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Betty Paulsen

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THE OTTOWA EXPERIENCE: THE LIFE OF IASSAC BATTICE IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS TRIBE

By
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B.S., Grand Valley State College, 1971

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA 1976

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ABSTRACT

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The primary purpose of this study was to explore basic sources of cultural disruption and the long-term effect of forced acculturation of a specific member of a group that was involved in an intensive acculturative situation.

The life history of Iassac Battice, an Ottowa Indian, from Hart, Michigan, is presented with fundamental emphasis given to familial enculturation and formal education in government boarding schools.

The dialogue was taken directly from interviews and conversations taped during the summers of 1970 and 1972 and from numerous correspondences with Iassac.

The basic methodology utilized was informal interviewing. Direct questioning in the form of open-ended interview situations were used to fill in gaps in the information and to elicit data that might not have been part of the informal discussions.

In addition to the life history materials, ethnohistoric as well as secondary sources of documentation were used in the introductory ethnographic data presented on the Ottowa people. Since no ethnography or other succinct ethnohistoric statement is currently available on the Ottowa, the brief introduction presented an historical perspective necessary to set the stage for the life history.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Appreciation is expressed to the members of my committee for their patience and help.

I would like to give a special thanks to my committee chairman, Dr. Frank Bessac, whose active and critical interest led to the completion of this thesis. Further, for his continuous support, advice and encouragement, I am sincerely grateful.

I am also immeasurably indebted to Iassac Battice who gave freely of his time and without whose cooperation this study could not have been possible.
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"You can bend the young tree but you cannot the old oak"

Chief Cobmoosa

(Royal, p. 12)
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study is offered in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's Degree at the University of Montana.

Its major concern is a chronicle of the early life of Issac Battice, an Ottowa man. Some brief background materials will introduce the tribe, the area, and government boarding schools.

I had been hoping to be able to make some very definite statements about the socio-political organization of the Ottowa prior to contact, in answer to questions from friends and from a personal need to establish my own ideal fantasy—that of a time and place when the Ottowa lived a peaceful, settled life. As with all idealisms, the fantasy ended with research and I have found the Ottowa, at contact, in a transitional state. Their very survival as individuals and as a people depended upon their ability to adapt to a rapidly changing situation. The fur trade, Iroquois wars, and consequent migrations during this time placed the Ottowa in an era of intense cultural stress.

It was also very difficult to find accurate statements about pre-contact social structure simply because the
data preserved was written by people concerned with their own needs as missionaries, fur traders, or government officials, and not by anthropologists interested in social structure. It is important to note here that early sources, however valuable, must be used critically, keeping in mind that they were written by a particular person steeped in the culture of his time and place. He was viewing a totally alien people who were not only of a different race, but had totally different life ways, values, and goals from theirs. They were written by a people who were using these "savages" to meet their own purposes--be it that of saving souls or securing a profit in furs.

In any reconstruction, limited to data gleaned from such sources, we are, of necessity, bound to supposition or hypotheses of probable structural organization based on currently acceptable ethnohistoric methodology. Such an extensive undertaking is too far-ranging for this study and since Kinietz (1940) has already put together an excellent summary and critique of the major, early documents, I will here briefly describe only those areas that I feel relevant to setting the scene for the life history.

The life history data will be a dialogue taken directly from taped conversations with Iassac that were recorded during the summers of 1970 and 1972. As an undergraduate at Grand Valley State College in Michigan in 1970, I accompanied instructor Roger Tro, who began the interviews with Iassac. During the summer of 1972, as a
graduate student at the University of Montana, I completed the fieldwork with Iassac that I felt necessary to present a chronology of his life. My graduate work has been financed by a Ford Foundation Doctoral Fellowship for American Indians.

The decision to try to publish Iassac's life story was a very difficult one to make. The need to protect the privacy of an elder of my tribe was, for a time, an overwhelming one. After a great deal of soul-searching, I decided to put the conversations to paper and try to publish them. I found the answer to my uncertainties in Iassac's own words.

In the days spent with Iassac he said so many times how important it is to him that we preserve what we can yet salvage of our culture so all Ottowa left can share in it. I remember how he often expressed the desire to write an Ottowa dictionary—written in such a way that the young people who do not speak Ottowa could learn the language of their people. He stressed the need of education for Indian people. Yet, he believes that the education they receive must be an accommodation, a blending of the best of both worlds in a way that the young ones are not torn from the nest of love and caring; so that they are not deprived of their birthright; so that they, too, may experience—without shame—the beauty and joy of being an Indian.
Iassac's life is the story of thousands of Indian men and women whose childhood and youth were spent virtually imprisoned in parochial and government boarding schools, to be "educated" in the white culture, scourged of their Indianness, and then tossed out into the world without the benefit of a secure toehold in either culture.

Too many publications are based on those lucky few who either ran away or somehow survived without the "benefit" of a government education. The not-so-lucky ones endured the painful cathartic of "education" and have lived happy and fulfilled lives. But, the scars are there, and they run deep. We will look at them here.

We will view especially at Iassac's boarding school days. Elders today vividly remember these schools, which have not changed much over the years. In many cases, now and in Iassac's time, children are and were forcibly taken from their parents and sent to distant schools, often to see their parents only once a year, and, all too often, even less.

Perhaps this account of one member of the elder generation will effectively portray the sadness and deprivation of the childhood and youth of so many others. Perhaps it may serve to educate those whose apathy or ignorance of such circumstances continues to perpetuate the dehumanizing process of institutionalized "Indian education."
This process, and its results, exists and will continue to exist until we, as a people, become totally involved in the education of our children. We must actively accept the responsibilities inherent in the educational process. We must no longer, either through lack of choice or through lack of caring, allow this process to continue.
CHAPTER II

NISHNABE

The Ottowa people of the United States, now principally located in Michigan and in Ohio, are a relatively small Algonkian tribe which consisted of villages located on the north and south shores of Georgian Bay, on Mackinaw Island, Manitoulin Island, Thunder Bay, and Saginaw Bay (Blair, 1911: 149, 281). The initial contact was made by the French explorer Champlain in 1615, or it may have been as early as 1534 with Cartier, but was negligible until after 1660, which marked the beginnings of direct trade west of Lake Huron (Kinietz, 1940: v).

This historical synopsis of the Ottowa people covers nearly 400 years. Since initial contact, the influx of peoples into the areas was from three different European powers between the reign of the beaver and the era of reservation life. The British supplanted the French in 1760 and they were, in turn, replaced by the Americans in 1796.

Even without direct contact, the lifeway of the Ottowa was already affected by European trade. The Huron who were actively involved in the fur trade introduced

\footnote{Nishnabe: Ottowa term for themselves}
European goods into the Ottowa culture in exchange for furs. The Ottowa bought furs from other distant tribes and sold them to the Huron in return for tradegoods, corn, and fish (Peckman, 1947: 2). The name itself, Ottowa, means traders, deriving from their status as middlemen in the trade. The name was given to numerous Upper Algonkian tribes who came down to the French colonies to trade. The Ottowa had claimed ownership of the Ottowa River, one of the main trade routes. Hence, numerous tribes descended the river under the general name, Ottowa (Kenton, 1927: 168, 194).

Intertribal warfare had taken a heavy toll in disruption of cultures in this region prior to and during the era of initial contact. The Iroquois, finding their forests denuded of fur-bearing animals, looked passionately at the Huron's prosperity due to the trade. Though fewer in number, the Iroquois made successful assaults on the Huron and neighboring Algonkian peoples, resulting in a "domino effect" (Malouf, 1972) pushing them to the west of Lake Michigan.

The early French sources of data reflect a time of intense cultural stress. The Ottowa were in a state of dislocation due to continual incursions of the Iroquois, forcing them to leave Georgian Bay for the Great Lakes, Wisconsin, and as far south as Louisiana. Hostilities with the Sioux forced their northward migration to Lake Superior and later back to Michigan (Blair, 1911: 159-173;
Thwaites, 1912, Vol. 16: 70). The descriptions and characteristics can be acceptable only as accounts of a relocated people who are attempting to reestablish their culture while accommodating in varying degrees to Christianity and to a wholesale acceptance of fur trade as a way of life.

Under the circumstances of the migrations and the paucity of relevant data, it is difficult to definitely establish the number or the size of original tribes or the extent of the sociopolitical organization prior to the Iroquois wars. With the available data, however, it is possible to hypothesize that certain institutions which persisted to more recent times, may have existed in approximately similar forms before contact, keeping in mind the rapidity of diffusion, the wide contacts during the migrations, and the different environments experienced. The discrepancy between the official policy of successive powers and their actual application is an additional, crucial factor in any critical reconstruction of the Ottowa culture.

Ottowa society, precontact and during initial contact, is characterized here with more emphasis given to the fur trade era through the reservation period, especially to the specific events that affected the structure of Ottowa society prefiguring Iassac's life experience.
Village Life

The Ottowa originally lived in longhouses like the Huron with similarly fortified stockades (Fitting, 1970: 196). Perrot described a triple palisaded fort built by the Ottowa. Small oval shaped dwellings were constructed during the hunt. They were a semi-sedentary people (Kinetz, 1940: 236) who occupied large villages for several seasons (Fitting, 1970: 196). The women and old men practiced a digging stick agriculture, the principal cultigens being corn, peas, beans, squash, melons, and pumpkins (Kinetz, 1940: 237; Fitting, 1970: 196). The inhabitants of the villages were principally women who were quite successful agriculturalists. There are accounts of surplus corn being traded to the Chippewa and to other tribes when the Ottowa acted as middlemen in the fur trade with the Huron.

The men traveled as far as 75 to 100 miles away from the villages in search of game and pelts. The villages were occupied according to soil fertility and the hunting areas seem to have also had some regular patterning (Kinetz, 1940: 237; Fitting, 1970: 196).

