

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: MARIE TAYLOR
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: #504 - 14 SPADINA ROAD
TORONTO, ONTARIO
INTERVIEW LOCATION: #504 - 14 SPADINA ROAD
TORONTO, ONTARIO
TRIBE/NATION: OJIBWAY/FRENCH CANADIAN
LANGUAGE: ENGLISH
DATE OF INTERVIEW: 07/09/82
INTERVIEWER: JAMIE LEE
INTERPRETER:
TRANSCRIBER: HEATHER BOUCHARD
SOURCE: TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY
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TAPE NUMBER: IH-OT.014
DISK: TRANSCRIPT DISC #109
PAGES: 25
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Very brief description of life during the Depression.
Jamie: Today is July 9, 1982, and I am interviewing Mrs.
Marie Taylor of 14 Spadina Road. My name is Jamie Lee.

Jamie: The machine is on right now so if I can just ask you
first some of these biographical questions? Let's see, you're
a female; were you, where were you born, and where, and when?

Marie: Born in Ontario, 1919.

Jamie: 1919. And have you been married?

Marie: Yes, I'm still.

Jamie: I see. And when was that?

Marie: 1945.

Jamie: 1945. And what about your parent's people, where do
they come from?

Marie: My mother was born -- my mother was an Ojibway Indian,

she was brought up in Spanish. My father was a Frenchman and he came from Quebec. And anything else I don't know.

Jamie: And what religion did you practice then?

Marie: Well, we were brought up as Roman Catholics. We didn't practice it, we were made to do it.

Jamie: You were made.

Marie: More of less.

Jamie: Did you go to a residential school then?

Marie: Yeah, in Spanish.

Jamie: In Spanish. And how long, how long before, how long were you home before you left for school, then?

Marie: I was, I went to school when I was six years old.

Jamie: And you, you're active in the Ladies Auxiliary?

Marie: Yes, right now.

Jamie: Any other groups or clubs?

Marie: I don't think so -- O.N.D.I.O.N.(?), but I don't know whether I've paid up for that or not.

Jamie: And what about languages? Do you speak any French?

Marie: No, just plain English.

Jamie: Any Ojibway?

Marie: No.

Jamie: So you were educated in a residential school. Have you gone to school at all since then?

Marie: No.

Jamie: And what about jobs, have you worked, or have you been...?

Marie: Well, well, I worked as a waitress.

Jamie: Where was that?

Marie: In Toronto.

Jamie: Starting... when did you come to Toronto?

Marie: When the war started, I think about 1939. I guess we came to Toronto in 1938, '39.

Jamie: What brought you down here?

Marie: Well, to get a job. (laughs)

Jamie: So you worked as a waitress. Where was that?

Marie: The corner of Sherwood, Sherwood and Carlton.

Jamie: What was the restaurant called?

Marie: Beside the church. Oh, I can't remember the name of the restaurant, it's not... The restaurant is still there but it's not the same name.

Jamie: And, and was your husband working as well?

Marie: No. I, I didn't meet him till 1949, '45.

Jamie: Oh yeah, of course. And you work in the craft shop as well now?

Marie: Yes, I just sort of help out.

Jamie: And have you had any jobs in between those then?

Marie: Being a waitress? Yeah, I do day work, or housework, whatever you want to call it.

Jamie: Yeah, that's a big job.

Marie: Well, it's called day work -- housework is menial labor. (laughs) That's what my husband always used to say, anyway.

Jamie: When did he die, your husband?

Marie: Oh, he's still living.

Jamie: Oh, he's still around.

Marie: Don't put that down.

Jamie: Okay.

Marie: My life stopped in 1945. (laughs) Oh, that's all you need to know anyways, till 1945.

Jamie: Okay. What about Spanish, can you tell me about, about... Was there a reserve there?

Marie: Well, I don't think so, just a school.

Jamie: Just a school.

Marie: Yeah, Spanish River, Spanish residential school. I

was there when I was about six years old.

Jamie: And there was, was there a mission there?

Marie: No, it was a residential school for the Indian boys and girls.

Jamie: Can you explain about that? I don't know much about these schools.

Marie: Well, there's nothing much... what is there to explain? It's a residential school for Indian boys and girls.

