

IRON RANGE RESEARCH CENTER

Oral History Interview

NAME: Mary Jourdain

OF TAPES: 2

INTERVIEWER: Tracy Dagen

TRANSLATOR: Janice Jordain, daughter.

ALSO PRESENT AT INTERVIEW: John Boshey of Lake Vermilion

DATE: December 7, 1996

PLACE: First Nation Reserve, Lac La Croix, Ontario, Canada

COMMENT: Mary Jordain sometimes speaks in Ojibwe, sometimes in English.

ACCESSION #:

Italics designate a translation of statements made in Ojibwe.

(Parenthesis) designate an "aside" clarification.

Tape 1/Side 1

Interviewer: Where were you born?

Translator: *Where were you born? What was your last name?*

Mary Jourdain: *What was your last name?*

I: No. Phyliss is my aunt. Bobby's wife. She's from Nett Lake and I grew up in Vermilion.

T: *Is that where you were born and grew up?* Basswood Lake. That's where she was born.

I: Who were your parents?

T: *Who are your parents?*

MJ: Nora LaBott and Willie - my dad.

I: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

T: *How many brothers and sisters?*

MJ: *(Mary talks about her mother married twice. The first husband was Kingfisher and the second was LaBott. The Kingfisher dad died. Leona's dad died and was Jennie's dad. Kingfisher was their name.)*

T: Kingfisher

MJ: *(Kingfisher was their last name.)*

T: Her mom was married twice. The first batch was Kingfisher. And uh, the second was LaBott. And uh, the LaBott, he had... Leona dad... Lizzie - Elizabeth, Jennie, King, Clara, there mighta been...

MJ: Leona's dad is the same as yours (Mary's).

T: There was about six of them. *Do you know how many children there are on the Kingfisher side?* And she doesn't know the... how many kids on the first.

I: Where did you grow up?

MJ: *Nor a soo*

I: For how long? Did you go to the Indian School?

MJ: No.

I: How long were you in Basswood? What was a typical day when you were growing up there?

MJ: *I just grew up there and lived.*

T: She knows that's where she uh, she was... that's where she grew up and that's where she was born, but she doesn't know she doesn't know how old she was.

MJ: *We were chased out of there and went to Vermilion Lake.*

T: Oh. They were chased out of there. Oh, yeah. They were chased out of Bass... Basswood and they moved here.

I: Up to Lac La Croix?

T: Up to Lac La Croix.

I: Why were you chased out?

T: She doesn't know. She....

MJ: *I was about the same size as that little girl.*

T: She was just a little girl.

MJ: *(Mary talks about her younger sister being in a cradle board when they got chased out of Basswood. The youngest sister in Mary's family. They called her "Da Beeg." Her real name was Helen Geshick and she was born at Vermilion Lake.)*

T: The little one was - I guess in uh, taken out when they were chased out.

I: How many children did you have?

MJ: *Thirteen.*

T: Thirteen.

I: And Isabelle was the youngest, right?

T: Yeah. Isabelle was the youngest. There was a, there was a set of twins...

MJ: Isabelle... (*Mary says that Isabelle's youngest child is named June.*)

T: *No, we are talking about the youngest of your family - Isabelle.*

T: Isabelle was the baby of the family.

T: *Your children.*

T: When the twins were June and she was one of the twins.

I: Oh yeah. Cause uh, I grew up right next to her... Ruby and "Johnny?" That's what she... They had Isabelle?

T: Yeah.

I: Then she moved away when... about sixth grade. Or even earlier. Maybe fourth grade? Somewhere in there. How much traveling did you do when you were growing up?

MJ: *I don't remember.*

T: She doesn't remember.

I: How much time did you spend at Vermilion? Or, did you go to Vermilion?

MJ: *Um hmmm.*

I: What did you do there? Or why did you go there?

MJ: *We went there to live in the summertime.*

T: They went there in the summertime. In the... every year ...

MJ: *Not every year.*

T: I guess they went there sometimes in the summertime.

I: Did you go ricing? Did you go get wild rice?

MJ: Um hmm.

I: Where would you go for that?

MJ: *(Mary talks with John Boshey about where they riced. They're trying to remember the name of the lake they riced at. They also talk about another person who had a car.)*

I: Rice... rice?

JB: Hoist Bay. *(Hoist Bay is on Basswood Lake.)*

I: Hoist Bay or something, it was called, where she went.

John Boshey talks in Ojibwe about using a cars or trucks to portage their canoes in to pick wild rice at Hoist Bay.

I: What do you remember about growing up?

MJ: I went "snagging" or "courting" or "boy chasing." I will never forget that! *(laughter)*

T: When she went "snagging" men... *(laughter)*

I: How old are you now?

T: Twenty six, why?

MJ: *(laughs)*

I: 70?

T: She could be about 70. *(Mary was born about the same time as Charles Guyette - her first cousin. Charles was born in 1922. In 1997 that would make her approximately 74 years old.)*

I: Yeah. My grandpa's gonna be about 79 or 80 next month.

MJ: *Oh, I'm losing my memory. I can't remember what to say.*

I: Did you have any schooling? Do you remember if you went to school?

T: ... when you were a little girl?

MJ: In Tower. I just stayed there one year.

T: She went to Tower. To one year.

I: To the Indian school?

T: In that school, yeah.

I: Can you remember what it was like at that Indian School? How old were you when you went there?

MJ: *I can't remember how old I was when I went to school.*

T: She can't remember how old she was when she went to school there.

I: Were there lots of kids there when she went?

T: *Was that school in Tower nice? Kind of fun? She didn't like going to school there.*

MJ: *I remember a little kid choking on something there. Someone said "What's she got in her mouth?" It looked like candy.*

I: How did you get up from Basswood to Lac La Croix here?

MJ: *We rode in a motorboat*

T: Motorboat.

T: *Did you have to portage? How many times?*

MJ: *Quite a few.*

T: She says they had to portage

I: How long would it take?

MJ: I don't remember. *You should ask Jennie (Jennie Opheim - her older sister) about how many times we had to portage. She remembers more. Talk to her.*

T: *Would your younger sister "Da Beeg" know?*

MJ: *She wouldn't know because she wasn't born yet.*

T: *Da Beeg was born in Tower? (They talk about traveling back and forth from La Croix and Vermilion Lake.*

MJ: *We lived in Lac La Croix and then went back to Tower. That's where "Da Beeg" (Helen) was born. We grew up in both places.*

T: One of her sisters uh, the youngest one, Helen Geshick, she was born in Tower.

I: Oh... um hmm.

T: But they were already living here....

I: They were.... *(baby crying)*

T: *Yeah, they came back to Lac La Croix after Helen was born.*

I: Then they came back up here?

T: Yeah.

MJ: *...over there.*

I: *...That's where she.... she was about Janelle's age. (They were asking her how old she was when they moved to La Croix.)*

MJ: *You should talk to Jenny. She remembers more. Talk to her. She thinks a lot, too.*

T: There's a lady...

I: Her sister.

T: Her sister. Her name is Jenny. She just lives, just across here. She might remember quite a bit.

I: All right.

End of tape.

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