Among many North American tribes, a village or residential group is typically composed of members who may belong to one or more cross-cutting agnatic or uterine clans. In much of the available literature, these ethnic groups are very often called clans. The definition of a clan is problematic and far beyond the scope of this
study, hence the groups mentioned here as clans are cited as such by original sources and are not necessarily clans by current anthropological standards. The tribal divisions described as "Ottowa nations" probably represent both residential groups and clans.

A 1734 census listed two divisions as the principal tribal divisions: Kiskakon or Bear Clan and the Sinago or Squirrel Clan (Thwaites, 1896, Vol. 17: 245). In other descriptions of tribal divisions or groups cited as clans as few as two (1896: Passim) to as many as thirty nine clans (Michelson, 1911: 38) were mentioned. The four or five tribal divisions noted more frequently were the Kisakon, Sinago, Sable, Nassoukueton, and Keinouche (Blair, 1911: 282). The Kiskakon (bear), Sinago (squirrel), Keinouche (pike or pickerel) could have been clans. The Sable and Nassuakueton are most likely locative names of residential groups made up of composite bands agglomerated during or after flight from the Iroquois.

Clan membership often provides the fiber or network of social relationships upon which much of the socio-political organization is based. Roles and status are provided or ascribed by clan membership or may be individually achieved. The values and norms of behavior are part of the enculturation process of every member of a society. In villages of several hundred residents, life would have been chaotic without some semblance of institutionalized order. The early observers mentioned the clans, the
chiefs, the councils, and the societies, but they were apparently not aware that inherent in these institutions there were the intragovernmental processes of the people.

The Ottowa clans were described as matrilineal (Blair, 1911: 68, 140; Lahontan, 1905: 457) possibly with matri-patrilocal residence (Lahontan, 1905: 457; Blair, 1911: 68). Marriages were secured with acceptable members of another clan and often by the young people themselves (Thwaites, 1896: 251). Monogamous unions were the ideal (Blair, 1911: 64), however, polygamy was readily apparent (Blair, 1911: 68; Thwaites, 1896, Vol. 16: 23, 84). Sororate and Levirate marriages were also observed (Lahontan, 1905: 457).

Ottowa people were allowed a freedom of mind and body unknown to and little understood or appreciated by the French. Personal independence was a greatly valued norm not only at the individual level, but by each family, village, or tribe. It is perhaps this individuality that led the observer to believe that there was, in effect, no government among these people (Blair, 1911: 145). Had the French understood relative cultural systems, they would also have noted the severe restrictions imposed by religion, fasting, behavioral observances with regard to kinship, status, the seasons, menstrual taboos, etc., that also structured Ottowa society.

Power of the Ottowa chiefs was limited to their personal charisma, and the respect earned through demonstrated
ability in the hunt, in war, as orators, or through knowledge of spiritual powers. The council considered problems of concern to the whole village, i.e., waging war, planning and executing the hunt, punishment of theft, blood vengeance, etc. (Blair, 1911: 145).

Little information is given of specific women's societies, except for one trader's account of the "Ickouene Kiouffa" (French derivation of Ottowa i.e. Hunting Women). These women caused the Jesuits "much grief and to wit (they) uttered many remonstrances." These women refused to follow the usual marriage and family patterns, preferring the hunt to marriage and the dull life in the villages during the winter. "The women usually tell the Good Fathers in a deriding way that if their threats be well grounded, the Mountains of the other world must consist of the Ashes of Souls" (Lahontan, 1905: 464).

Members of institutionalized medicine societies were respected and feared. In times of illness, they applied their knowledge of curative herbs and invoked spiritual powers to restore health. The medicine man would ascertain the cause of the illness and, often in consultation with his attendants, would prescribe a remedy (Thwaites, 1896: 51-54).

Prior to Christian influence, the ceremonial life and spiritual leadership of a village were functions of elders or priests. It is no surprise to find the medicine men extremely hostile to the Jesuits (Thwaites, 1896, Vol.
who were attempting to quash all native religious beliefs and practices and replace them with Christianity.

Jesuits were not only hated but feared. Baptism was believed to cause the death of children, and indeed, illnesses may well have been introduced, even inadvertently, by the Jesuits. Wherever whites encountered Indians, entire populations were decimated by diseases to which they had no natural resistance.

The Jesuits found the Ottowa a difficult people to Christianize. Their greatest obstacle was the attachment or "addiction to idolatry, superstitions, legends, polygamy, personal manitous or "medicine"--a devotion inculcated from earliest infancy in both boys and girls" (Thwaites, 1896: 64, 167, 205).

Yet, the people held fast to their religious beliefs and ceremonies. In culture change, concrete cultural elements may change rapidly while belief and value systems are maintained, thereby retaining relative stability within the group.

Migrations

The Iroquois relentlessly and successfully assaulted neighboring tribes, including many Ottowa groups. Finding themselves seriously outmaneuvered, the Huron, the Ottowa, and other Algonkian tribes were pushed westward.

In 1650-51 the Ottowa of Saginaw Bay, Thunder Bay, Manitoulin and Mackinaw Islands fled to the area of Green
Bay. They occupied Huron Island (now Pottawatomi Island) until 1653, and the former home of the Pottawatomi. Learning of an impending Iroquois assault, they migrated into what is now Wisconsin and northwest Michigan. They constructed a fort, cleared the land for corn, and stayed there some two to three years in constant watch for the enemy.

The Iroquois invaders included many Huron captives, many of whom were related to people in the fort through mothers who had survived desolated villages, had been taken captives, and incorporated into Iroquois tribes. Because of this, and a food shortage, the Iroquois deliberated with the Huron and Ottowa in the fort. The ensuing peace freed the captive Hurons who were reunited with their families.

In 1656 the "Ottowa descended in a body to Three Rivers" where they were assigned missionaries and five Frenchmen to accompany the missionaries. Father Garreau went to the Hurons and Father Dreuillette to the Ottowa. These groups of people included Saulteurs (Chippewa), Huron, and Ottowa. They built a fort on the Lake of Two Mountains, located at the expansion of the Ottowa River where it empties into the St. Lawrence.

Father Garreau allowed the main body of Ottowa and Chippewa to go ahead to the Great Lakes since they were better canoemen than the Huron. Iroquois, who were then at peace with the French, ambushed the people left behind,
killing many and taking many captives. Father Garreau's body was taken to Montreal. Here the Iroquois tortured the captives—without opposition from the French.

The Huron and Ottowa never forgot how the French had abandoned them to their enemies. On this and other occasions, they "pretend to be our devoted friends . . . in revenge the Ottowan's have since then sought every opportunity to betray the French . . . they treat the French thus through policy and fear, for they do not trust any people . . ." (Blair, 1911: 157-159). Although this passage from the trader, Perrot, reflects his own bias, it does depict the harshness and instability of the times.

Between 1657 and 1660 the Ottowa divided into two groups (Blair, 1911: 165): one going westward to the Mississippi, along with Huron bands; the other group arrived at Lake Superior earlier and settled at Keweenaw Bay (Kinietz, 1940: 5). The Sinago, Kiskakon, and Keinouche were among the people who fled to the Mississippi, encountered the Sioux, and eventually settled at Chaquamegon Bay from the beginning of 1660 to 1671-72 (Blair, 1911: 165). Chippewa bands fled northward and finally to Keweenaw during this period. It may be that groups of Ottowa migrated along with them or along similar routes since part of the Keinouche Clan was already established at Keweenaw Bay in 1660 when the first mission was begun (Thwaites, 1896: 21).
Finding the land and peoples, for the greater part, hospitable along Lake Superior, the Ottowa remained here until 1670-71. They again abandoned their homes for Mackinac Island and Manitoulin Island because of continual hostilities with the Sioux.

After the migrations, various other areas became settlements of the Ottowa: Manitoulin Island, Detroit, Saginaw, Mackinac, St. Joseph, and L'Arbre Croche which has from 1742 on become the only lasting settlement found in current literature. Other settlements throughout the state can be found, but were not as permanent as L'Arbre Croche (Kinietz, 1940: 230).

It is here in L'Arbre Croche, in the land of the crooked tree that the council of the four fires met. Ottowa, Chippewa, Pottowatami, and Wyandott, numbering 30 or 50, met annually until the enforced western migrations. Saplings, one from each member, were planted in a great circle with knives and other artifacts implanted in the twisted tops. Eight of the original 30 or 50 remained to the early twentieth century, having escaped the lumberman's greed. It is said that the council continued to meet long after the Wyandott were removed and that trade goods or "wampum belts" were sent to the Wyandott in Indian Territory (Wright, 1917).
Missions, Fur Trade

The era of fur trade involved many generations and the influx of three separate European powers. The French controlled the area from contact to 1760, the English from 1760 to 1791, and the Americans from 1796. An analysis of their policies in a comparative perspective is a topic for a lengthy discussion, so here only a brief description is made in an effort to emphasize the intensity of cultural stress and the amount of accommodation necessary for the Ottowa people to survive during these tumultuous years.

Missions were established in each large Indian settlement. With direct contact, they became trading centers with Jesuits peddling Christianity in the name of Salvation and the profit of France. Although it was the official policy of the Seventh Congregation of the Society that Jesuits should not become involved in actual trade, Jesuits were probably more successful in the trade than they were in saving souls. Their direct involvement in trade is cited in the Jesuit Relations. "Father Carheit says, 'I desire the good of both religion and the Trade, which you are obliged to keep in accord one with the other, without ever separating from the other.' " "Father Vimont obtained Des Chaslets consent that the prohibition of trade should not apply to Jesuits, if they carried it on quietly (Johnson, 1919: 13, 14).
By 1673 when the Jesuit Relations publications were suspended, the most important missions were at Chaquamegon Bay, Green Bay, St. Ignace, Sault St. Maire, and St. Joseph (Blair, 1896: 509). It was during this time that an attempt was made to replace the Jesuits with Recollect Priests. It was an unsuccessful trial and much of the subsequent data reflects the problems involved in the feud between these orders (Blair, 1911, Vol. 16: 510).

