

**Tape 4, Side 1: November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

**Session 3, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm**

**Brenda Macdougall** – Okay, and so we've got just a little over an hour left, and we'll wrap up the day's presentations by addressing some of the questions that came from students who were listening in the other room all day, and many of you listened to them speak. So, the first question that was posed was how do we get to the process of actually taking oral history in, inside us, making it a part of us and actually have people listen to them and respond to them, particularly inside Aboriginal community? And so I'll just open that to the floor and whoever wants to go.

**John Murdoch** – Yeah, my whole interest in what's called oral traditions comes from a part that I've played often. Like the kind of leadership or the kind of organization I'm already used to is where I've known people for a very long time. Very often the children that I teach in school, I was there before they were born and before their parents were born, and people have a sense of what each person knows and who would be a good person to go and see when you're trying to do something. And my skill, I guess, is bridging between what feel natural and comfortable out on the land in a family setting, and people being able to arrive in a more formal setting, let's say of school, and taking those feelings with them. I was teaching history in the school at home, and Ida was talking about the discrepancy between words in Cree and the words in English. First of all, you are operating within a fifty minute time period. The history program is really a translation of history as it appeared to Europeans, and it really cramps one's style. You know, the education of the history program is that the kids' ancestors were locked in a closet for ten thousand years until Henry Hudson came along and mercifully let them out. You know, that's really the beginning of the history, with Henry Hudson. And I really felt that it was my duty to destroy that sense, by, for example, there's rock paintings that are up the river that are 2,500 years old, which was about the time the movie "Gladiator" depicts. Where the Roman Empire was sort of at its peak, its greatest limit. And it was quite shocking to them that there actually was history before the arrival of white people, and then following that up with artifacts that were taken from the places where people still scoop up fish and people still hunt geese and people still hunt and trap. So

that you really undermine the stereotype that's there, that's been created by an awful lot of so-called history programs over time.

But, like, one of the words that I used to organize to avoid hearing was **(Unknown Word)**, and if you ask one of the students what does that mean in English, they'll tell you it means bored. It doesn't. **(Unknown Word)** is the word that a mother would use because a child is throwing a tantrum in the store and getting in the way of their shopping. You know **(Unknown Word)** is something that somebody would use when talking about somebody that is interrupting them while they're doing, scraping a hide, and somebody keeps coming along, bugging them, asking them questions. This kind of thing. So it's more about irrelevance and irritation, and somebody offering something that is not genuine in place of something that they sense is.

And I really decided that it's impossible in the context of a school, fifty minute periods and so on, and the proof of that is that the elders are not comfortable in those classrooms. So I started thinking in terms of, well, maybe you should accept the framework or the structure that people perceive in everyday life in Cree life as the structure that you base oral traditions on. And very quickly found out that everything falls into place. I took the terminal objectives of the Minister of Education's High School program, which now, because of other developments, it's the same right across of Canada. Junior **(Unknown Word)** and Senior **(Unknown Word)**. And instead of treating them like gospel, treat them like targets. So, for example, in natural science, or ecology it's called in Quebec, 5.1[?] is the students should appreciate the physique of three species of animals, their usual behavior, and their relationship, the ecosystem that they inhabit. And that's the, you know, if the student puts in, I think its 250 minutes of instruction and demonstrates an understanding of that, they get the credits appropriate to that, and it's pretty well the same in every province. But that's not a very natural way for an older person or a person in a student's family to think.

So what I did was I took the attitude of boy scout badges, where you don't try to get people to regurgitate understanding, you get people to demonstrate understanding. And so what I did is I put together a performance objective, where a student would be expected to snare a rabbit, skin it, be able to name all of the main organs of the rabbit, in the first language and the second language, and get some kind of an idea as to why the rabbit's heart is this proportion it is compared to say a moose or whatever. And I had no problem with the Minister of Education officials in a third language, satisfying them that any student who

could do that had certainly accomplished the understanding that they were trying to get in the terminal objectives. So, now the situation becomes instead of putting an elder into a framework that feels really weird, a fifty minute period in the school, now you give a card and at some point in the cycle, the annual cycle, the movement from one place to another in the bush, as long as the family, or the elder or somebody, makes sure that the child is able to perform. Then they can be tested at any time to assure the Minister of Education that this student deserves the three credits or however the credit system is organized for that course. So it changes the nature of bridging between what passes for history in a Euro-Canadian setting and what passes for history in the community.

And what I was doing a year ago was basically taking the whole grade eight and nine up curriculum, and we were doing it and efficiency, I mean, we had ten students who were rejects. I mean they were the students who wouldn't go to school and they were doing in ninety minutes, they were doing the equivalent of doing 200 minutes in the school. But the things they didn't like were levered against the things that they enjoyed, which is a very normal and natural way for a parent, or grandparent to think, and there was no bell going off every fifty minutes. And the **(Unknown Word)** was much more congenial and felt much more natural to the students, so it required a lot less supervision. Didn't need a hallway monitor to keep the kids in the classroom. We didn't worry about people hiding out in an outhouse. It's not as comfortable as hiding out in a washroom instead of going to school.

