

IRON RANGE RESEARCH CENTER

Oral History Interview

NAME: John Boshey, Senior

# OF TAPES: 1

INTERVIEWER: Tracy Dagen

TRANSLATOR: Janice Jourdain

DATE: December 7, 1996

PLACE: Lac La Croix

ACCESSION #:

Tape 1/Side 1

I (Tracy Dagen): It's December 7, and I'm up in Lac La Croix talking with John Boshey, Senior - and I want to know about your brothers and sisters, where you lived and

John Boshey, Sr.: What do they want to know about my brothers and sisters? (*Sound of child in background.*)

T (Janice Jordain): All right, what about your brothers and sisters? How many did you have and...?

JB: Oh, there was ah, Harry Boshey was the oldest one. I'll tell ya, just the two of us left here and um, Raymond Boshey and me. Just the two of us living now.

T: But how many were there? And where were you born?

JB: Well, there was uh, uh, Jack Ottertail, Jimmy. Jimmy. Jack. Jack. Jimmy. Tom. Who else? Never can remember.

T (Janice Jourdain): Your brothers and sisters. (*Ojibway... About your sisters and brothers.*)

JB: (*Some words in Ojibew.*) That's what I'm talking...

I: Where were you born?

JB: Here.

I: Here?

JB: See, Harry Boshey born here. That's the oldest. And my sister Elizabeth, she was born here. And I was born here, too. See, I'm 84 years old now. (*Laughs*) Yeah. I went to school over there just about three years and....

I: Where did you go to sc... at that Indian School?

JB: Eh?

I: You went to the Indian school?

JB: Yeah. Three years I was there. I want to trap, so I come back here again. I was about 15, yeah, 15 years old. And I thought I'd make money that way, eh? *(Laughs)* To make trapping....

I: What were your memories of uh, going to school on the reservation?

JB: Well, I stayed with uh, Jimmy Boshey. With his wife, Jenny. Jenny Boshey. I stayed there three years. And after that, uh, four years time, my father and my mother moved over there.

I: Who was your mother and father?

JB: Huh?

I: Who was your mother and father?

JB: Uh, Josephine. Josephine Boshey.

I: Where did you grow up mainly? Up here, or Vermilion, or Burntside, or....?

JB: Lac La Croix

T: *(Repeats question in Ojibwe.)*

JB: *(In Ojibway.)* Right here.

T: *(In Ojibway... Right here was where you grew up at?)*

JB: I was born here. .... Harry born here, Elizabeth born here. And me. That's three of us born over here. All my uh, others, my brothers and the other sisters born in La... in Tower.

I: How long did you stay there? Tower?

JB: How long?

I: Yeah.

JB: Only, see I come out over there about 17 years old. I ... drop in over here.

I: What year...

JB: I was five years I was there.

I: What do you remember about Tower?

JB: Huh?

I: What do you remember about Tower? 'Cause that's where I'm from now, and that's where I'm going.

T: What year?

JB: What does he remember about Tower?

T: *(Asks question in Ojibwe)*

Another voice in Ojibwe: .....*What you did at your house.*

JB: *(Answers in Ojibwe.)*

T: They'd visit each other and they also had um, um pow-wow's.

I: About how many people would be at the pow-wows?

JB: Oh, not too many.

I: Fifty? A hundred?

JB: Oh, about 30 or 50.

I: Where did these people come from, or were they all from Tower?

JB: *(Ojibwe)* .....*They just had dances in a big house and the dances varied. Sometimes it was just people from the village.*

T: Oh, round house, no?

JB: *(Ojibwe)* .....*No round house. Just our homes .....*

T: Oh.

JB: Used to have pow-wows in their homes, eh, at times. They don't have any pow-wow ground either. *(laughs)*

T: *(Ojibwe)* You were asking that there were....

I: Where were these people from, you know?

T: *(Asks question in Ojibwe.)*

JB: Nett Lake. From here. Yeah. And uh, Basswood Lake, I think. There were some uh, old ladies - lived there before, I guess.

I: Yeah. I heard about the Basswood Camps, and there was a...

