

IRON RANGE RESEARCH CENTER

Oral History Interview

NAME: Walter Caribou

OF TAPES: 2

INTERVIEWER: Jerre Pete

TRANSLATOR: Walter Caribou's son.

DATE: February 4, 1997

PLACE:

ACCESSION #:

Tape 1/Side 1

Interviewer: I'll be interviewing Walter Caribou from Grand Portage. How old is your dad now?

Translator: 82. Turned 82 Christmas day.

I: Do you know where he was born?

Translator: Somewhere around Basswood Lake. Jackfish Bay area. North of Ely.

WC: *(Ojibwe)*

I: What do you think we should ask him?

T: What you should ask him is what you already asked. Where he was born. When he travels, like where ever he was at. They used to travel a long ways from LaCroix, to Tower, even to Basswood they probably went. That's a good general thing you want to know is,

T: What is this program you're working on?

I: The history of the Lake Vermilion Indian Reservation. And what they want to know is how long did the people live on Lake Vermilion, and the people that lived there - where did they come from? We know that a lot of the people who lived out there came from Basswood and Lac La Croix and Burnside. Then a lot of these people moved to Lac La Croix after that, and a lot of people moved to Nett Lake. I wonder if he knows anything about that school that used to be out there? There used to be a school out on the Reservation years ago. I wonder if he knows anything about that?

T: I'm sure he does. Do you want to ask him the questions live? Or... *(Ojibwe)*

WC: *(Ojibwe)*

T: Jackfish Bay. He was born around that area there.

WC: *(Ojibwe)*

T: *(Ojibwe)*

WC: *(Ojibwe)* ... I must've been younger, myself. ... All the old people around there.

(Unclear)

T: Gordon Lindeman?

WC: Yeah. Lindeman.

T: Yeah. He was telling me about that.

WC: *(Ojibwe)*

Tape is turned off for awhile.

WC: *(Ojibwe)*

T: *(Ojibwe)*

WC: *(Ojibwe)*

(Here there is general conversation in Ojibwe between all the people.)

T: Three hours together.

WC: *(Ojibwe)*

Tape is stopped here, and then continues.

WC: *(Partly in Ojibwe and partly in English, but unclear)*

T: Did you know that? They were supposed to build a tower?

WC: *(Unclear. Ojibwe & English.)*

I: Ask him what he did for a living.

T: *(Ojibwe)*

WC: *(Ojibwe)*

Everyone laughs.

WC: *(Ojibwe) Pete? (Unclear)*

T: You're a Pete?

WC: *(Ojibwe)*

T: The youngest.

WC: *(Ojibwe)*

I: I remember they used to come *(unclear)* a couple times. You can ask him that too.

WC: *(Ojibwe)*

T: (Ojibwe)

WC: (Ojibwe)

I: ... Logs from Basswood... (unclear) ... we used to have it by there. Used to blast the logs. Log jams. Maybe he would remember some of that. They started from Basswood.

T: (Ojibwe)

WC: (Ojibwe)

T: A lot of those Indians had the same names like, uh, the same Indian names. Like Tower, and up in Sein River. I just found out that, we went through some records up in Fort William. There's an old priest that's pretty old. He has records of these people in Grand Portage and even up in La Croix. Those La Croix people, some of those people originated from Grand Portage. I hear the name Blackstone a lot in Grand Portage. (Unclear), and Ottertail.

T: I might have a lot of relations around. One of the Chief that signed the Treaty of 1854 is, they call him *Ma ti kulos*. His other Indian name is *Nane ge go nay*. Same as mine. The first name that was given to me from, I believe, *She be no seek*. Remember her? Her husband gave me that name. That was the first name he give me. *Nane ge go nay*. That was, I think, was his Indian name too. (Unclear) ...goes back as our relation.

Here there is conversation between the Interviewer and the Translator, but it is very quiet.

WC: *(Ojibwe)*

Side Two

I: My mom was Jenny Pete. Mary O'Leary too. She was a Pete. Bob O'Leary's wife. Remember Bob O'Leary? Mary O'Leary was his wife.

WC: *(Unclear)*

I: That was his brother. Member John O'Leary too. That was his brother. John. I remember I was just a little kid when we were ricing. May. May, and, was living right next door to us. We were living by that Burnside's old house, and John O'Leary come to our house that morning. Drunk. He was drunk. He was *(unclear)* at the same time, and he said *(unclear)* "Got anything to drink?" he asked my Dad. My Dad says "No. We just got water over there. There's the water bucket." Right next to the water bucket was a dishpan. A dishpan of water that my Mom just got done washing dishes. And she grabbed a dipper by the bucket and, rather than dip it out of the bucket, dipped out of the dishwater. He said "Ummm. Boy, that's good." And my Mom said "That's my dishwater."

WC: *(Unclear)*

T: 1922.

WC: *(Ojibwe)*

T: What else can you think of?

I: We covered pretty much.

T: You mentioned John Kingfisher. You remember him, huh?

I: Yeah. I know who he is. Yeah. *(Unclear)* George Boshey at that house? That's where *(Unclear name)* used to live.

T: Yeah. As soon as his Dad died, he was ten years old, John Kingfisher come and got him from Nett Lake. I mean from Grand Portage. And took him to Nett Lake. 'Cause his mother died when he was real young. I don't think he even remembers his mom. His dad died somewhere on the train... he fell off them train tracks. They were drinking. They were drinking somewhere between Ely and Tower there. You know those things that you pump? He tried to go back with that thing and put his head on the railroad track. He died. He was about ten and when John heard that, that he was an orphan, he had no parents, he come and got him. He grew up in Nett Lake the rest of his years. Went to school there. Brought him to Nett. John Kingfisher raised him.

I: *(Unclear)*

T: That's what he said. Go from Tower to when you get to Lac La Croix. There's *(Unclear)*

I: I remember what she had in Tower.

T: A celebration on Sunday with *(unclear)*

I: What did they call them. They used to have them in John Sahabadio's (*unclear*). Long ring like, dancing. I remember they used to go over there. (*Soft and unclear*)

T: They have one at La Croix where old Tony Navoch (*Unclear surname*) used to live. Past the way where Leon lives now. Somewhere in there. All that was all clear. No trees. They had a long dance hall there. I remember that. I was just a little guy. Can't smoke in here. Have to go outside and smoke.

WC: (*Ojibwe*)

T: That's okay. That's what Indians call having a meeting.

I: That's what they used to do, then?

T: Yeah. Pass the pipe around.

I: Pass the pipe around.

T: Council. That's why the only time they smoke is up straight. (*Unclear*)

I: That should be enough then.

WC: (*Ojibwe*)

T: Yeah. I guess that is!

End of tape.

The Vermillion Lake People:
Vermillion Lake Bois Forte Oral History Project
Minnesota Historical Society