Jamie: And they came from all around the area to go to school there?

Marie: Yes, yeah.

Jamie: And they stayed for long?

Marie: Yes, they went home at sometime.

Jamie: So how far away from, from the school did you live, or your parents?

Marie: They were living in Cornwall.

Jamie: It seems a long way. Do you remember much of Cornwall?

Marie: I was never there.

Jamie: You were never there?

Marie: No, I was at the school.

Jamie: What about before you went to school? Can you remember much of your life then?

Marie: No, I was just born. (laughs) I was six years old, I remember, went to school. And I stayed there until my mother passed away, and then I was... Then I came home and I looked after the rest of my family -- my father, my brother, and my three sisters.

Jamie: So you came home to...?

Marie: To look after the family. Now the interesting part of it is, I was brought up at, in a residential school, right? Where we have electricity, where you have everything. When I went home to look after the family we lived about two and a half miles out of town, about two and a half, I suppose. Life sure is a problem. And I had to learn how to do everything from scratch.

Jamie: So they had no electricity?

Marie: No electricity, no indoor plumbing, nothing. I had to learn how to, learn how to cook on a wood stove, to wash clothes by hand, and to look after three girls and myself.

Jamie: That's a big job. How old were you then?

Marie: Actually, I can't remember. I'd be about maybe twelve, fourteen, but I was, I just don't... Couldn't be any older, I don't think, that's all. And then I came to Toronto and got married.

Jamie: And how old were your brothers and sisters when you were looking after them?

Marie: Well, they were all younger than I was.

Jamie: And your father, was he working at that time?

Marie: Well, in those days I think the Depression was on. They were getting, we were getting relief. Well, the men had to go out to work on the roads -- you weren't around in those days. (laughs) And in the summer they used to, they used to bring us pails and pails of smelts, when the smelt season was on. That is a problem, to clean smelts, because I had to cut the heads and tails off, and the insides. (laughs) Most people eat the whole thing. Well, what other questions did you...?

Jamie: Well, I... Can you remember anything else about, about those times? It must have been very difficult times.

Marie: Well, in a way yes, because I had to cope with a situation that was beyond my, beyond my -- how would you put it?

Jamie: Well, you were very young. Is that sort of...?

Marie: Beyond my...

Jamie: Experience?

Marie: Experience, yeah.

Jamie: Can you remember much of your daily routine? What did you have to do?

Marie: Well, the children, I didn't get -- they more or less got themselves ready for school.

Jamie: Where did they go to school?

Marie: They went to school in the town, they were in a public school.

Jamie: And your father?

Marie: He was always around. Oh, I can't remember much.

Jamie: What about the town itself, do you remember much about... How big was it?

Marie: The town? Oh, it was fairly large. In those days there wasn't... In those days there wasn't anything around, we used to do our shopping in the Eaton's catalogues.

Jamie: Can you remember ordering anything from it?

Marie: Oh yes, we ordered, we used to order... Dad used to barter in town with the shopkeeper, where we did our dealing, with groceries. So he bartered, so we had money to send to Eaton's for clothes to send the kids to school.

Jamie: So he grew vegetables?

Marie: Yes, yeah, we had a garden.

Jamie: But he also worked on the roads?

Marie: Yes, you had to.

Jamie: Did he get paid for working on the roads?

Marie: Well, you're getting, you're getting relief, and I think you had to work so many hours, I don't remember how it was worked. And then, and then he used to also work in the, work for the, I forget his name, the, the grocery, the gentleman that owned the grocery store. (laughs)

Jamie: The green grocer, or whatever.

Marie: Well, in those days they had everything.

Jamie: Yeah, that's right, yeah.

Marie: Old fashioned, some of the clothes were old fashioned. And he worked on the, he worked out in the woods.

Jamie: What did he do there?

Marie: Well, he was down cutting wood, lumber.

Jamie: For somebody else?

Marie: Yes, for the grocery man. I forget his name.

Jamie: So was that fairly common for somebody to hold so many different jobs, and earn their money so many different ways?

Marie: Well, in those days you just get what you could because you weren't getting help from the government, but...

Jamie: So there was a grocer. Was there, were there any sort of other prominent figures in the town that you can recall?