JB: Huh?

I: I heard about the Basswood Camps and there was a lot of Indians up there. All over, and uh, we're trying to do a history of the Vermilion people there.

JB: See, that's why... See, they - years ago, about 19 uh, 19... 19 uh, oh, 24 - See, the Indians from Tower lived at uh, Basswood. *Jackfish Bay* they called it. That's where they, uh, that's where they're living at that time. They were living over there and people from uh, Sein River live over there too.

I: Well, why did come from uh...

JB: Some people from here, too, lived over there at that time.

I: Up in Basswood?

JB: Up in Basswood there. That's how, how they, how they lived long time ago, eh!  
When you visit there, well, you'd live over here, eh. ....

I: How did you get around from... (*Unclear*)?

JB: Paddling.

I: Paddling?

JB: Yeah. Snowshoeing in the winter. And they can, they can go long ways with  
snowshoes. Camp out, make a fire. And they have these - what you call - rabbit skin  
blankets. They're warm!

T: (*Translating...*) There was a question that you asked that he uh, he didn't answer you.  
Where he grew up in?

I: Yeah. Well, he did.

T: (*Ojibwe*) He did answer you.

I: What kind of schooling did you have? Did you go to school?

JB: Eh?

I: What kind of schooling did you have?

T: *(Asks question in Ojibwe.)*

JB: *(Ojibwe) When I went?*

T: *(Asks question again in Ojibwe.)*

JB: *(Ojibwe) Basically the same thing they teach children today.*

Another voice in Ojibwe: *When you went to school...*

JB: *(Ojibwe) Went up to grade 3.*

T: Basically the same thing they teach today...

JB: See, I went three years there.

T: He went up to Grade 3.

I: At the Indian School?

JB: I was about 12 years old.

Another voice in Ojibwe: *What school?*



JB: Tower. At the Indian School.

I: What do you remember about that Indian School?

Another voice in Ojibwe: *What do you remember about the Indian School?*

JB: Indian School.

Another voice: Uh huh.

JB: I was at that school, eh? Long time ago!

Another voice: *The kids just stayed at the school?*

JB: *(Ojibwe) Some kids went home, but a lot of kids stayed there. The teachers just stayed there. Some children went home to their homes every day. It was up stairs and downstairs and then they had school lessons in that building. It was a big building. They have rooms upstairs there. Teachers living there.*

I: Do you remember how many kids went there?

JB: Eh?

I: Do you...

T: *(Ojibwe) How many children went to school there?*

JB: *(Ojibwe)* There was a lot of children that went there. I don't remember that. ....my class. There were 10 of us there. The other classes, I don't know. There was two classes. Two teachers there.

T: He says there was quite a few of them, but in his class there was 10 of them. But he doesn't know...

JB: They go through grade 8, I guess.

I: Where were the kids from?

JB: ...were all from Nett Lake, I guess. I don't know. From there and Tower. And Sein River. Sein River Indians were there too.

I: What about your trapping days. You want to tell us more about those?

JB: Well, *(Ojibwe)* Will you translate?

T: *(Ojibwe)* Yeah. We're helping you. Just speak the language.

JB: *(Ojibwe)* Trapping... We used to travel... Uh, we used to travel down to Burntside Lake. We'd trap around there.

T: He traveled but he, uh, trapped with his father. And they went all over along... he also went to uh, Burntside Lake. Yeah. He trapped over there.

JB: That's where my grandfather, where his grandfather was living.

Another voice: With his father.

JB: And we would start from there, go off trapping - off in the lake, lakes. To all the lakes - mink trapping.

I: What did you do with the...

JB: In the fall.

I: What did you do with them after you trapped them? What did you do with the furs or the pelts?

JB: Well, we'd sell it.

I: Where would that be?

JB: Well, we'd sell it in Ely. There was a fur buyer there, up in Ely.

I: So you brought all your furs from up here down to Ely?

JB: Eh?

I: You brought all your furs from up here down to Ely?

JB: No, we stayed at my Grandpa's then, at Burntside Lake.