Unlike the Recollects, the Jesuits lived among the Indians. The Recollects were unable to establish as great a measure of rapport as the Jesuits had. Thus, it is in the Jesuits' critical descriptions of "heathen practices" that a view of religious beliefs, marriage and residence patterns, and the mythology is presented. However biased, it is the earliest data available.

The first mission was established at Keweenaw Bay in 1660. Although the Ottowa had been directly and indirectly involved in the fur trade for at least two generations, the trade was not officially opened yet in this area. Furs from this area were taken directly to Montreal to trade. The few Frenchmen who traded illegally made a great profit. "It was a Peru for them" (Thwaites, 1912, Vol. 16: 33).

The Indians gladly traded their worn out beaver robes for the iron goods—knives, hatchets, and kettles. Frenchmen who lived among the people and learned their languages and ways were often employed by the government as explorers and interpreters and mediators in intertribal wars.
Wars were fought, countries were born, and fortunes were made and lost. Every habitat of a fur-bearing creature was invaded and the animals slaughtered with no thought given to their preservation. Rival powers sought out allies among the tribes, and used any means available to keep them cooperative, and to keep the furs coming in. Intertribal wars were encouraged and actively supported. Illegal trade became the norm, liquor the means, cultural disruption and disintegration the effect, with greedy profit writing the field procedure of the trader (Johnson, 1919: 54-57).

Although the seductive policy of the French seems to be a more humane one, a toll was taken and the process was irreversible. The Jesuits had laid the foundation for the large mission-trading post-Indian settlement system that replaced former independent villages. To the missionaries, it was God's will that the heathens be Christianized, and thus rendered more compliant to full participation in the fur trade\(^2\) (Johnson, 1911: 14, 15).

The English succeeded the French in this area in 1759, and like the French, their main interest was in the profit secured in furs rather than in opening the area to

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\(^2\)Also see MacKenzie IV; W.H.C., Proceedings, 1889, 67; Winsor LXV 189-253; Jes. Rel. LXV-253, IX-71-5, LXIII, 265, for further information on the part Jesuits played in the trade.
settlement. When Michigan came under British rule, the Ottowa were already familiar with their tactics. The British continued the French practice of giving presents to the Indians trying to buy and maintain friendship and trade. But, unlike the French who usually treated the Indian as an equal, the British maintained an attitude of superiority, and a policy of severity and harshness that eventually forced the Ottowa to rebel, climaxing in Pontiac's war (Johnson, 1919: 66,67).

The general British policy was to open trade to anyone while the French had attempted to maintain an aristocracy. Both systems failed since their laws, ordinances, and decrees were impossible to enforce. The soldiers and officers, who were supposed to enforce the law, found the profit in furs too tempting to comply. A myriad of laws and decrees were made to keep rival influence out of the area (Blair, 1911, passim; Johnson, 1919: 54-57). During the 1800's fur trade waned in Michigan as well as throughout the fur trade world because of the "ruthless competition" among the "vast numbers" who wanted to get rich quick with a policy of "kill as long as there is to kill" (Johnson, 1919: 148, 149).

Reservations, Allotments

By the time the United States entered the scene in 1796, the profit in fur trade was dwindling. Prior to this time, in an effort to keep settlers out of the area,
Michigan had been characterized as a vast morass of swamp-land and impenetrable forest. The virgin forests soon replaced the waning fur trade in attracting settlers. Once the forests began to be cleared, the prime farmlands invited more intensive settlement.

Thus, in Michigan, as well as throughout the east, the tribes were faced with more and more settlers demanding Indian lands. During the nineteenth century the United States made treaty after treaty with the tribes which resulted in their being pushed westward across the continent to make way for "progress." Treaties were made, with the Ottowa and other Michigan Indians ceding lands to the United States, and by 1842 the last piece of Indian land in Michigan had been taken. The treaties and agreements made provided for reservations, cash, and annuities. The United States promised to build schools, hospitals, gristmills, sawmills; to provide teachers, doctors, millers, and blacksmiths; to furnish food, tobacco, and domestic animals; and to supply other things like vaccines, farm animals, farm implements, guns, steel, and blankets.\(^3\)

While the official policy of the United States, as reflected in the treaties and the Supreme Court Decisions were supportive of Indian rights, the actual policy was

\(^3\)For specific information, complete documentation of all U.S. Ottowa treaties are available in American State Papers: Indian Affairs.
that of slow death for Indian tribal entities. Empty
treaties were signed under duress in exchange for unfit
lands west of the Mississippi, and their eventual settle­
ment on reservations surrounded by white-owned territories.
Under the guise of preservation and protection, the removal
policy systematically separated the Indian and his lands.
Manifest destiny, and vanishing American, and the melting
pot myth where themes used to justify the taking of Indian

Pressures to reduce Indian land holdings still
further results in the Dawes Act of 1887. The facade this
time was a new philosophy toward Indians. In its unfailing
righteousness the government relentlessly pursued its
course of expatriation of Indian lands. The government
deliberately bypassed traditional tribal leadership and
dealt with individual Indians or Indian families (Tylor

The original land set aside in the treaties for
Michigan Indians was subject to allotment by the Dawes Act.
The provisions of this legislation provided for the in­
dividual allotment of land. It further stipulated that
Indians would receive title or a patent in fee for such
lands in twenty years. It also provided that Indian land
owners would be conferred United States citizenship. The
land remaining after allotments were made would be opened
for sale to non-Indians, moreover, titled Indian lands held
by allotees could be sold or leased and when the lands were lost so also were the services that had been provided for by the government as stipulated in treaties.

With the loss of the land base small rural and urban residential agglomerates developed often having only a common bond of Indianness, and often shared with members from many other different bands and tribes. The head of extended families in most cases became the central authority figure, and in many families they continued to exert a controlling influence in behavior and in decision-making processes, a phenomenon still existing today. Still other radical changes in subsistence patterns have forced many families to separate into nuclear units in order to find jobs.

After removal to reservations the Ottowa had to adjust to a settled existence. The land base for hunting and trapping, as well as any major market for furs was gone. People were forced to subsist on government handouts, meager local game resources supplemented by available wild vegetables and fruits. The reservation system was supposed to make farmers out of Indians, but it was soon apparent that they would not become agriculturalists overnight, especially since the land base was so restricted by the reservation limitations.

For the Ottowa, concrete cultural elements were the first to change; they were quick to accept material goods while their belief and value systems, language and identity
persisted. Even in a relatively stable situation, all cultures undergo continual change making multiple choices available to the individual. Yet the individual's existing perceptive mass as influenced by his enculturation will determine and modify in varying degrees the choices made. (Herskovits 1952: 56).

During the fur trade tribal groups had been relatively autonomous. Despite the rapid concrete cultural change, internal social organization in the form of tribal or band leaders or councils all remained viable and continued to function. As reservations were established and with the individualization of land ownership, these indigenous forms of social control and sanction began to disintegrate.

Earlier, when the Ottowa were considered invaluable in the trade and a profit was the focus of attention, the successive governments did not attempt to force assimilation. It was only when the land that the Indian occupied became the object of attention that the jargon of administrative policy became assimilative.

Crystal Valley

The rich fertile land along the Grand River was also coveted and eventually taken. The Cobmosa Band, who were Isaac Battices' people, was among the 1300 to 1400 Ottowa, Chippewa, and Pottawatamie bands that were removed to small reservations further north. The Cobmosa Band settled
in Crystal Valley which like all Indian land, soon proved to be too valuable to continue to be "Indian land" and it too was eventually opened to public sale.

"Such was the land chosen by the Aborigines, and the white who have supplanted them in their birthright, have reason to feel happy in their selection of a settlement" (Royal: 29). A fertile, beautiful land, cooled by winds of Lake Michigan, here primeval forests stood watch for thousands of years as the people of the land passed below. Crystal Valley yielded to their needs throughout these years and in 1856 again responded to them as remnants of one of the most powerful tribes in this section of the United States sought refuge here.

Chief Cobmosa, forseeing the agony of displacement and the harshness of times to come, conceded, "I am an Indian and can be nothing else. I wish my people and my children to be civilized. I know that your ways are superior to ours, and that our people must adopt them or die. But I cannot change; the young can adopt new ways but the old cannot. I shall soon pass away, living and dying an old Indian. You can bend the young tree but you cannot the old oak" (Royal 12).

The reservation was secured by the treaty of 1885 in which lands on the Grand River were taken and agreement was made to move the Indians farther north. By 1857 and 1858 provisions were made for four reservations, each six miles east and west and twenty four miles north and
south. A part of the treaty agreement was that the Ottowa would receive annuities. A passage from an Oceana County history is slightly reminiscent of the local activity in Montana in 1972, when the Flathead received a land payment:

"November 25 was the day set apart by the U.S. government officials to pay the Indians on the Reservation. The Hon. D.W.C. Leach, Indian Agent, with his Assistant, a Mr. Smith, came with the necessary funds, the week previous, to Pentwater, from which place he proceeded to the Reservation. His appearance occasioned great activity in all quarters throughout the county. Six or seven wagons were loaded with merchandise and then the procession headed by the Paymaster, started for the Reservation. It resembled a great caravan, or as the Oceana Times speaking of it at the time, says: 'It might have been taken for a party of Pike's Peak gold hunter.' There were J. Godfrey and Julius Houseman, from Grand Rapids, J. Morton, from Ionia, and about every business man in Oceana County, as well as many others who went out of curiosity or in the hope of a lucky opportunity presenting itself to enable them to get some of the redman's 'Guinio' (money). Indian payment was a great event for the Indian, and a greater one for the white settler" (Royal: 44).