Marie: Well, the town was situated about... We would call it French town, the English town, and the foreign -- all different nationalities. There were Polish, Hungarians, Ukrainians, that was all the...

Jamie: And what were they all doing there?

Marie: Well, same as we were doing, I guess, but I ain't got no comments. (laughs) Because there wasn't any work. Well, there was a little, there was work probably like the judge, and the post office -- we had a post office. What else consists of a small town? Post office, the hospital, grocery stores.

Jamie: But all those people from other countries, the foreigner section, had they originally been attracted by some other industry? Was there...?

Marie: Well, at, at one time it used to be a lumber, there was lumber mill.

Jamie: Do you remember who owned it?

Marie: Who owned it? Abitibi.

Jamie: Abitibi. Did they shut down during the Depression?

Marie: Well, it was running for the power, that's all. It was just running. There was only one person running the power

house, or whatever you call it, for the electricity. And everything else was closed down.

Jamie: Can you remember what you used to do in your evenings? Did your father come home, and did you have much of a family life at the time?

Marie: In the summertime we used to go swimming.

Jamie: Was there a river?

Marie: Yes, there was the Spanish River. That's something that you're not supposed to say anything about, because we were swimming illegally in some of these private properties. (laughs)

Jamie: I'm sure that, I'm sure that used to happen all the time.

Marie: 'Cause when we came home, dad used to go down and have his annual bath. (laughs) Water was very scarce in the summer at that time.

Jamie: Did you have to carry it into the house?

Marie: Oh, yes.

Jamie: How long?

Marie: Oh, I guess it must be about a hundred, two hundred yards.

Jamie: But it was somebody else's property on the river side then?

Marie: Oh, yes. That was only on the other side of the highway. You had to walk quite a ways.

Jamie: Did you have a lot of friends of your age at the time?

Marie: No.

Jamie: So was it you and your brothers and sisters?

Marie: I was too busy.

Jamie: Did you have much contact with older people, you know, say of your... Did you know your grandparents at all?

Marie: Well, we knew our grandfather.

Jamie: On which side?

Marie: On my mother's side.

Jamie: Did he live in the, the town as well?

Marie: No, he lived in Spanish on the, near the river. But he used to come and visit us once a year. He'd walk from Spanish to Sudbury. He would drop in and see us.

Jamie: How far would that have been?

Marie: You know where Spanish is? Do you know where Sudbury is? (laughs)

Jamie: I know, I know the Spanish River, but I don't know that the town, I don't know the town of Spanish. Does it still exist today?

Marie: Spanish? Oh, yes. That's where Elliot, that's the Elliot Lake. And they had the mine in Elliot Lake, the town is, the main town is Spanish.

Jamie: So you used to see your grandfather once a year?

Marie: Yes.

Jamie: Did he tell you stories and things, or what did he do?

Marie: No, he just used to come and go. My aunt Mary was a storyteller.

Jamie: Was she, was she on your mother's, or your father's side?

Marie: That was my mother's sister.

Jamie: Can you remember any of the stories she used to tell you?

Marie: Heavens, no! I remember one thing.

Jamie: What was that?

Marie: We all slept in the same bed. (laughs)

Jamie: Even your aunt?

Marie: I don't know. We crawled in with someone.

Jamie: When would you see her?

Marie: Aunt Mary? We used to go and visit her, when we could afford it, in the summertime.

Jamie: Where did she live?

Marie: She used to live in Spanish. We'd stay about a week.

Jamie: Can you remember what, when she would tell you the stories?

Marie: No, in the evenings.

Jamie: Were they scary stories?

Marie: Oh, yes. The images used to be so wrinkled(?), that's why all, that's why we all went in the same bed. (laughing) We didn't care who it was. The images were so real you could actually see them.

Jamie: Were they traditional type stories or new stories?

Marie: Oh, yes, yes. There's a lot of, perhaps a lot of them were, are of the imagination. Or some of them, the stories, were real. But then they sort of... like a storyteller.

Jamie: Stories about the wind, and things like that?

Marie: Yes. I can't remember what.

Jamie: Did you see any other people of your mother's family?

Marie: No, I was only young. There was only Aunt Mary and grand, and granddad.

Jamie: And your father, was your father associated with them quite a bit? Or did he have his own circle of people there?