So it's really changed the chemistry from something that was always in the face of the students and wasn't managed very well by the students who didn't have the support of their family, and didn't have the confidence to be able to translate in order to appear confident. It put kids in a situation where there was a sense of flow to things. Things did feel normal and natural and the focus was not on, you know, sort of bowing or genuflecting to white people's notion of what history was. It was in a much more affectionate relationship with an older person, listening and behaving in such a way that suggested understanding. So that's where I would see a lot of the information that is contained in oral traditions. It has immediate relevance when you take education and put it back into a traditional flow, into a traditional situation. And then, obviously, what's being called oral tradition has its natural place. But while you have a school operating on fifty minute periods with educators who don't follow anthropology courses, who follow geography and history courses, and regularly tell the students your parents are modern day examples of my primitive ancestors. You get

this in the face kind of relationship constantly. What the school is delivering in the way of history and what's being neglected? What's the opportunities that are being missed outside the classroom?

So, my challenge is, in a roundabout way, first to establish the elders as experts in the courtroom, and with that settled, the elders are obviously experts in the classroom. I'll have less trouble with the Minister of Education qualifying and accepting the qualifications of elders because that's already been proven in a courtroom context. I'll have less problem having them accepted as experts in a classroom because of the way that white people's lawyers have already come to regard them in a courtroom. But, you know, you really need, I think, to focus more on what the oral traditions mean to Aboriginal people, much more so what fascinating differences they bear with what, you know, with what white folks know as history.

**Richard Preston** – Just as kind of a postscript to what John was saying. I think part of the answer, too, is who in these communities are we trying to interest in stories? If I tell stories to kids anywhere from grade one to maybe four or five, they're fascinated by stories, they love stories. It doesn't matter whether it's in Hamilton, or whether it's in Waskaganish, you know, or **(Unknown Place Name)**. I had an interesting experience there in Hudson. And so there is a time in peoples lives when they're ready for one kind of story or another. If I tried it with kids of maybe, I don't know twelve, thirteen, fourteen—forget it, you know. Don't want to hear it. If it's people who themselves know some stories so there can be story swapping, then that's another one altogether. But I think what it does, really, is ask us. It would be almost a separate panel discussion event, I think, to, because in some ways if we move to the level of what we are spiritually receptive to. Okay, you can't instruct that. At least, I don't know of any way to instruct that. You have to wait until the person is open and hope that there's something there, too. And so it goes all the way from engaging the imagination of little kids to almost a personally transformative kind of thing, and there is a lot in between.

And I, about a third of the stories that I got from John Blackned, are now on CDs. Twenty-six, thirty-one CDs. And if I ever get some money, well, it will be one hundred, and that will be good. But the thing is, that the guy who gave me the contract, Director General of the Cree School Board, was talking to me on the phone, and he said, "You know, I keep a

set of those in my car and when I travel I play them.” I thought, *Hey, success*. It’s like somebody telling me they read my book. I think, *Oh, wow*, you know, and I don’t know if it’s a personally transformative experience, but at least he’s engaging and that’s the step. And so I think there has to be lots of answers to your question depending on the readiness of people and the context where it’s given, what John was talking about. Context makes such a difference. Okay, it would be comparable to trying to—and I’m not proselytizing here, I’m a Quaker we don’t do that, and I’m not a literalist and so I don’t want to get into that—but if you were going to try and teach Bible to a community at large that was maybe, somehow or another, a middle class secular community, well, good luck. The question’s about the same. What you’re looking for is the roots of spiritual depth, and that has to be almost asked in terms of each individual’s life course.

**John Murdoch** – I’ll give you an example of where I’ve run into it. For fifty years, from 1950 to about 2000—well, more than 50 years, I guess. Starting off with a Selwyn Dewdney, who was an archeologist of national museums, there’s a **fore cache (Proper Terminology?)** between Lake Nemaska and the Broad Back River, where 1668 to 1672 there was a band of about eighty-five Mohawks from Kahnawake. And they established a fort, and there were a few battles, and you know. There’s been efforts to try and find that location, find that place, and they’ve drawn a blank and a blank and a blank and a blank. And, but the reason why they kept doing that was they overlooked the meaning of oral history and the stories that somebody would be telling about those. What I did on a Saturday afternoon, I flew over at about 500 feet with a little Piper **(Unknown Word/Words)** on floats. I shot a battery of pictures with a digital camera. I continued on to Nemaska, which was about another half hour away, and I sat down with the families whose hunting territories they were, and with the photographs, not maps. There’s too much information edited out of maps. You don’t get the same provocation of memory from a map that you get from a picture. And it was just bang, bang, bang, bang. You know the fort, the island, George **Teasel (Unknown Spelling)** identified that right away. The place where there were **Nadoway (Unknown Spelling)** bones. Where it was, was easily visible, but in really short order.