I: Oh. Okay.

JB: So, I didn't come back here, trapping over there. After awhile, I come here and I start trapping on this side then, Canada.

T: *(Ojibwe)* What age?

JB: Eh? Seventeen. Sixteen, seventeen years old there. Yeah. Twelve years old *(Ojibwe)* is when I left there.

Another voice: He was twelve years old when he first...

JB: And I came out there at sixteen. Sixteen years old. *(Ojibwe)* My parents lived over there too, and they moved too when I started school. Why doesn't she write instead of doing it this way? Maybe she would understand me better.

*(Women are talking about the fur and about trapping at Burntside and selling in Ely.)*

I: How about wild rice. Did you do ricing?

JB: Yeah. After that we used to make rice, eh. At Basswood Lake.

I: Basswood Lake?

JB: Yeah. I was young that time. We make rice over there. Yeah, we pick up a lot of rice.

I: Did you ever go up to Nett Lake?

JB: Eh?

I: Did you ever go ricing up in Nett Lake?

T: *(Ojibwe)* Did you ever go up to Nett Lake?

Another Voice: *(Ojibwe)* Did you ever go to Nett Lake?

JB: Yeah. I was in Nett Lake too.

T: Did you ever go ricing there?

JB: Yeah. *(Ojibwe)* That's where we went with your grandmother. We used to make rice there. Make a lot of money! *(laughs)* We go and rice. Make about a thousand dollars....

I: How did you get around - up to Nett Lake and from Vermilion?

JB: From here?

I: From Vermilion? And Tower?

T: *(Ojibwe)* How did you get there?

JB: See, we uh, we padd... I mean, we go by motor here, outboard motor, to Crane Lake and we'd get a car from Crane Lake to Nett Lake.

T: *(Ojibwe)* How did you get from Nett Lake to Tower when you want to go ricing?

JB: Nett Lake. By car *(Ojibwe)* is what I said.

T: By car.

JB: Went by boat from here to Crane Lake.

T: *(Ojibwe)* You went by car from Crane Lake to Tower?

JB: Yeah. We used to visit Tower every year, eh. We'd paddle sometimes going over there, going to Sioux River. About 3 days. Three days paddling.

I: Three days. Who would you go with when you went?

JB: Eh?

I: Who would you go with when you went?

JB: My wife. I had a wife.

I: What was her name?

JB: Eh?

I: What was her name?

T: (Ojibwe) *What is her name? She's asking you.*

JB: Elizabeth.

I: How many children did you have?

JB: Uh, let's see. *(Laughs)*

T: There's *Qua* (Nickname)...

JB: John Boshey,

? : Janice.

JB: Elma, Justin, Alfred, and Janice.

I: So you had five kids.

JB: Yeah. Five children.

?: But then with his first wife he had two - Nancy and Johnny.

I: Two?

JB: They all married.

T: Nancy and Johnny with the first wife.

Another voice: *(Ojibwe) What was her name?*

T: *(Ojibwe) What was the name with your first wife.*

JB: Oh. Beatrice (she was a Redsky). Yeah, I had two wives. My first wife was Beatrice and uh, Elizabeth is another wife. She died last spring. March. I had her about 40, 40 years I lived with. The other wife, may her about 6 years. She had TB. TB. Died in the hospital.

I: Where at?

JB: Eh?

T: *(Ojibwe) Where at?*

JB: Hudson, Manitoba.

T: *(Ojibwe) Where did she die at?*

JB: Otherwise, in Fort Francis - Elizabeth - this spring. *(Ojibwe) What's the name of that? (Rainy Crest?)* The old people place. That's where she died. She was sick a long time. She got hit with that "Ski-doo." *(Baby crying)* She was sick about 17 years now. *(Ojibwe) Is that enough?*

T: Um, he's asking if you're done, or?



I: If you want to be, we can be done.

T: *(Ojibwe)* Do you want to be done?

JB: You can be... There is um, Mary over there.

I: Okay.

*End of tape.*

The Vermillion Lake People:  
Vermillion Lake Bois Forte Oral History Project  
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