Marie: He knew a few French people in town -- they didn't actually live in town, they lived on the, on the, on the road, on the highway going to, to town, down by the river. There was only one family we used to go and visit.

Jamie: Did you see many of the other foreigners from the other quarter of town?

Marie: Yes, like, when, when the children went to school, you see, they got to know them.

Jamie: So your brothers and sisters had friends from...?

Marie: Yes, in the town. They met them at school.

Jamie: And where were, what about you?

Marie: I was busy.

Jamie: You were busy. What about your name, were you named after a relative?

Marie: No.

Jamie: The Taylor was, Taylor, Taylor is not a French name?

Marie: No. My, my husband was an Englishman, I guess. He was born in Canada, but his father came from England.

Jamie: And what was your name before, before marriage?

Marie: (laughs) I can't remember.

Jamie: Can you remember many of the big, big things that used to happen in, in the community, in your town? The big celebrations at some time.

Marie: We didn't, there wasn't, I don't remember about anything.

Jamie: Nothing at Christmas time?

Marie: No.

Jamie: What did your family do at Christmas?

Marie: Oh, we didn't do very much, we didn't have... We had

our own fun. I remember one Christmas the youngest -- one of the girls... There's no such thing as a Santa Claus -- because we weren't getting any presents, or anything. So they happened to open up the back door -- they heard a knock -- they opened the back door and there was a great big box and all the presents and everything. So there is a Santa Claus! (laughs) That's all I remember. That was one Christmas.

Jamie: And what was in the box?

Marie: Oh, everything you can imagine. Toys, and clothes -- it was from the people of the church, I guess. Well, that would be Women's Auxiliary too. Or the church people.

Jamie: So you didn't celebrate with a meal, or...?

Marie: Oh, yes, when we were able to afford it. My dad used to like duck.

Jamie: And what about the rest of the community? Did the church have a big gathering?

Marie: I don't know. They always had, like, in the church, the Roman Catholic church, they always had the midnight mass at Christmas time. We used to like to go, because... the only reason we liked to go was because we could stay up late. (laughs) That was such a beautiful walk in the moonlight. The moon was just like daylight out in the country, especially in the winter time, it used to be twenty-five below zero -- and that's cold.

Jamie: Did you skate on the river, or anything?

Marie: No. We had, we had sort of a pond in the back. And it used to be a swamp until dad drained the land out. But we didn't have skates, you see, we used to slide around on, on your, on cardboards, and we used to use them on the hills too.

Jamie: Yeah, we still do that.

Marie: Oh do you? You mean you can't afford a sleigh? (laughs) Yes, you go down to the flea market and you see some of those articles we used to use.

Jamie: Like what?

Marie: Oh, like the, the wash, the washing, the boiler, the washing, the boiler that you used your water in. The copper, the copper boilers. And the old tea kettles, and the wash and boil. I haven't seen any washtubs. We had two washtubs and a, and a stand -- we got that from Eaton's. And the stand was, with the hand wringer, the hand wringer.

Jamie: Can you remember what your house looked like?

Marie: Well, it was only like one, it was like two rooms --

one large room, and then, and then a bedroom. We each had our own bed; there was six of us, we all -- we had bunkbeds.

Jamie: Was it a log house?

Marie: No. It was, it was sort of like a cabin that my dad built. It was well insulated.

Jamie: You'd have a, twenty-five below weather, you want it to be.

Marie: Didn't matter. It used to get pretty cold in the morning when the fire went out. (laughs)

Jamie: Do you remember much more about the town?

Marie: No, we didn't bother with the town. They went, the children went to school, that's about all.

Jamie: What about your school? How many years were you there?

Marie: In Spanish? I don't -- well I was six, I guess around eight.

Jamie: How many people were there?

Marie: I guess around eight, it was run by the Jesuit fathers, and the sisters. Or I should say the government.

Jamie: How was the government involved?

Marie: Well, it was helping out the Indian people.

Jamie: How big was the school?

Marie: Fairly large. You must have read about it -- it burned down not so long ago with a family, a whole family in it. They had made it over, it was empty for about fifteen years -- and they made it over into apartments. And it's burned to the ground right now. But a whole family perished in it. Not anybody I knew, but Irene knew some of them, like, uh, there were...

