

Elder Interview of Albert Caisse (A:)
Place: South Bay Camp Ground near Ile-a-la-crosse, Sask.
Date: August 17, 2001
Interviewed by: Wayne Morin (Q:)
Transcribed & translated by: Wayne Morin
Present at time of Interview: Albert Gardiner
Type of equipment used: Sony minidisk recorder c/w attached microphone

Time

001:02:25

Q: What your real name?

A: Albert, Albert Caisse.

Q: When were you born?

A: 19, I wonder, 1931.

Q: 1931, your fairly old?

A: I'm 69.

Q: That's a good number.

A: It's still hard.

(Laughs)

Q: What are the names of your parents?

A: Napoleon Caisse and Margaret Natamogan.

Q: Where are they from, Pinehouse?

A: Yes, my mom but my dad I don't know.

Q: Where does Caisse come from?

A: I don't know, I just couldn't tell you. We tried to track our family there was too many all over it hard to do. They're some here and Buffalo.

Q: Are you related to all the Caisses' here?

A: I don't know.

Q: How many in your family, like brothers?

A: There's me, George and Donald.

Q: Are you the oldest?

A: No George than me, then I have about 7 sisters then Donald.

001:05:03

Q: Is Beatrice (Gardiner) your sister?

A: Yes, this one. There another one in Beauval working as an FPW her name is Ann.

Q: Just your family lived at Sucker Point?

A: No, there was Joe Misponas, Magloire Misponas.

Q: There treaty hey?

A: Yes treaties.

Q: And you are?

A: Half-breed.

Q: Were you on treaty land too?

A: No the place we lived was by treaty land.

Q: Does anybody still live where you use to live?

A: No nobody, no.

001:06:27

Q: How did you make a living?

A: We lived off the bush.

Q: Did you have a garden?

A: I don't know I was in school.

Q: Where did you go to school?

A: Here at the mission about 4 years.

Albert Gardiner: Let me tell you a story about my buddy here. I was on my way to go fishing and I saw this boat coming carrying a white something, I thought it was DNS, boy it was this guy (point to Albert Caisse) he was riding a white fridge. I stopped to talk to him, he ask me if I wanted a beer I said sure, he opened the fridge, this was out in the lake on a boat, a handed me one, I was happy to get a cold beer, I opened it took a drink but had to spit it out because it was so warm, I thought he had the fridge plugged into a generator, boy that was funny.

(Laughs)

Q: Where were you taking the fridge?

A: I was taking the fridge to Sandy Point.

Q: You lived at Sandy Point too?

A: I use to always go there.

001:07:51

Q: How, by walking or horse?

A: You know were Leo Belanger has his cabin we use to live there we would walk along the shore, no motor back than nothing. If you were lucky canoe and paddle.

Q: Were you married?

A: No.

Q: You had a lot of girl friends tough?

A: Just 20 that's all.

(Laughs)

Q: How old were you when you with to school?

A: I was about 14.

Q: Were they mean to you?

A: The sisters were real mean.

Q: What did they teach?

A: All sorts of things we played a lot.

Q: Like what?

A: Ball things like that.

001:09:14

Q: You didn't go home often?

A: Not often, you start in September and leave in June, no holidays.

Q: Did you pray a lot?

A: We prayed lots, we could almost become priests.

(Laughs)

Albert Gardiner: We would stay in a dorm if we misbehaved we would get a beating, I was afraid for somebody to act up.

001:10:21

A: We use to get fish for lunch that didn't taste right it tasted like it was rotten, but you had to eat it.

Albert Gardiner: We weren't treated well.

Q: What if you didn't eat then what?

A: You'll starve to death if you don't eat.

Albert Gardiner: It was rotten, they kept in to long. This one time a few of us wanted something from the cooler we sneak but I ended up being lock in the cooler I got caught and got the beating of my life.

Q: So you would go home July and August?

A: yes.

Q: How would you come back in the fall?

A: We had a motor ran by battery, you had to steer by paddle, as the motor didn't tum.

Q: What would you do if the battery died?

A: It didn't die often, you can start by hand to.

001:14:04

Q: What did you do growing up?

