html> accessed 4/20/2014.

Lockyer, Sharon

2008 History of Qualitative Research. *In* The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research. Lisa Given, ed. Pp. 706-710. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Langness, L.

1965 The Life History in Anthropological Science. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Linderman, Frank

1972[1932] *Pretty Shield: Medicine Woman of the Crows*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Books.

Loeb, Barbara

2012 *The Woman Who Loved Mankind: The Life of a Twentieth-Century Crow Elder*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Maracle, Lee

1996 *I Am Woman*. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers.

Medicine, Bea

2001 *Learning to Be an Anthropologist and Remaining "Native."* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Narayan, Kirin

1993 How Native is a "Native" Anthropologist? *American Anthropologist* 95(3): 671-686.

Olsson, Michael

2008 Postmodernism. *In* *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research*. Lisa Given, ed. Pp. 655-659. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Ranco, Darren

2006 Toward a Native Anthropology: Hermeneutics, Hunting Stories, and Theorizing from Within. *Wicazo Sa Review* 21(2):61-78

Rosaldo, Renato

1989 *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Schneider, William

2002 *So They Understand: Cultural Issues in Oral History*. Logan: Utah State University Press.

Shopes, Linda

2011 Oral History. *In* The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, eds. Pp. 451-465. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Smith, Andrea

2013[2006] Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy. *In* Readings for Diversity and Social Justice. 3rd edition. Maureen Adams, Warren Blumenfeld, Carmelita Castaneda, Heather Hackman, Madeline Peters, Ximena Zuniga, eds. Pp. 86-92. New York: Routledge.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai

2012[1999] Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. Second Edition. London: Zed Books.

Turney-High, Harry

1998[1941] The Forgotten Kutenai. Fairfield: Ye Galleon Press.

Tuck, Eve

2009 Suspending Damages: A Letter to Communities. Harvard Educational Review 79(3): 409-427.

United States Census Bureau

2012 The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010 Census Briefs <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-10.pdf>, accessed April 11, 2014.

Wachowich, Nancy

1999 Saqiyuq: Stories From the Lives of Three Inuit Women. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Wilson, Angela

2004 Reclaiming Our Humanity: Decolonization and the Recovery of Indigenous Knowledge. *In* Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities. Devon Mihesuah and Angela Wilson, eds.. Pp. 69-87. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Wilson, Gilbert

1921 Waheenee: An Indian Girl's Story Told By Herself to Gilbert Wilson, PhD. St. Paul: Web Publishing Company.