Jamie: That's Irene Beckett next door?

Marie: Yes.

Jamie: Can you remember what your day at school would have been like?

Marie: Well, being a residential school you, it was, like, each group... One for the kitchen, one for the laundry, one for the garden, one for the barns, to do the milking of the cows. They had a caretaker looking after the horses, and looking after the barn. And they had a chicken coop. And to

upkeep the whole school, like each group was, like... Maybe there was, like, ten in each group, that you were, how would you say it? For one, you were on that team for one week and then you'd change around. So you learned how to do everything in the school -- how to bake bread, how to cook, how to sew, how to clean, how to, in the garden, how to milk a cow, how to look after chickens, everything. So we learned everything.

Jamie: Were there lots of men at the school too?

Marie: They had their own, a boy's school, across the estuary(?).

Jamie: So when did the, the two schools get together?

Marie: You were allowed to go and visit your brother on a Sunday. We never associated by the separate...

Jamie: What about school work, did you, did you have classes?

Marie: Oh, yes.

Jamie: What sort of things did they teach you?

Marie: Anything you learn in school, I guess. (laughs)

Jamie: And you spoke English in school?

Marie: Yes.

Jamie: Did they teach you French at all?

Marie: No. That was one, that was one thing that we didn't like about it -- you couldn't speak your own language. You had to speak English.

Jamie: So they wouldn't let you speak Ojibway?

Marie: No, they wouldn't let you speak French, or any other language, just English.

Jamie: What would happen if they found you?

Marie: They used to punish you.

Jamie: Did that happen to you?

Marie: Well, the only language I knew how to speak was English. (laughs)

Jamie: So you were all right.

Marie: But I was trying to learn, so I guess I, I got into it too. We more or less all did in one way or another.

Jamie: Were you trying to learn Ojibway, or French?

Marie: Yes, both.

Jamie: Who would teach you?

Marie: There was girls that spoke French when they came, but quite a few spoke Indian when they came.

Jamie: So when, when would they have a chance to teach you?

Marie: Well, we had play time, and we'd get in groups way down in the yard.

Jamie: And what would happen?

Marie: Nothing. We would be found out sooner or later, apparently. And also in the school they had fire drills, and we had -- what do you call it -- not the stairs part, we had the stair part safe, but this was in the back of the school, you know, with the long pipes. We had to learn how to slide down the pipes.

Jamie: Like the firemen.

Marie: That was fun. (laughs) We used to use that as a short cut once in a while. There was... But we always got caught. The school was only three stories, at least there was that. To us being so, you know, children, we got out of favor until we found out when we read about it in the, when they had that fire, and it was only three stories.

Jamie: Can you describe the grounds to me?

Marie: The grounds?

Jamie: The school grounds. There was a barn you said.

Marie: Yes. Well, there was a barn and there was the chickens, chicken coop, chicken house or whatever you want to call it. And then we had the garden in the summer. There was garden out there in the summer, we practically grew everything. And they had the same monuments in the men's school, in the boy's school, I should say.

Jamie: Did any of your brothers, or your brother ever go to the boy's school?

Marie: Yes, they were... When mother died Aunt Mary brought them back. They stayed at school for a while until dad got together, could get us, you know, get us all back together.

Jamie: So when you left was it because you'd finished the school, or was it because you father...?

Marie: No, he finally got a place and he needed someone to

look after the children. He wanted the four of us all together, so... Well, that's about all I guess. I got to go to the doctor's. (laughs)

Jamie: Okay. Well, maybe if there's some time, some time later when I can come back and talk to you some more. Do you think that would be okay?

Marie: I don't know. What else there is to talk about? I got married in 1945 and I'm here, and it's 1982.

Jamie: '82, yeah.

Marie: And this is the first home that I've had on my own, that I could call my own.

Jamie: Well, what we would like to do is, is put the tape in the library for other people to listen to. Do you think that would...?

Marie: Play it back and see what it sounds like. (laughs)
It must sound terrible. (laughs)

Jamie: Okay. Well, do you think that will be okay, to do that?

Marie: I don't know.

Jamie: So you'd like me to play some of the tape?

Marie: Yeah, see what it sounds like.

Jamie: Okay.

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