The demand for timber was great in these times and "Indian Town" was gradually absorbed by whites. By following a successive series of county maps one can literally see the land being eaten away. "Each year shows a marked diminution of their numbers; only those remaining who have settled on their farms and adopted the customs of the whites, as far as Indians can adapt themselves to the customs of the white man" (Stevens, 1895: 11-19).

Oceana County's great fruit producing potential was already recognized as early as 1867. "The trees were literally breaking down with peaches and they seemed to
bear every year" (1895: 61). This area is in Michigan's prime fruit belt today.

Some time later, the Indians received the patents from the government for land included in the reservation, but by 1895 few had retained them "due to their improvident habits, and many more by the intrigues of their better posted, but avaricious and unscrupulous white neighbors" (1895: 11-19).

Iassac told a story of two older women walking to Hart, carrying very heavy hide bundles filled with dirt. When questioned, they replied flatly that some "stupid chemokamon was paying money for Indian land" and they weren't about to be left out. Ironic humor, perhaps, but here as everywhere else, when the Indian concept of land ownership was involved, so too was liquor and deception.

Iassac's feelings reflect an oral tradition of anguish expressed by his elders: "Indians complained about being penned up. Indians were not supposed to go out of the reservation. How can we hunt? The people talk, 'Are we animals to be treated like cattle?' So the government decided that the people can roam around, too."

"People heard that the Indian was selling land, not for money but for trade. They give land for guns and other secondary things like farm implements. Some got money, thought ten cents was a lot of money. Hardly any educated, hardly able to transact business. Indian people heard about money and trade and went to Hart to sign off
land. Guerney was in charge of signatures. He put his hand on the feather. Some didn't know he was writing their name. Some people were told of high value of liquor and given it for its taste and effect. The next day they were run off their own land."
CHAPTER III

IASSAC BATTLE

World View, Family

Iassac was born April 7, 1907 in a log cabin in Crystal Valley. His parents had somehow managed to retain several acres of land. His father and mother worked for white farmers in the area doing menial tasks in order to earn enough to survive.

During the years of dependence on the trade for life's necessities the people had no choice but to become consumers. With the loss of the land base it was impossible to eke out even a meager subsistence. Where they once could utilize different resource areas during the different seasons, they were now bound by the measured, documented, cubicle they "owned".

As we begin to look at life through Iassac's eyes, we must remember that his ideology is a reflection of the system. In the process of educating the "fickle forest being", the institution negated Indian differences, such as language, religion, value systems, etc., and attempted to remake the savage into an image of itself.

Many Ottowa received Catholic indoctrination due to early Jesuit influence in the area and later to parochial control of Indian schools. Iassac's mother spent several
years in one of the boarding schools in which Iassac later spent much of his childhood.

Iassac is a very gregarious man. His friends often stay at his house for extended visits. It is rare to find Iassac alone. In the opening dialogue, Iassac and two of his lifelong Indian friends are in the midst of a religious discussion:

*Iassac.* I personally feel whether I was brought up a Catholic or a Protestant, I believe in being good regardless whether I follow the good of the Protestant or Catholic Church. If I stay at home and never go to Church, I practice the goodness of life right here at my own home. I think I am as good as that person who goes to church and yet is an evil person, a perfect hypocrite.

We should meet God and visit him the way we should while we're in church. Now it doesn't matter to me how anybody else feels about it but that's the way I feel as an Indian. It shouldn't make any difference whether I go to church (at all) a Protestant Church, a Catholic Church, a Jewish Church, or any other denomination. If I am good, I stand just as much a chance when I die to go to there's a heaven. Nobody knows for sure, in my thinking nobody knows if there's really heaven or hell—nobody knows. No human being, in my thinking, no human being can tell you there's heaven over there and there's hell down here, and there's purgatory there. They can't say, that to really tell the truth because they don't know themselves. That's is my thinking about it. In my feeling we're just guessing, no matter if we're religious leaders, we're just guessing and we keep on guessing until we die. When we die then we really will find something out. As an Indian that's the way I feel about it.

I'm an American Indian, that's what I am, and I feel darn proud I'm an Indian, too. Regardless, how any other Indian feels about their way of race. I don't care if the other Indian feels that he is like a white man, I feel that I'm an American Indian and I am darn proud of it. That's the way I feel.

When the Indians believed in the Great Spirit, which we feel is the same as God, the very one they must have chose to call the Great Spirit...; but that Great Spirit they worshipped, that was God himself. That's the way I
feel. That was really God all the time and yet the missionaries came and taught us religion after that first white man set foot in this country. But actually we were worshipping him before the white man ever came here. Only we idolized the Great Spirit which we thought was up in the sky.

And you know, when we think about it now, when the thunder comes moaning and ya hear the thunder and the cracking and the lightning flashing, my people, the Ottowas, my people actually believed that that was their grandfathers, that the old-timers that died and gone and went to heaven, same as heaven, went to goodness, I mean, and then they, they descended--come back to life--I mean come living that spirituality under spirituality, not living the way we're living but raised like a soul. My people believed they were our grandfathers.

I'll tell you what my father done one time. It had started off with hailing and lightning and flashing and some claps of thunder being so loud it just shook the house over there and about ten times he took some wild tobacco. He had some wild tobacco come directly from the plant, tobacco plant. It had been dried and he had it in a little leather sack. He took some of the tobacco and he put it in the stove. I asked him why he done that and he says, "I'm giving our grandfathers chewing tobacco" and before long the storm will die out, it will go away, go somewhere else." Well, whether you believe it or not, in about half hour's time, the storm gradually died out, just died out and the sky cleared up; but I'm not going to say that really would happen all the time but that's absolutely the way it turned out, that he put tobacco in the stove.

Jacob. Yea, but it didn't happen all the time, it could be a coincidence.

Iassac. Yea, but I don't know...

Miko. It'll happen. I've done that myself. Basically, it's peculiar, but going back to the spiritual, spiritual aspects of the culture of the Indians the basics, the major religions are based on that spirit that we worshipped and adored and feared. That's what we did actually. The old time Indians feared that spirit. But like I've learned, the major religions such as Hinduism, and well, like Jehovah, before the Christian religion became known as the Christian religion when Jesus brought Christ, the religion of Christ, the Christian religion, well, the Hebrew and these Isrealites, they worshipped. They didn't say "Our Father" they said "Oh God, hear ye." They never called the Great Spirit "Our Father", yet, still and all,
we were all derived from the same source of life, whether we were Isrealites or what not, but since then, like Iassac says, well if we believe whatever you want to believe, well that's your privilege, whether you're Catholic...I don't want to express what I believe because if I sound a lot of foolishness and I don't want to mislead anyone of you now, influence anyone my way, because I can't do that. They have their own way of thinking, like Iassac said. I can't tell you, I can't tell anyone else what I want to do.

Jacob. Churchgoers go to church every Sunday because its a question of sin on others ways. Take an atheist or anybody that led the Good life, a good clean life, I think they have this much chance to get to heaven as a hypocrite going to church every Sunday.

Miko. If there is a heaven, O.K., and if there is, I want to be there and if there isn't, well, I leave it up to God, as I try to understand my God, my Creator...To begin with, I didn't ask anybody, I didn't ask you, I didn't ask anyone, "Could I become a human being, a living soul?" I didn't even ask my mother. Involuntarily I was brought forth to become as I am, Albert Miko, and I kind of attribute that to the higher wisdom of God, to become a human entity, a human being. So I was born. I was provided a means of birth and living through my childhood, my manhood, so called. So, when I kick off, I leave it up to God because He brought me here.

I do believe there is a God, a higher power, as we try to understand him, as each individual understands him as he trys, he or she trys. Whether you're Catholic, or shouting Baptist, or Holy Rollers or what.

The hypocrisy, and there's another angle, you can't fool yourself, you can't even fool yourself let alone, you think you're fooling the public, well shoot, but you can't fool your conscience, conscience, contact of God as you understand him. He's within you. You can't fool that man. You can't fool yourself, that's where your divine spark is. Maybe we don't know it, but its there...invisible, indivisible, inextinguishable; you can't put it out. Life eternal, by Jove, God knows. Well, that's about all....I didn't mean to intrude of anything that was being said...

Iassac. I'll tell you one thing what I know about the American Indian, not that I'm about to say anything to other races about what they are, how they came about, why they are this way, that way, why they get sick easy, and why they are overcome with sickness sooner than an Indian provided that the Indian could have been living yet, the way
he used to live when he walked with nature. American Indian
was sound physical built. American Indian in the old days
while he was living off of nature for natures' providence.
When nature was providing everything he needed, his hair
was black right up close to when he was a hundred years old.
He never had no gray hair. He never grewed no hair on his
face. Well, I don't have no hair on my arms right now and
I don't have no hair on my chest. We was really sound in
physical built. We was strong because we lived directly
from the providence of nature. Nature provided us with
everything genuine, there was no substitution, no chemi-

calized elements that we had to take in to live by. It
made us well and good physical built. When we came into
modernization, there we began to be just like the others.
We become sick just as much as anybody else. I don't think
as much as I heard from my folks, my people, we never had
any kind of sickness anytime. We had minor sickness but
we overcome them by the herbs we used to find in the woods,
and, of course, there were Indian doctors in those days
but they didn't have no drugs like we have now. They went
out in the woods...well, for instance, I had an awful burn
here on my wrist one time and that burned my hand clear
up to here, next to my elbow. It was all colored up from
burning my hand clear up to here, next to my elbow. It
was all colored up from burning my arm on the hot stove.
I showed it to my mother and my mother she went down the
road here and picked off some of these cattails, dried up
cattails, got a bunch of them, put some grease on them,
start mixing grease with cattails, and after she got so
much of that with the cattails, she laid that right on my
arm and then took a little sheet...bed sheet in strips and
wrapped it around my arm like that. About four days time
my burn was all gone, and you can't even show where I got
burnt.