And again, this was over 300 years old, and with people who had been told the story and told the story and told the story. But what it came from was every time **(Unknown**

**Name) Anderson** or **(Unknown Name)** walked by that portage, somebody was bound to turn and say to somebody, that's where the **Nadoway (Unknown Spelling)** bones are. You know, and tell the story of the battle. The people who navigate throughout their hunting territory, whether it is in conversation or actually moving from one place to another, they keep, it's like books on a shelf in a library. They take the book off as they pass that place and open up and read from it. You know, so people's hunting territories, their oral traditions, navigation skills, everything, are all in a relationship. And it just happens that in legal jargon, proving land tenure, is proving that you have that knowledge. And that is the Cree criteria. You know, I was working with elders on the **(Unknown Place Name)** and people identifying hunting territories, and there was a couple of families who've taken advantage of the fact that white people have undermined the traditional land tenure system and have gone in and squatted on people's hunting territories. But everybody mocks them and ridicules them in the background. They have a good sense not to show up at a public meeting so they're certainly aware of the sanctioning part, but people know that they don't belong there because they don't know the stories. They don't know the land. They don't have all of that information. That hasn't been passed on to them because they are not legitimate tallymen[?] or the legitimate stewards of that land.

And it's the same problem with the court cases. When oral traditions are challenged in court, those things should have been learned by adolescents. They should have been learned by children, and there should be a whole population of people that knows all of those stories and are the guardians of the information, the proof of their Aboriginal title. But because the Crown has controlled the education system, and as a school principal working under Indian Affairs, it was not by accident that Aboriginal title and Aboriginal knowledge was kept out of school. It was a very clear policy on the part of the Crown, whether we're talking education, economic development, political development or whatever. They keep protracting the negotiation process so that probably in another ten years you won't have the information to assert Aboriginal title over territory. And, in fact, what I've read is that within, maybe, four generations more, there won't be people with Indian status anymore under the *Indian Act* because of some neat little twists in there. But it's kind of dumb because there will be hundreds of thousands, possibly millions of Crees, because the *James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement*, section 3, was negotiated on a very different basis than the Crown's agenda.

But oral traditions belong, where they belonged a hundred years ago, where they belonged a thousand years ago, and if the new definition of education is a community school, that's where they belong, and when people lose the meaning of the language, Sonny was saying, what's left? You end up with almost a hundred thousand people in the center of a city like Winnipeg and they've been de-cultured. They still have the same cognitive style. They still identify as communities. They still sit together, but they no longer have the cultural support of adequate personality development. They no longer have the adequate support for dreaming about the future. They no longer have any of the positive things that people normally associate with a culture, you know. And I have always felt that this notion of forced acculturation, it's stupid, it's reckless and it's never accomplished an agenda for a government. And Aboriginal people have to defend themselves against that by restoring the elders to their rightful place in relations with children and in relations with people that have to learn the knowledge to prove to whoever challenges them as the rightful owners of that land. Evidenced in the fact that they know that land intimately well. So, whether it is Selwyn Dewdney looking for a fifty year old battle site, or whether it is somebody trying to prove that that's their hunting territory different from another family's by virtue of the knowledge they've gained in using it, and the knowledge they've maintained in that use over time.

But I've read so many court cases that Aboriginal people have lost because they've been challenged by phony expert witnesses, and they don't have their own truth to respond to that challenge with. A perfect example is *R. v. Frank*, where Alexander Von **Gernet (Unknown Spelling)**, he has a Ph.D. from McGill University in archeology. He was under the supervision of Bruce Trigger, and the lawyer that was paid to fight that case did not bring in Elden Yellowhorn, who has a Ph.D. from McGill University and who accomplished that under Bruce Trigger, but who also is a Peigan Indian, who is a Blackfoot, who has a very real knowledge, as shown in his doctoral dissertation of the knowledge. And because the strategy of the court case was not reviewed in front of the community—that was not the legal counsel's style, unlike the James Bay Court Case where I remember on the community floor where the lawyers and the experts presented what they thought was the case before the court, and people laughed at them. But good thing they got a chance to laugh in the community. It didn't end up in court. And when they started talking about wandering, somebody explained nomadic, what nomadic means. They explained that in Cree and it sounded like people wandering around aimlessly, not knowing where they were going or

what they were doing. Ahh, that's wrong. That's wrong and people laughed at it. And they told the lawyers and they told the expert anthropologists what was the truth, and they provided the basis of personal knowledge of fact, which is prerequisite to expert opinion in the court. So *Quebec Canada v. Kanawat* went very well, but it was the last time the Crown got caught flatfooted, and they started bringing in their experts with the primitive Aboriginal theory and, you know, the rest is history.

But, you know, the only way I see people recovering from that, ever defending themselves from that is to use the Aboriginal means. You know, the means that people have used for thousands of years of maintaining Aboriginal title, of maintaining a presence on the land and maintaining the knowledge. I don't think you're ever going to see a Cree dragging a sled-load of books around on a trapline. It just doesn't make practical sense. On the other hand, it makes a lot of sense to treat an elder, who is certainly the equivalent of a library, with the appropriate respect. So that in a very strong and powerful and supportive atmosphere of affection, that elder opens books daily and reads from them to kids that are, they don't see it yet, but they're being entertained. I've heard stories told to children that are very small, and it's more about affection and entertainment, but I've also heard the same person ten years later, hear the same story from the same elder and they understand more from it. It means so much more to them. And I see people in their thirties and forties, organizing their lives according to the templates they've understood from those stories.