A: I use to cut hay, as there were a lot of cattle in Sandy point. It was awfully hot while we did this. We would stack the hay shove stick under the stack, let dry than move it the next morning it was tough work. Sometimes I would fall I couldn't see the uneven ground because the stack was too high.

Q: The guy ahead wouldn't tell you?

A: No, you had look after yourself.

Q: So you would carry a big pile?

A: Not that big, you make a big pile with smaller pile. Leave it there and haul it in the winter with horses.

Q: How many cows did they have?

A: They had about 15.

Q: That was a lot back then?

A: There was about 4 or 5 horse.

Q: Did you work in Sandy Point too.

A: Yes, we helped each other. We cut hay with grass whips with 2 handles.

Albert Gardiner: The old guys were fast, no use for you to go ahead as they would catch up and knock you off the way.

Q: Every fall you did this?

A: Yes you have too, they were good the old guys. They cut the hay in a way that it remains standing so it would dry faster they were good.

Q: Who built house?

A: They did, they build them nice.

Q: How about windows and things like that?

A: They got them somewhere.

Q: They must have got them from Hudson's bay?

A: I think so or maybe the mission.

Q: What kind of house did you have?

001:19:15

A: A log cabin, it took long to build, as there was a lot of chopping to get the logs just right. Moss would be used to fill the gaps and clay to protect the moss. The clay was ice cold I would wrap cloth around my hand to keep warm.

Q: When would you build houses?

A: It would have to be in the fall, if you build in the spring or summer the clay would wash off with the rain as it wouldn't have time to dry.

Q: You would have to re-do it in the spring?

A: No it dries hard like cement.

Q: How about the roof?

A: They would use tarpaper and planks, they would wrap the inside with cardboard box and paint it.

Q: Did you consider yourself poor?

A: No I had everything I needed food to eat a place to stay.

Q: But you worked hard?

A: Yes we did, but thing were cheap a pouch of tobacco was 25 cents, papers were 5 cents.

Q: Where did you get money?

A: Selling furs, we would send them to Winnipeg and then wait for our checks. Just my dad did this I didn't.

Albert Gardiner: Our parents taught us everything, they taught us to be independent to look after our shelves.

001:23:37

Q: Did you hunt?

A: Yes I did. I tell you why people are so unhealthy today because they don't eat properly and don't exercise enough, as for us we would walk, paddle, work and eat things from the bush, we're probably in better health than most young people.

Albert Caisse: Even the cows today they drug them to grow faster, that's no fuck'en good. Even those wieners they talk about, I gave a package to my dog its better him than me.

(Laughs)

A: His dog was happy to eat a feast jumping up and down

Albert Gardiner: He's still kicking around, nothing happened to him, now I regret giving those wieners.

(Laughs)

Q: Do you know any stories of Wesackedjack?

A: No I don't.

Q: Ok I'll tell you a couple stories about him as told by an elder.

Wesackedjack was bought a truck of a white guy; the guy trained him all day to drive. Dusk settled in and Wesackedjack yelled to the guy as he was leaving, how do you drive at night, the guy answered back just follow the lights you'll be ok. So Wesackedjack jumped in turned on the lights a followed them, this is easy he thought just then he run into a tree, he followed the lights right into the ditch.

(Laughter)

A: He must off knock him self-out.

Albert Gardiner: Or give himself a nosebleed.

Q: Do you know the duck that wobbles when it walks it's because of

Wesackedjack doing. Wesackedjack came onto a lake full of ducks he was

hungry. He hid until he thought of a plan, finally he emerged from the bush carrying a bag over his shoulder. The ducks were curious they asked him, my brother what's in the bag, he answered songs to dance to but you must be blindfolded come to my hut tonight and we shall dance. The ducks arrived at his hut, he blindfolded the ducks and instructed them to dance a fire he had built, as each duck came in his reach he grabbed it and snapped its neck, the Diver Duck being a little more curious than the others, he peeked and saw what was happening he yelled out he's killing us all my brothers, just then Wesackedjack kicked him in the behind and to this day because of that he wobbles when he walks.

(Laughter)

A: Next time I see that duck I'll think of you.

001:29:09

End of Interview