That's the way we overcome disease and sickness and
of any kind of anything like that, like wounds and like now
it can be anybody if they get infections. Sometimes it's
too late no matter how good the doctor is, it can still be
too late.

Miko. You know, speaking about the Indians being
what they were, never used medicine and were pretty happy
people. But take the Norsemen or any of the old from the
European race of people, Norwegians went through a lot of
hardships. They were a hardy race of people too. So along
with this process of civilization, we as Indians had to
go along with it and had to suffer. There resulted in
living like we are now. And these chemicals, like Iassac
was saying herbs are chemical. Thats where a lot of the
medicine, medication (came from). I've been told anyway.
I'm not an authority on medicine or anything of the kind. I talked to a student of medicine. He just, you know, passed the day. He said "this is a weed here," he named the weed, "that's where we get that digitalis." And I take digitalis three times a day, or once a day. I have a heart that don't work just right but I have to take that in order to survive so go along with that medication.

Jacob. You know Indian gave white man 75% of the drugs he uses today. The white doctors use it.

Miko. Well, he can have my time. It's bedtime. I got up five thirty. I'm gonna take off. Sure am happy to have met you. Excuse me, I'm going to take off. I'm beat, cripes! I'm tired. I been playing golf all afternoon...right in the rain.

Iassac. I think the Ottowas (religious belief) go back before the white man came here. I think one religion that the white people followed is called Idolism. A group of a family of my people would go down to a spring and they had a carved statue there, a statue of the Great Spirit. They believed it was the Great Spirit. When they go to get water from the spring, they would kneel down and pray to the statue. They worshipped that statue. That's something like what they do in Asiatic country. They worship idols. China, I think, and Japan and Tibet, the country of Tibet, have quite a practice of worshipping idols, but that's the way the Indians, my people, worshipped in the old days.

My dad would tell me about it and carve it out of a cedar log like that, carve out a statue of some kind. They had that sitting by a spring water before they would dip the water out and pray. My dad told me that and, like I said before, I could have learned a lot more about my people if I didn't go away to school when I was young. But I left home, I went away to school and I stayed away so long, so many years, I missed out on a lot of what my people could tell me. You know, Betty, when an Indian, in the time I went to school--well, maybe that's the way it was with my mother too when she went to school--there seems to be so much to change to go into the white man's way, to practice the white man's way. It's just so much change--in the way I've been living here from the time I was born--to get used to an entirely different way of life, when I entered Harbor Springs.

I wasn't used to it, you know. See, I was brought up the way my mother was around here or the way any Indians were at that time. If I could go far enough back, the Indians lived in tepees or birch bark houses made of pieces
of birch bark that they laid together. I guess they might have tied them to stay together.

But that's the way it goes, you see, generation after generation up to the present time now gradually got used to the white man's ways. And that's another reason why we would forget a lot of these Indian customs, because we fell so strongly to the white man's ways. That bothered me quite a bit till I got used to it. But now I understand quite a lot now, I guess. The problem is to live this way is a lot harder than it was at that time. I didn't want to go into...to live that way...but now of course, we have to live this way. You can't go back anyway and live the old way because times, everything has changed so much. You couldn't go in and start living in the woods again like our people did a long time ago. For one thing, a lot of it is privately owned from different people, like the wild game. I still like to go hunting like my people did a long time ago, but the way it is now, a lot of us are so busy making a living to keep, to earn the money, they don't have much time to go and hunt like there used to be. I don't even have much time to go fishing, as much as I like to go fishing. But especially when a person don't have no income or anything that keeps him busy, working out every day to keep him going, and the cost of living is so much higher now than it used to be.

My mother and my father used to take us in a wagon and we'd go out there to Runion Marsh and pick huckleberries through the summer months. We sold the berries and that's how we got our groceries. We'd stay there and camp over there most of the summer pulling berries, till they quit growing and then we came back here again for the winter.

A lot of Indians done that over in Pentwater. They camped around them hills and that's what they did, selling huckleberries to tourists at that time. A lot of people from Chicago'd come and buy them, the huckleberries didn't grow as good.

I used to go up around the Lake Michigan shore and go out and play around the shore there.

Everybody was traveling in horses and wagons in those days. There was no cars. A lot of times when my dad wanted to go to town, he'd go to Hart from there and a bunch of us would get on the wagon...and go and get something--groceries or something else.

The Indians used to build fires and cook outdoors. Well, to think about it now, it was just like the old days
when the Indians was along, before the white man. We had a good time. Some of the older boys would get on horse back and ride around.

We had a good time those days. Then we'd come back here. My father lived over here on about ten acres land. My father, he come from, well, to say his father was half French and half Indian. I don't know whether he farmed. He might have farmed it some.

When my dad got married he built that house where I was born. Before I was born, he first built the house back here in the corner, and I think after my oldest brother and my oldest sister, they were born, he decided to move that house over where it is now. It took two teams of horses to pull that. It wasn't that big though. It wasn't quite that big when he had it over there. They sunk in the mud, deep, pulling the house over there. And after they got settled, that's when I was born.

I was born on April 7, 1907. My mother said while I was still young, at times while she held me in her arms I'd go unconscious and when she turn me to certain positions I came back to normal again.

My oldest sister's name was Margaret, Maggie. The next to the oldest is my brother James. Then my brother Harry came next. My other brother John, was after me. Then came a girl Sharlot, then another sister Maude and then came a little brother.

You know, this kind of puzzles me a little bit. It always did puzzle me. When I was a younger guy my hair was pitch black and my sister's hair kind of a brown, a brownish shade. Then my brother John, if you see him, especially when he's sitting next to the sunlight, his hair is kind of a brownish shade like, you know how young kids look, their hair looks...real light. That's the way his hair was when he was about six years old.

That must be it was the French blood coming out. Well, as near as I can figure, I'm about 1/8 French. There may be a little more than that because my father, he was 1/4 French. Because his dad was half French, half Indian. And of course his name was John Battice. They named my brother after my grandfather's name.

My mother's mother, she even kind of wondered herself where her mother got the red hair and she was quite light. Light complexion and she got red hair, my grandmother. She died young. She was 44, I think. Now, she
either was half or somewhere around there in that degree and according to that she must have been at least a quarter French.

And my half-uncle, he died when he was 68. In bad weather, in windy weather, his hair used to curl up. And when he'd comb it it'd look quite black all over. He was quite light complected. His mustache and his whiskers, they were kind of brownish, kind of a reddish shade. That's a funny thing. It must be just the degree of the white blood. Maybe he took after somebody from way back.

I notice my brother, Jim, my oldest brother, he don't have much gray hair as I got and he's older than I am. His hair looks quite coarse. Like I said once before, it must be the French coming out.

I guess that's true of everybody, the racial blood that's in you reacts...in different ways. Just like you get a big sack of beans and then as you take them out, maybe you get a big sack of pinto beans or navy beans. Pretty soon you find one black bean, all black. Then it's supposed to be all black beans...pretty soon you come to one red bean...

You know, there used to be two families, Indian families lived over there on the corner by that twin bridges. Old man Louis used to live over there. He used to put on a lot of programs, Indian programs. They used to do their preaching there a lot. They had an Indian preacher, preaching Indian to the Indians. That old guy, I think he was about 98 when he died. I remember I used to see him. He'd go around with a cane and he had one of these big high hats like them top hats that they used to wear in the olden days. When he fixed his hair—he let the hair grow down to his shoulders—he'd braid his hair on the side, then he'd tie them. He liked to dress up like that.

**Boarding Schools**

Boarding schools were popular educational institutions for Indian children during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To the Americans, they seemed to be the quickest and easiest means to effectively facilitate what was perceived by the administrations as good for Indian children—
that of removing the child from a cultural matrix that stood in the way of rapid assimilation.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs Boarding School system began in the 1870's. When many Indian families refused to send their children to them, Congress authorized the Secretary of the Interior to withhold food or subsistence from those Indian families whose children were not in school. Later legislation slightly modified this policy, but as late as 1919 Navajo children were taken from their parents and placed in boarding schools. In 1933 three-fourths of all Indian students still attended boarding schools (N.A.C.I.E. 1974: 108).

Boarding schools did not try to replace the home environment but attempted to provide the Indian child with a ticket into the "better" world of white man. Harsh discipline and corporal punishment, study and Christian training were the ethic of the boarding schools.

Iassac's first experience was at a Catholic convent. His sister, Margaret, became, as much as possible, a surrogate mother to Iassac. She was very helpful, as much as a nine year old girl could be, for Iassac in overcoming the initial trauma of transition from an Indian home to a Catholic boarding school. Maggie may have been more prepared for this role than would a white child since most older Indian siblings are given the responsibility of helping raise the younger children.
Iassac and Maggie spent two years at Harbor Springs. The following summer and winter were spent at home in Crystal Valley with their parents. It was a brief time in a child's life but Iassac's home remembrances are cherished. The sweet memories still bring a quick smile to his face and tears to his eyes. All too soon the warmth and closeness of family would be taken from him and he would leave his mother again amidst tears and death.

Harbor Springs Convent

Iassac. The first time I went to school, Maggie and I went together in Harbor Springs Catholic Convent. My dad took us in horse and buggy to Fern, Michigan, north of here. There we changed to horses and wagon by a half-breed by the name of Busha. He took us on to Custer, and there we boarded a northbound train. As I can remember, a supervisor of the poor, in those days, cared for us on to Harbor Springs.