Leroy Little Bear is the man between seasons for me. He's a man that knows the land of winter and knows the land of summer equally well. So, when I'm looking for summer, when I'm looking for something that I haven't had experience with, he's the person that I start with and it still makes sense. And when I go looking for something else I'm going to look for another person between seasons. You know, there is another template that's been developed in my head from having listened and having seen people live out these stories over and over and over again. And that's the structure in my life. It's the pattern perceived, it's not the structure imposed, and hopefully people will get articulated enough to present that pattern in court. Of structure. And something of the same practical value as what structure passes for qualified people. But that's what I think myself.

**Sonny** – I think we have to keep in mind or do an assessment, I guess, of our situations, and remember that the long history of how a lot of our culture and history has been lost, you



know, through the assimilation policies of the government, residential school experiences, the various epidemics that wiped out a lot of our people. And we have to remember that the collection of the oral histories, in one sense, you know, not only is it preserving, but it's also reviving a lot of our culture and history. But at the same time, you have to keep in mind as well that the oral history is still something that's very dynamic and something that's still happening. And at the time, that you spend and go out talk to an elder and to record or to write down the notes. There's other aspects, or other parts, that are still happening that you don't realize.

I mean, for instance, you know, we rely on certain elders who know the language and are able to provide us with the perspective of our ancestors, like when they think in the language they think about how our ancestors thought of certain things, and those that are the one's that we really look at. But there are also people out there, elders out there, who refuse to sit in front of a camera or sit behind a tape recorder, or just sit there and have you sitting their writing notes. And then those same elders are still out there and they're still following, you know, the different ways of passing the oral histories down. For instance, quite often, there is this one elder I am thinking of in particular, that's from a more remote community in Chehalis and he's quite knowledgeable of the language. He doesn't want to talk to anybody. He doesn't want to be tape recorded. Doesn't appreciate people going to see him with a notepad, but if you ever attend some sort of a function there, whether it's someone who passed away or a wedding or whatever. You always see him there sitting at a table and have, like, at least half a dozen people around him and he's continuing on passing down his knowledge because all these young people range from teenagers to, to men almost as old as himself, and you know they're asking questions. And he's just telling a few stories or whatever.

And I think the other thing, too, is that we need to remember what are the traditional means of the oral history, like how do the First Nations label it? I'm not sure how others do it. I know like the **Nacatmut (Unknown Spelling)** have a similar way as the Sto:lo. And the Sto:lo have a word that we call **(Unknown Word)**. **Unknown Word (Same as Previous Word)** are the stories of the creation, and then we also have what's called **Unknown Word)**. So when we look at oral history, oral history just isn't about stories. Oral history, there are many teachings that are incorporated into that, as well. So when we look at **(Unknown Word)**, those creation stories that talk about **(Unknown Word)**, the

Transformer who traveled through the land, transforming our people into Mountains, and transforming them into resources that we use today.

There's that part of it, but then there's also the **(Unknown Word)**. Okay, and now the **(Unknown Word, Same as Previous Word)** is like the true news or the history that people talk about. So when I take people out on a tour and I share the stories about the **(Unknown Word)**, the creation stories, or else if I go to a fishing place or a hunting or a berry gathering place and I talk about the name of that place, and if there's any part of it that talks about my family like where my great-great-great-great grandfather is buried at this one location, or where my great-great grandfather fished or that to me that's the **(Unknown Word)**. Right. So that has to be talked about, as well, or people have to understand the different ways of how oral history is passed on. And then, also, to remember that oral history to us, it is quite important in the past because that's how all our rights and privileges are passed down and we still practice that. When we have a name giving ceremony or any kind of ceremony like that, people are still called as witnesses, and those witnesses still have a role to play within their society, a responsibility that they need to pass that information on to other people, and twenty years down the road they need to stand up and say what they have witnessed if somebody comes to question what they had witnessed at, you know, twenty years ago. So you need to remember that those sort of dynamics are always happening, as well.

Just one more thing, too. I think, like, how do we bring it back to the community. I think there's a certain sense of pride that we need to remember to try and instill into the young people, and the way to do that is, I think, you know, not only teaching them about **(Unknown Words)**, those different ways that oral history is passed down, but also letting them know the importance of it and how it makes us unique. I know over the years some of my younger relatives and cousins that I've spent a lot of time talking with them and finding that it brings up their—like, I've seen young guys who, just, younger people a few years younger than me who were mixed up with their own lives and having a lot of their own problems. And then I took them out, a couple of them out to different places and shared some of their history with them and shared some of our common history about some of our ancestors and shared some of these stories. And I've seen a big change in how they reacted to it. And then, you know, a few years down the road, they start doing their own thing. And then sometimes they come up to me and say, "Gee, remember that time when you took me

out, that was, just made a big change in my whole life and I'm just really proud of who I am now and that's why I've tried to carry myself the way that I do now and you know, I did a big change."