The way it was there, they had schooling from kindergarten to the eighth grade. I don't think anybody graduated. I don't know for sure if they went to high school there in town or not. But when I went, I was in kindergarten.

The way it was; we had to go to church for early mass before we had breakfast. After breakfast, we got ready for school. We always had to pray before we sat down to study our lessons. We had to pray again when we got ready to go for dinner and when we got to the table we had to say our prayers again. Oh boy, we really done a lot of praying! In the evening we had what's called a chapel meeting. They had a regular chapel meeting we used to go to every night. Everybody had to be in bed by 9:00 every night.

We'd go to church again next morning before breakfast and on Sunday we had to go back to church again about 9:00. In the afternoon on Sundays we had a recreation place we was allowed to go out and play, in the yard, but that yard, it was enclosed with a high board fence about as high as this wall. There wasn't nobody supposed to go over that fence anytime. We were supposed to stay inside
of that. Any kid that was caught climbing over that to get out, they were punished.

When it was rainy there, like in winter time, we was given needles and hooks to knit with and we learned to knit socks and hot pads. We learned how to knit socks and we even made mittens. When we wasn't doing that--oh, they must of had about 24 sleds. The nuns would take them out and they let us have them sleds. We'd go out and pull each other around the yard with them sleds. Part of our playing in winter was sliding on our shoes.

On Sundays in early fall or spring the nuns would take us out...for a walk and we'd walk around the lake side, go so far and come back. There was two nuns in the front walking and two in the back. When we'd come back, we'd say prayers again. Then, of course, they taught us the Catholic Catechism.

In the spring, on Memorial Day, we was taken out to a cemetery and visit those graves of those that died there that didn't have no friends to go home to, to be taken to. A lot of them boys and girls didn't have no home, no parents. Their parents were dead and when they died, they were buried right close to the school grounds. We'd be taken over there to decorate the graves of those that died there.

We was never allowed to leave the school grounds any time. That is, if we wanted to go down to the town we had to go with one or two nuns.

I was bothered much by home sickness. My sister payed attention to me as much as possible--we had strict rules. But, we was given good clothes to wear and good meals. We were not allowed to leave; as we wish, anytime.

When I first went to Harbor Springs, I was about five years old. I didn't exactly go to school the first year. I was just...or they just kept a lot of us at the age, five and six years old. We was kept in a room where we could play with toys and then on the second year they got us on to school because they got us used to the place.

On the first year, we cane home, my sister and I got off (the train) in Hart. From there we started walking home, about eight and one half miles. She carried a straw suitcase, quite heavy with her belongings and mine. We took turns carrying it. After walking several miles, somebody gave us a ride.

The following year my brothers, Harry and Jim, followed us. Schooling was the same, as I remember. We was taught more about the Catholic religion. I was made
an altar boy for a length of time, same as assisting the priest while he said mass in church. Not much athletics in school--mostly study in prayer books for us all. In the spring we all came home and I never went back there.

Betty, I'm going to tell you what happened one time (the next summer). There was my two older brothers and myself and John. He was too young, my younger brother, John was too young to go to school. It was in about the middle of summer, about July. We joined up with my three cousins.

We started out with these, for our dinner pails, these syrup pails. You know where syrup come in sometimes or molasses? Them two quart pails. My mother put up our lunches. She put some potatoes in there and one big chunk of squawbread and put the other on top of that and then she put in a couple of pieces of muskrat meat in each pail.

We started out, the way it was, what made me laugh so much about now, was we was trying to fool our mother and all the time she made a big fool of us. The way it was, we got up to my cousin's place—they joined up with us—they knew we was on our way to go to school. Six of us got together and we started going down the road. Up the road, over that hill, we got around that big hill where it comes around that road. We thought that it was fun to climb that hill and run down it. When we got down on that hill, all of a sudden we stopped by the bridge there and we started talking. We just had a little more ways there to go to the schoolhouse by the corner. We didn't have much further to go and this oldest boy at that time, my cousin, he says, "Hey, we don't have to go to school today. Why can't we...the crick looks so nice, it might be pretty doggone good to go fishing today, instead of going to school."

Well, we all agreed, "My gosh, that's a pretty good idea. We won't go to school today. We'll go fishing. They'll never know it; our parents'll never know it. What we'll do, we'll watch our time."

We didn't have no wrist-watches, but we watched when that sun got so far toward the horizon, we knew just about when it was getting around four o'clock. We watched that sun.

Some of us had some pins so we made a hook out of that. Wrapping string, we used that for fish line. We didn't have enough pins for everyone to fish. Boy, we had a lot of fun fishing, getting bites from those trout, good sized trout. We couldn't take no fish home, but what we caught, we'd throw them back in. We'd just get fun out of
fishing. So we kept going down the stream till we got pretty close to that swamp, first part of that swamp. Well, we was going so slow and was playing part of the time, throwing stones in the water. Oh gosh, we was having a lot of fun.

"About time we look at the sun," one of them said, "By gosh, it looks like we better get back. We'll go back towards the road and we'll walk down the road just like we went to school."

So that's what we did. We all went towards the road again and we sailed away acting happy.

My mother was already home waiting for us. I didn't know what she was waiting for. She almost told us right away we didn't go to school. She says, "What did you boys learn today?"

"Oh my gosh, we did same thing like every day. We got so much arithmetic, so much reading, and spelling. We had a spelling match today."

"Well," she says, "This is good," and she says, "Did you go to school today?"

And we said, "Sure we went to school today. Where else would we have gone? As long as you sent us off to school, we stay in school all day, till school let out."

All the time we didn't know it, she was working for the teacher, the school teacher. She was hoeing beans for the school teacher's husband. She got back down the road when we was still on the crick, when the school teacher's husband took her home. That's how she got home before we did.

The teacher says to her—that's what she told us—she says, "Say, Mrs. Battice, I'd like to talk to you."

She says, "All right." She quit working then.

The teacher says, "Did your boys go to school today? Did you send them off to school today?"

"Yeah," she says, "I sent them off first thing this morning. I got their lunches ready and everything. I seen them come up the road."

"Well, they wasn't in school at all today," the teacher said. "They wasn't in school today. Where did they go?"
"I don't know," she says, "I thought they were in school all the time."

"No, they wasn't there at all. None of them was there. Even the Moses' boys, they wasn't there either."

By gosh, my mama began to get puzzled. "Where in the world did they go then," she thought.

And, well, the teacher kind of bawled her out a little bit. She told her that there would be a truant officer sent out there if we don't go to school. She told my mother she could get arrested for us not going to school.

She said, "I'll see about that," she told the teacher, "I'll see about that, where they went."

When we got home, trying to lie all we can at that time. She come up to me, she says, "You tell me the truth and if you tell me the truth I won't give you no licking at all. I'll just lick your other two brothers. I'll let you go."

My oldest brother said, "No matter what she does, don't tell her we was out fishing. Don't say a darn thing."

Well, I didn't know what to say. I didn't know whether to lie or tell the truth.

But she told me, "You tell the truth. If you tell the truth, I won't give you no licking."

I didn't know what to say. Well, I kept thinking. I said (to myself), "Let's go ahead and try a lie. Maybe I can get out of it."

But she didn't tell us how she knew that we wasn't in school, not right away anyhow.

I said, "Well, we was in school. I don't know what in the world the teacher tell you that we wasn't there. We was there all the time. We can prove it."

She didn't take my word at all. By God, you, she got tired of me, trying to get me to tell the truth. She went out and get them willow switches from the bushes out there. She didn't have to go far. Boy, oh boy! I tell you I had a hot hind end that night, after she got through with me. She whipped me till I just sat down. I run around and she kept hitting me. I got the worst darn lickin that I ever had in my time. Boy, oh boy, I had red streaks on my hind end after she got through with it. She
done the same thing to Jim, my brother, both my older brothers. Yeah... then she explain afterwards.

She said, "You know how I found out that you boys wasn't in school? The school teacher came up to, came up and asked me where was my boys. And I told them, I sent you off."

Well then we came out and told, "We decided to go fishing after we got down the road. We decided to go fishing." And we told her, "We thought we could get away with it."

We never tried to stay out of school anymore after that. It wasn't long anyway, after that, that we was sent to Mount Pleasant Indian School.

That last year (at Harbor Springs) my sister caught cold in the school laundry-- never got well. Her illness changed to consumption. She had fainting spells before she died. I think she left us some time in December.

My mother was a strong believer in medicine. She believed someone killed Maggie in a bearwalk method.

Mount Pleasant Indian School

Iassac. My dad died that winter in January. Caught cold while husking corn for a living. Illness changed to pneumonia. He partly died grieving over my sister's death. The day he died it was bitter cold. My brother James and I were sledding up some wood from the swamp at that time. That same day I come home with hands frozen stiff.

Jim was considered the main helper for my mother. I think he went as far as the fourth grade. Don't know much about his daily life except that he worked for a lot of farmers. Also trapped a lot in winter months for living.

My brother and this other guy, they went down that swamp road. The went toward the middle of the swamp. I think they were hunting rabbits or were trapping way down there. One of them had a shotgun and the other guy would stand out and shoot them.

They had to cross that mud crick down there, and mud crick just like a river. It was in the winter time. They had to cross on a log, slippery log. There were both young at that time, in their teens. I guess he was about 15 and he was about 13. They had to cross that mud crick on that log and this older brother of mine went across
there just like a deer. My other brother, he thought he could do the same thing. He stepped a little too far to one side...and before he could get balanced he went down. He dropped in the water--a big hole there--and what they did, he got all excited.