And I think that's part of it, as well, to instill that pride into them, recognizing the unique history that they have. You know at the same time that we're doing the cross-cultural awareness to try to make non-Native people aware of the relationship to our land we have, to do that with our young people, to instill that pride to know that they are unique. Because there was a time period where our elders didn't want to pass down the oral histories to us, or they felt reluctant to do that because they thought that in order for us to succeed in the non-Native world, that we needed to become educated in a non-Native world. But at the same time, they were leaving out all the important aspects of our culture and our history. So, now we needed to take that and return it back within any media that we can, whether it's a book or spending the time just passing the oral history. I know that every opportunity that I have, that's what I do.

If I get the audience, just the other night, you know, we were out playing volleyball, and after we finished volleyball we ended up in a restaurant—my wife, my brother-in-law and my sister-in-law, and then my two sons. My two nephews showed up, and one of them asked a question about a certain part of our history, and right away I just jumped on it, like, that's how the elders are right. I mean, if you go and ask them questions, they're ready to tell you, and you have to be there and prepare to show that you're interested and that they're actually going to contribute to your knowledge. And so that's what I felt like when he asked, then right away, then I just gave him as much thing, you know, talked to him for, like, over half an hour. Just talking to him about some of his family history and what he could talk about when people ask him about certain stories or certain things about his history, and he had never known, you know. Like one of the things I told him, his great-great-great grandmother was the only women in Sto:lo territory that caught a sturgeon with her bare hands, and I asked him if he knew that story and he didn't know it. And I shared that with him. And then, so, through that I shared a bunch of other stories about the relationship we have with sturgeon. How the sturgeon is important to our community, you know, through the different **(Unknown Word)**.

And so any opportunity like that, then that's what I do. I just jump at the opportunity, and if I have a captive ear then I'm going to continue passing that on. And

same with any of the books that we've produced, any publications. I think people need to know that there's a lot of things happening out there with the oral history, and that to just try and instill some interest in them by reading the book and saying you should go out to your elders, and because the way we've presented books, the books that we have, we know that its just one snapshot. Like the atlas that we have there, we know that it can be built upon.

And that's the other lesson that I learned from the academic, is that whenever you put something in writing your challenging other people, or putting it out there so that other people can challenge what you've written down. And, you know, that's something that Keith and I do as well, is challenging each other on some of the different things, and it forces us to look deeper into certain subject areas. And I think, then, you know, that's what we did when we published our books. We put it out there and people can challenge it. And sure enough, the community members that are out there reading it, and I get all kinds of feedback, where people come back to me and tell me, "Hey, how come you didn't put in this site in the map," you know. So people are coming, and, you know, informing more to it. So people are out there are reading it and understanding it and realizing the importance of it. So any chance we have, like, that we should be doing that, whether it's a video a book or whatever.

**Maria Campbell** – I think one of the things, that, I think that this was Hillary's question. That, you know, Sonny said its really important, our generation, those, nobody wanted to tell those stories too much. And so there was a lot of shame for us really early, at least when I think about myself. By the time I started school I didn't, you know, I learned my lesson after repeating some of the stories a couple of times, and so you don't want to talk about them or you don't want to listen, and those stories were competing with what I was reading in the school library.

But I think today it's different. I think it's been different for probably, for me I think its been about twenty-five years that I've seen the difference for people. When I talked earlier about going into the communities in the late 60's and doing workshops and we did storytelling, a kind of storytelling workshops. The look on people's faces were like the look on your face this afternoon when she told you about the stitches. There's a real, what would you call that? I don't know. Some people's demeanor changes, and, like Sonny said, if you grab that opportunity and tell that story immediately, you know, share a story then, you have

that. I work in theatre with our youth and I have never had any problems getting youths to listen to stories. In fact, you could be telling stories all day long, and they'd still be there waiting for you to wake up and tell them some more. I think that the time is, you know, when I think about the teachers and old people that I've worked with who always said that, you know, that our history is kind of in cycles, and that the time, at least they told me this when I was in my late teens, early twenties, that the time is here and you, you know, it's almost like Wesakejack is back now. He hasn't shown himself totally, but he's there, hanging around the fringes, and he's just waiting for his story to be told. And as soon as that happens, like in the case for you this morning with the stitches and the bag, is that he comes to life immediately at the same time that the listener comes to life, and there's an explosion. I don't know what you call it in English, but there's something that happens and it takes over.

So I think that it's all of us, you know, and instilling that in the young people that we work with. Making that little, you know, jack them to life and kind of life blowing it. Giving it. And you feel it all over. You know, I'm leaving this early next week for Penticton. There's, they're talking about the same thing at the **(Unknown Name)**. So I mean it's in the last five or six years, there's people gathering all over and there's all kinds of different names, but it all ends up in storytelling and talking about, you know, not just where twenty years ago we just talked about, you know the Creation stories of the **(Unknown Name)**. But today we're talking about stories about the land, the hill that, you know, that Wesakejack slid down and left his, you know, his imprint on it, or beside the river where Granny Elizabeth had her baby or. All of those stories are really important, so it just seems like they get bigger and bigger. I think that the real fear for me, sometime, and I shouldn't be because it always, it always, you know, something shows me that I shouldn't be afraid, but I think there's not enough of us telling stories. We need to be out there just cooking. I'll stand on the corner and tell you a story.