What I think he should have done, or what my older brother should have done for him was told him to run back as much as he could. Get back to the house as soon as he could and get his clothes off right away, put on dry clothes, stand by the stove; but instead of doing that, my older brother had some matches. He told him to take off all his clothes and he'd build a fire. He started taking off his clothes. They were all wringing wet. It happened in February. Cold day, colder than hell. And heck, he took off all his clothes. He told him to stand by the fire there and dry off. He caught cold there. He started coughing and his sickness went to his lungs and it turned to TB after a while.

Before he died he suffered a lot. I remember seeing him laying down on the floor there on one of these single mattresses my mother had. They had him laying there and he would holler and scream and ask my mother to help him get well. After she done all she could to get him well, she couldn't do nothing more and all she could do was look at him. He body would raise up like that, just like a woman being pregnant. I don't know...it was full of air, like.

They got the county doctor out there and after a while it would go down, pretty near all the way down. Then it would go up again after a while. He went on like that for a long time.

He couldn't very well lay on his belly or his side because it hurt him. At the same time he was coughing. He was awfully afraid to die. He hollered and screamed at my mother to do anything...pray or anything. She felt so bad...she felt so sorry for him, she had to cry right there in front of him. She knew she couldn't do nothin more, so she just sat there and cried.

About this time, the sponsors of the poor were beginning to pay more attention to us. So the following spring, in April, my younger brother, John, and I was sent to Mount Pleasant Indian School because my mother had too many of us to support. The welfare and the county doctor, they got together and they thought it was a good thing to put us in school at Mount Pleasant. We were taken away against her will. She cried the day we were taken away.
The year we first went to Mount Pleasant, my brother and I, we cried about three days, on and off. We cried because we got so homesick and we just couldn't get on to the regulations there. We was almost a problem to the matron because we didn't want to do anything that they asked us to do. We just kept thinking about going back home.

The first night we was put to bed in somebody's private bedroom. Everything seemed so strange to us. After about three nights, we was put in a regular boys dormitory. We had to get used to the boys. They were nice to us. They boys talked Indian to us privately. We didn't know much English anyway. Gradually we were put to get used to school rulings.

We gradually got used to it. I got to talking to some of the boys, the older boys. They'd come and calm us down and talk Indian to us and we felt natural then.

After a few days we were put in a small boys' building. There we got well acquainted. After a few years there, I begin to notice a lot of boys and girls look like white kids. It was suppose to be a school for Indians only. I learned later that a lot of them were half and half, some over half.

I was at Mt. Pleasant about two months and I got a letter from my mother that told me my brother Harry died. I guess he was a lot better off when he did die—going through all that suffering.

The following year I got peeved over the matron's scolding. I didn't realize it but the epidemic of flu was going around about that time all over the country. I went up in a darken stairway and sit there a long time. It was cold and drafty. That's when I caught the flu germ. I almost died. My fever was extremely high. My school doctor almost gave up on me. I slowly got better.

That year a lot of boys and girls died. Well, so many was sick, the school hospital was so full that they had to use the dormitories for sick wards. I remember I saw about one boy dead almost every other day.

I remain in Mt. Pleasant School for ten years. John and I were put there in April, 1918. That year that first world war ended. The boys and girls celebrated. Everybody danced to the drum beat out on the campus, bells rang and the factory whistles blew.

I remember the first Christmas we had there. We had our programs in the school auditorium. Two big Christmas
trees on the stage, well lighted and decorated. We all sang Christmas carols. Employees were all there. Boys and girls got, from the government, bags of candy, oranges, apples, nuts, and popcorn. Those of the boys and girls that had parents fortunate enough received gifts from home. Very few was left out and I was one of them. I didn't know what it meant at that time, but it did hurt me to see others getting presents from home and I didn't get anything for ten years. But in the last three years that didn't bother any more. I was getting older then.

I was put in a large boys' building as I got older. It was compulsory for all boys to go to church every Sunday, the girls too. We always had to march down town to church. In winter we had to do the same no matter how cold it was.

Employees went to town to do shopping on Saturday. They rode in wagon, looked like a bus, pulled by a team of horses. The teamster was a school boy. He was learning a farm trade.

Superintendent of school always went in horse and buggy to go to town. I was put as caretaker for the horse. He was a mean and frisky animal. I went through daily chore of feeding, bedding with straw, and watering him.

That first year in school I learned about the boys and girls brought there from Carlisle Indian School. That school was shut down, become army hospital for vets.

There were thirty one cedar trees planted at the school grounds to honor the Indian boys that enlisted for service. Some didn't come back.

We learned about every trade like farming, dairying, gardening, carpentry, tailoring, painting, papering, baking, housecleaning, engineering, drafting, laundry, boiler works, plumbing, and military training. Also we learned instrumental and vocal music. We went to school half day and worked half day at trade. Everything was furnished us free.

We had strict teachers. Most of them were white, few were Indian. Every ten weeks we were taught from one trade to another. I had much experience with every trade. We were even taught table manners at meal times.

Every year, at Memorial Day, we marched down town and paraded down the streets for the people. We wore uniforms and strictly followed formations. Also we played band music.
Every morning we arise to the bugle call at five o'clock, drilled to army training before we ate our breakfast. They was awful strict, the school officers themselves was awful strict. We got regular military training at that time, besides our regular schooling. Yeah, we got army training. I tell ya, five o'clock, when we was on drill, when we got out to go on drill, we was rolled out from our beds at five o'clock in the morning...and we drill and drill till it was time to go to the dining room for breakfast. On real cold mornings frosty morning, that frosty air, you know, some of us guys, we'd try to get our hands in our pockets. The school officer'd come along and get our hands out of our pockets and tell us to keep our hands out of our pockets. Yeah, keep our hands down marching. Sometimes they'd give you a boot in the hind end if they catch you with your hands in your pockets, "Keep your hands out of your pockets!" Just the way they do it in the army. When we had our uniforms on, no matter how hot it was, you had to button up your coat clear to the top. Anybody caught with one button off or one button loose, you get a punishment. That's how strict they were.

There, if you was caught running away, if you was caught talking Indian, you get a rubber hose. They give it to you with a rubber hose, a garden hose. Boy, that's awful, if you get late for school, if you get late for bedtime, you get punished.

Nine o'clock you supposed to be in the dormitory in bed. When that guy comes around checks to see if you're in bed. If you're not there, he'll write your name down. He knows where everybody sleeps. He writes your name down and next morning he calls the names off of everybody that was absent, and then the school officer hollers out, "open the ranks!" Everybody steps out and pull off their belts and make two lines. They make one guy at a time run through between the two rows of boys and everybody gets a chance to...they wallop. The faster you run, the less chance there is for them to hit you but if you can't run fast enough, you get an awful wallop with that belt. Each and every boy has got their belt and they race at you and try to get you twice before you go on by. That's the way they punish us when we was absent.

At Mt. Pleasant they were very strict with us about talking Indian, too. We got punished every time we was caught talking Indian. I think it was that they wanted us to learn to talk English. It was all right if we didn't forget the Indian language, but still they wanted us to learn the English good so when we got out of school, we'd face the world and understand people. I think that's what they wanted to do. See, if they allowed us to talk
Indian, especially us like me, I was ten years old at that time, I wouldn't try to learn English. I'd just keep on talking Indian and I wouldn't learn English as much as I did otherwise.

But that's the way it was. I'm glad after all they were strict with us in the English language; but in time, to think about it now, I wouldn't want to loose my language, but get back to it so I could talk fluently. I don't practice it very much. Once in a while him and I talk Indian and others guys that come around, like Albert and Jacob. I always talk Indian when he's (Miko) around.

But you see, in them ten years there, they making us to practice this English, I forgot a lot of the Indian words at that time. I'm kinda getting back on it again, since I got out of school. Even my brother up here, he kind of lost words too because he was always around white people, working for the farmers and talking English to everyone. Kind of forget some of those Indian words. Now, very seldom, we practice that Indian language. But like I say, I really wouldn't want to loose it entirely.

Some time ago I was thinkin about makin the alphabet. I needed a word. Making a dictionary, make a book of it so that the next generation that comes up wants to learn the Indian language, well, they could learn that way, look at this book.

Yeah, I think it would be a good thing, you know because someday, I'll be gone and a lot of the Indians around my age will probably be gone, too. If that's let go, it probably be completely forgotten and nobody around to tell about it, to teach it. Now is the time to think about it. That's the way I feel about it. I think it would be good to write it out like a book, write out all the words. That would make it easier for the next generation to learn their language then, or young people that forgets their language, they could always pick it up again.

Well I'll tell you, you know, since I've grown up, and got out of school, by gosh, you know I'm glad I got that good training.

I stayed at that school for ten years. I didn't come home at all. I stayed there year after year... summer and all.

About the fourth year John ran away from there. They caught him and brought him back. He went again and the second time they just let him go.
Yeah, I'm glad I got that good training. If I had children I wouldn't have been strict with them like they were to me. Still, I would have taught them good discipline. But I wouldn't have been mean to them.

Course I didn't have no kids. I wish I did have one boy and girl at the time. Now I haven't got nobody. I mean, I'm all alone and when I get older, well, I might be just like my uncle. They might find me dead in my home sometime. Sometimes I live alone you know.

Most of the time I live alone, live all by myself. So the older I get, the more...the harder it'll be to take care of myself. Course I'm not so darned old I can't do nothing for myself yet. I can get around pretty good. I could almost go and play football yet, the way I feel, yeah.