**Unknown** – Soapbox grannies.

**Maria Campbell** – I mean, you were very quick to share that story today. Because it did something for you and it's, you know. So there were all these young people that felt its life that you breathed into it when you repeated it. So I think that's kind of like what you were talking about when you were talking about, you know, Ida talking about living culture, living

the life, and you with, you know, it's not just, it's not just making maps. Like I made maps with my father and I got really emotional when Richard was talking, when he talked about the old man putting his hand on the page. You know my dad did fifteen maps with the old men in our community, and this was years ago. And they couldn't read and write, so I figured out that if I got this plastic and put it on our table cloth, on my dad's table cloth, and then when the old men were sitting around, having tea, they would draw a map for me. And then they would make marks, and then when I came they would tell me what these marks were, and so they would tell these stories. And then the first time that the stories were written down and I was reading to them, and the feeling that they had that those stories were, you know, whatever happens to the stories. I don't know what'll happen to them, but by putting their hands on them they were, they were witnessing or they were passing something over, you know. Which, you know, is for me the responsibility that we were talking about, I think, this morning. I'm sure that when that old man did that for you, he passed over responsibility to you, and because when I think of that I think, you know, that's the protocols that you can, you know, how do you describe those kinds of things? Anyway.

**Unknown** – I just wanted to allude to what Sonny was also saying and Maria, my brother, my sister, my relatives in some way, with a different bloodline. But it's always been my understanding from oral history and the teachings that we get through oral interpretation is each individual is unique and that how we conceptualize that information that is given to us. We make that into our own interpretation. Our own understanding of it. Where it becomes real for us. I'd have to go back and tell a story about my Grandpa again. When I was about six or seven my grandfather gathered up all the little kids and we went on a canoe trip to go look at the historical sites in our community and the Wesakejack's footprints on the rock and the rock canoe and the rock chair, and the stories and meanings behind that. And because I was young at the time, and I didn't understand what was going on, but he was talking to us. But for me, I wouldn't sit still in the canoe, and, you know, I wasn't supposed to move around much in the canoe, and, of course, me, I wouldn't sit still. And so, from that day my grandfather gave me a name, which is **Machoose (Unknown Spelling)**. It means, a bug with little, fast little bugs that swim around like. And for me, because I really haven't, like I hear the stories from different elders, but during that time I was given that teaching. The context of it all or the realness of it all didn't mean anything to me because I couldn't

pay attention to my grandfather then. So, when I hear that name **Machoose (Unknown Spelling)**, it reminds me of that time of when I didn't listen. So. And I wish sometimes that I could go back to that time, to have listened, but that's something that was, I guess, it was not meant for me. But I got a name out of it, and you know it reminds me of that. So.

**Tape 4, Side 2: November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

**Session 3, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm**

**Unknown** – ... are, even the young ones, there's are a lot of young people that have a lot of knowledge, to speak before their time. And because of their, the teachings and their upbringing that they got, that they're able to pass down information that they need to pass down. But it's up to that individual on how they can interpret that or how can they understand it, or how can they make it real for them. So that's how you would take it back to the community, going back to what Sonny and Maria are saying is. And also what, I can't see your name, him, was saying, that we have to continue with our teachings that way because I think we sometimes get lost when it comes to material reading. We sometimes get lost into the research of it, that we want to make it more personal for ourselves, or we want to learn more about that person instead of the information that is provided because of the relationship. Going back to the relationship that we establish when it's being taught to us in an oral tradition and in an oral way, or in a communicating way or even social interaction that's oral. So. Just that alone. That's what the difference is between learning from material and learning from people. That's my understanding. Thank you.

**Maria Campbell** – I just want to go back to that story of the stitches, you know. Stories always, they grow, or you grow, and I heard that story often when I was young because I took stitches like that frog, and my grandma used to always tell me that I would never get a husband. And I guess she was right because they never stuck around. But I, when you were telling her that story this morning, you know, I don't like mice. I've had trouble with mice all of my life, and when you grow up in the country, especially the part of country where I come from, there's lots of mice in your, it's a constant job to keep them out. And then a few years ago I had dreams about mice, and they were important dreams, and then a few years later there were other things that happened that had to do with mice. And so I had to come to

some kind of recognition with mice and realize that they were very important in my life. And, to make a long story short, when you told her that story this morning about the mice, I thought, *Oh my god, it's taken me all these years to figure out what my grandmother was telling me.*

**Unknown** – Well, they say it's a life long learning process. I mean here's something.

**Maria Campbell** – We need to hear the story over and over again, and every time you hear it there is something else in. So now I understand better what the south door is all about.

**John Murdoch** – Another story I found about were syllabics, how it got started. Especially after having read so often that Algonquin Cree people are pre-literate. It's certainly not true. In the space of one winter, it went from nobody reading and writing to everybody that was able to see, and everybody above three or four years of age was able to read and write. And it was accomplished by one person teaching another at the end of a very tiring day. It was, you know, you talk to any of the people that learn to read and write in Cree before, let's say 1970, and sit down because there's a story. It's about a relationship with somebody very special, and that person having a very clear sense of exactly when to pick the time to teach what. And the big question among the researchers was: was it a white man or was it a Cree that invented it? And it's kind of, to me its kind of a dumb question, because there's a lot of, the same white person that they say invented it also he invented the tin canoe. And he got laughed at for that one. He was using the tin lining of tea chests and put it together and made a canoe, but he had to stop on the shore and solder his canoe so many times between North Factory and Cross Lake, Norway House, that that wasn't one of his better ideas. But when I got deeper into his diaries and his letters—and he died of exhaustion at the age of forty-six. He accidentally shot his guide two years after he started printing material in syllabics, and he was never mentally the same after that.

But the people from Cross Lake, Norway House, they met people from North Factory and Fort Severyn, and in both directions during the winter, and one family would teach another family. And in the space of one year it spread from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean that way. There was a Father (**Unknown Name**), Andre Marie (**Unknown Name, Same as Previous Name**), with the Oblates and he passed through present day Cochrane, Ontario, on the Ontario-Quebec border, and reported to his superior



that all of the old and feeble and the very young could read and write in syllabics. So, to me, when I see this sort of thing going on, I don't think it's a question of Aboriginal people not having traditions of science and knowledge and so on. It's, the traditions were not recognized.

You know, even the notion of science. I remember my late father-in-law, before the court case. They had two biologists come up, and my late father-in-law, who had lived with the beaver when they almost died out, and they had to keep them alive. They lived with them in the tent, slept with them, they had to do everything to keep them alive, to move them to areas where they were trying to bring the beaver back, and these two biologists sat down with my younger brother-in-law translating. He went on without repeating himself for two and a half hours, and suddenly they didn't have any questions anymore. They left fairly soon after. But I had talked to them before, and they thought they were going to really impress my father-in-law and, you know, they went away with information that I don't know how they would be able to verify because they're not prepared to eat beaver, they're not prepared to hunt beaver, they're not prepared to live with beaver, you know. So, they really wouldn't have the experience to gain that knowledge. And I really think that what the message that I'm getting is that people need to find innovative ways of returning those lessons, returning those experiences.

And the one that I've been using more and more on Aboriginal title research is with a mini-DV camera. Creating a DVD journey up a river, because with DVD you can put eight, nine different soundtracks in. So if you can preserve peoples memories of all the features along that river and then put them onto a DVD and make it available. It's possible for an elder, even though they're not physically, not able to walk around anymore, they can take that trip again with a grandson or somebody very precious to them. And if those sounds, if their narration of what a person is seeing is making, that trip can be recorded for all time. You'll get something much richer than a tape recorder or much richer than a printed book. And hearing the person's voice in your ear and seeing the trip that they're talking about, I think using that kind of technology to reproduce the journey that was made for hundreds of thousands of years. I see a good use for technology that way. But if it's to get around or to cut out the necessity of having an older person, somebody with an emotional engagement with what's being talked about, then I don't find that so interesting.

Even with the students, I found that there were students who were supposedly unmotivated, but they were willing to walk 1400 kilometres on a walk for raising money for a dialysis machine for diabetes. So let's get our stories straight. If these people are unmotivated, then how do you account for them being willing to walk 1400 kilometres? Maybe the truth is closer to what they're being served up as history, and science is not that motivating, and their reaction indicates that. Because when they have a precious reasons of their own, gee, if you could get somebody to walk 1400 miles for his grade eight history program, he'd score pretty high.

**Brenda Macdougall** – Keith, you had a comment.

**Keith Carlson** – Um yeah, I was just thinking about, you know, how do we get stories back into the community, get them listening to them again. And it's an interesting question, and I think my answer's informed a lot by what Ida had said earlier today. The idea that—I might not be doing justice to your idea, but what I heard anyway—that we have to get away from this idea of healing all the time. The idea that Native people need healing, Native communities need healing, are in need of healing, that's what being Native is all about. There is an interesting study recently that talks about this dilemma that some folk singers and people who carry on folk tales in Ireland feel today, because Ireland has gone from a country that for 300 years has been oppressed and impoverished and whatnot, and now under the EU, in the last ten years they've had this roaring economy. People are wealthy, they are doing well and all the folk songs about being the downtrodden poor Irish men don't apply anymore. And people are saying, "What about our culture, is it gone?" Can we only be Irish if we are unhappy and oppressed? And I worry sometimes that some people, non-Natives, are thinking that you can only be Indian if you're on a healing journey, that you're in need of healing. Part of the answer, I think, for me, a concern that comes up with me, you know, when you hear students and others talking, it's informed by the idea, similar ideas that, say, [Franz] Boaz as an anthropologist had 100 years ago, that Aboriginal cultures are vanishing. That they need to be preserved, and if we don't do it now, you know, Boaz was saying, this is the last generation of old people who know these things, right? And then **Sapere (Unknown Spelling)**, this is the last generation, and Genese, and today, you know, this is the last generation of people who know these things and, of course, wonderfully, it isn't.

Long after I've grown old, I hope, and died, there will be Aboriginal people telling stories. These stories, and new ones.

I was reminded of an article I was reading that I found once I got through the vocabulary. Very dense kind of thing, and I wish the person could write in words that I could digest without using a dictionary. But she was talking about Aboriginal people out in Oceania. Micronesian people. And she was saying that the amazing thing isn't that Aboriginal people in a global world, where imperial forces of neo-colonialism and an old fashioned colonialism was working. The amazing thing isn't that they've survived, although that in itself is amazing, but what she found amazing was that they've constantly found new ways to be different. And to be Aboriginal is to continue to have that special relationship with the land, and to know, especially in a North American context, that your ancestors were the first people here and that others need to come in and be receptive of the fact that we're on someone else's property. When I ask my students, "Who here's a beneficiary of Treaty 6," you see the Native students in the class very sheepishly, "Well, why would he ask me that? Put my hand up." And it's all the white people, here, right, because if it wasn't for Treaty 6, you wouldn't be allowed to have that house, because you would be squatting. The Treaty, at least, gets the process going. Where, and now if it's not being lived up to, there's problems, but as a non-Native you're benefiting from that Treaty. If every Aboriginal person in Canada was on average twenty percent wealthier than the average Canadian, boy, that would really bother all the Alliance party members or whatever they're called this week. Right, the idea that, this idea that these Indians are wealthy. They shouldn't be wealthy. One law for all Canadians. If they want to keep their quaint stories, that's fine. But I see the way stories are shared in the communities. They're thriving in some ways. Yes, they're struggling, but they're also thriving. And new stories are coming up.

One of the projects Sonny's been talking about doing is English Sto:lo place names. Place names that come out of people of the generation or two ahead of him who as a result of residential school and other things don't speak English. There are only about six people in Sonny's community who speak **(Unknown Word)**. It's, in your Cree community it's so privileged to have that language thriving that way. But people continue to see the world in a Sto:lo way, even if they're speaking English and they have English place names. The place that such and such happened, and it's in English. And it's building on a tradition of ancient Sto:lo place names. And it's adding to it even if the language is different. And they're storied

still, right, the stories get life breathed back into them. So, I just thought your idea about it's not healing, it's something else. It's living. Living in a balanced way, a healthy way, whatever it might be. Rather inspiring. I like that.

**Sonny** – That reminded me of a couple other teachings that I always keep in mind when collecting the oral histories or thinking about how to share them. And, not necessarily of Sto:lo origin, but actually a fellow—Keith probably remembers this—a non-Native fellow who worked for the Fort Langley National Historic Site that, one time we were talking about a potential employee there. And he talked about, the neat term he coined was that “each of us are all on our own stage of personal self-discovery.”

**Keith Carlson** – Journey of self-discovery.

**Sonny** – Yeah, our own journey of self-discovery. You know, and I thought that this was really a neat thing to say because we all are right. And I think you look around to whether you are a young person or an older person, and that there's are a lot of things about our past and our culture that we still have to learn, you know, different phases. Some people may not have picked up some things, and some people may have other things as well. So I always keep that in mind. Plus, the other thing, too, the other thing that I always keep in mind is one of our artists, Stan Green, was told by one of the elders that our culture and our history and our traditions is out there, and that it's up to us to grab it, grasp it, and hold it and bring it back. The jacket I wear over there actually is trying to say that. The design on the jacket. And he says that the elders told him that our culture and history is out there. It's very strong, but it's too much for us because of all the different experiences that we've had that we can't grab it and take it all back. If we took it all back, we'd be just too much in this, over burden on us I guess. So he said that we need to grab our culture little by little. Take little parts of it from here and there, and each time we grab a bit of our culture it makes us stronger and it prepares us to grab other parts of it. And I think when you look at how we learn things, that's what it is, and we learn certain things. Certain knowledge gives you, empowers you, and makes you able to accept other things. Or opens your eyes to understand other things. I know there's like some, there's a book that we have, *The Chilliwack and Their Neighbors*, that I must have read a dozen times, and each time I read it again there is always something new in

there that I pick up, because there are things that the elders talk about that I've never understood before and I didn't know anything about it. And so you know how your brain just kind of goes past that, and then sometimes you learn something about it and you go back to that same book, and read what an elder had said to a certain question. And all of a sudden, wow, it makes sense, you know. So they're always constantly learning like that.

**Cheryl Troupe** – Alright, I think that's a pretty good place to stop for today. We're just about out of time.

**Brenda Macdougall** – We'll start with the next question tomorrow as the launch off, maybe.

**Unknown** – It's a wrap.