Well, when I first entered school I couldn't talk a word of English. When any of us was caught talking a word of Indian we would be punished for it. We was to learn, simply learn the English language. Like I say every time anybody was talking Indian, anytime, they was punished for it. They was taken into the office and whipped and told that, "You should get on to English." I gladly done away with this Indian language. I got so I didn't try to talk Indian anymore. And up to the year I graduated from the ninth grade I almost forgot the Indian language. I couldn't hardly speak it anymore. I got on to English pretty well and when I came home here, my mother start talking Indian to me, I understood her but I couldn't talk back to her very well. They was so strict with us, you know, we couldn't keep our Indian language up.

I came with other boys that, like my brother there, he can't hardly talk Indian anymore now. Forgot all about that Indian language, just about anyway. But now that I'm back home again, been home all this time, I practice it every chance I get. I hope I can talk again like I did before I went to Mt. Pleasant.

We stand little chance to keep up this here or know a lot about this era. I'll make a guess because those that could talk very good that way, they're dead and gone. They're gone for good. They can't come back anymore. Like I said once before, the Indian that's dying today, what he leaves behind is going to be left behind for good. I mean they can't bring what is forgotten. What is forgotten is forgotten for good. It'll never be picked up again. There is nobody living that can pick it up again.

And now this Indian language, it sits, leaving the mind of these Indians, the Indian that's living today.
Today now, they don't even try to pick it up. They don't even care if they ever learn. They never pick it up.

Me and the other Indians around my age, my schoolmates, they try to keep it up but there's a lot of words that they've forgot and they've got very little chance to any old timers. There's old timers that come back and tell them that they don't know any Indian. There's certain Indian words, well, they just haven't got much chance to learn it, to get back on it because there aren't that many old timers left anymore to help us keep up this language. I think it's something that we should try to keep. We should never forget.

Well, I'll tell you why they wanted us to speak English all the time. They wanted us to learn the white man's way and if we was led to talk Indian once awhile, maybe we wouldn't learn English language as good as otherwise.

I think that we have the right to keep that up, to keep that language up all the time—not let it be a waste in our mind. Sometime, I think, sometime to come that (language) will be of high value to human beings. When it's gone, nobody will ever bring it back again. I think that, well, like the scholars, they bring it back to hear that again. And if it's completely lost, well, if the Indians are gone for good to the last one, there is nobody that can pick it up again. No one can bring it back. Like my folks, they would talk Indian very good and they couldn't talk English as well as they could Indian. What could be bad about keeping up the Indian language? God put us here to talk like that at the beginning. And why is it that we should leave it go entirely. Forget about it—why should we forget about it? Why can't we keep it up as long as we can?

But the young generation now, living and going to school are learning to be like white people. To my thinking they want to erase all Indian customs and cultures. They just want to erase. They don't want to have nothing to do with it. I don't think it should be that way. I think they should try and keep up the old Indian customs along with what they learn in the white man's ways carry on.

But yet I believe that the Indians had the best cultural life. I believe that because for centuries when they practiced their own life, their own way of living, they didn't form no pollution of any kind. They didn't stir up the air pollution, the water pollution. There wasn't nothing like that.
And when the white man say, "Them dirty Indians," he's not really dirty. When the Indians was here before the white man came, he was out in the water swimming or it was only a short time he was laying on the ground. When he did lay on the ground he lay down on a piece of hide, deer-hide. He wasn't dirty. He was always outdoors then. He wasn't in a house. He didn't have to be in a house all the time.

Why did they become good and healthy? Because they were breathing fresh air all the time, day and night. They were in the woods all the time where the carbon dioxide was being taken in the plant life, through chemicalized way and the leaves from the woods were formed from human life. The leaves from the trees, they exhaled like your lungs. They exhaled oxygen which was pure, pure by nature, naturally pure. The Indians breathed that in, like it circulates. They exhaled carbon dioxide and it purified out the air through the woods.

They were in the woods most all the time anyway. They didn't stay in a house where all four walls was closed up and maybe two, three windows, inhaling his own exhaling air. That's true. I'm not exaggerating on that at all. It stand for reason. It proves itself. You go outdoors, you go in the woods, and, well, you can't very well do it now, but in the early days you was breathing in nice, good, fresh air and built your lungs up good and you had good respiration. Because nature was providing genuine elements of providence for survival of life, human life.

Why did this come on like this, because to my belief, God started it that way. The Indians was doing it the right way. There were doing it without studying it in the books..how to live. It came, naturally came to them to live the right way. But then the pioneer got in here and start commercializing from European methods. Now we have this polluted air and water and careless people forming contaminations of all kinds and then we're breathing it.

Just like I told her, the more white blood this new generation has, the more they're trying to get away from this practice (of Indian ways). The Indian isn't increasing and the full blooded Indian is vanishing. Some day there will be no full blooded Indian anymore. They'll be gone for good. The only part that will be, that can be see or heard of, will be the memory of the American Indian. Some-day to come it's gonna be like that. There won't be no Indian, considered an Indian, to be seen or heard of no more. We'll be gone for good and we'll never come back again.
I think that's rather sorrowful to hear. We was just the same as a nation was strong as a nation. Like I said before if we would have held our country during the war­fare, we could have held it from any race of people that tried to take our country; although they didn't actually take our country away. They didn't push us out to the oceans. They left us live here, as far as that goes. But they took away what we lived for. We had to follow their way. When commercial business stepped in, why they just as same spoiled the country. From there on we had to go on living the way the white man wanted us to live. We couldn't go back and live the old way again because everything that was provided for us by nature was gradually running into the exhaustive stage. What nature had provided us with, she can't provide us with anymore. We're running into pollution nowadays...air pollution...water pollution...there's no chance to go back and live the way we used to live...not anymore.

Haskell Institute

I stayed there (at Mt. Pleasant) for ten years. I graduated and came home and stayed here for the summer. In the fall, I was sent to Haskell Institute. Went to school there for three years. I graduated from high school and then I started to go to summer school for junior college. I flunked out of Haskell, homesick. I wanted to get home to Michigan.

I quit and went downtown and painted some signs. I got $35 in two days and used that money and took the train and came home.

I stuck around here. I already had an opening to go back, but I stuck around here till I got a letter from the school asking me if I was coming back.

I wrote back, "Yeah, I'll be coming back. I'll be coming most any day." But I stuck around till about October. By that time there was other enrollments coming in wanting to get in school from other families. So I went back anyway. When I got there they told me it was too late.

I forget what in the world I did exactly. I guess I hung on there for a couple of days and went out and painted some more signs downtown. Made some money and took the train home.
Drifting

When Iassac left Haskell he traveled for a number of years, often utilizing the trade he did well in—sign painting. Iassac still paints for a living as does his friend, Albert Micko.

Here as throughout the dialogue we are faced with the ambivalence that I feel was fostered by the kind of educational system he was part of. He feels fortunate to have received a high school education and to have begun junior college at Haskell. Yet in his heart he feels an immense loss, his language, his culture, his identity. In reality, he knew that the odds were weighed heavily against success in the white oriented system. Unfortunately, he found himself in a marginal status in his own culture as well as hopelessly deprived of important parts of the Indian way (language for example).

Iassac. I'll tell you how I fell in with a carnival and circus. Well, I joined up and we traveled on trains. We stopped at different towns. We worked up toward Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana. Then we switched off to Chicago, down south of Chicago. We stopped in Wisconsin and went on up to Minnesota. By the time we got up to Minnesota the summer was pretty well over with and we started working back towards south again.

They winter quartered in San Antonio, Texas. After they left San Antonio, why I joined up with them at this town, can't think of the name of it now. But, I tell you, it was hard life. It really was a hard life. I'm glad I was young at that time.

Them rides I worked on—they put me on the rides—sometimes they had me run that lever, to stop the rides after the people got in. They called it the Lindy Loop... no, they called it the Hayday Ride. The tops looked like car bodies, modern day car bodies without a top on it—two big seats. They had a wheel like a steering wheel in the front seat.
I worked on that ride. I used to sleep under that ride. They had a banner hung all the way around. I had a bunk with an iron frame. It looked like pipes wired together, water pipes.

We had to load them (the rides) all on the wagons, big heavy wagons. They had a couple elephants pulled them wagons. Slept on the flatcar when we got loaded. Every week we got loaded and unloaded.

We got set up the first day we got to where we was gonna show. We had to work awful fast. Where we stopped they had two tiers and they had a flat--like a platform--and it took eight of us to lift one of them up and carry them up there to the top tier and they would put three of them on the top tier and three on the bottom. Great big wagons, heavy, weighed 800 pounds apiece. We had to load on the wagons.

They had two elephants and sometimes they had one loading up a flatcar. They put great big eight by eights so the wagon won't go either way when it's traveling on the railroad.

Boy, was I glad every time we got through. We had all day to just sit around after we got set up. We showed that night but during the day we didn't have nothing to do. We had a chance to get our rest after we done all that heavy work.

There was one fellow there—you wouldn't believe me—but he wasn't as big as I was. He was a great guy to swear and bawl us out every minute. There was two of us there trying to lift up on that old car body. It was so gosh darn heavy. He bawled us out because we wasn't lifting it up high enough so we could get it up into the wagon. We hollered back, said, "If you can do any better, take the damn thing off and lift it there yourself." By gosh, that fellow, he said, "I'll show you how to lift this up." He told us to get the hell off. He turned right around and he put his back against it like that and he got ahold and lifted it up and he started walking backwards. There was two of us, one on each side and can't lift that. I don't know how in the hell he did it. He must have had a knack to it, but my gosh, it surprised me.

I didn't get much pay at that time. I was practically working for my board and room. I got my meals. I got a ticket and that ticket lasted about two weeks and then I'd have to renew it for the cookhouse—they called it. That's how they did it. They cooked the meals for the troopers, carnival troopers.
Then I quit that. I got off in Chicago and came home. I stayed home for a while and the depression was coming on and I couldn't get no job. Hell, you know I was healthy and nothing wrong with me. I could stand a lot of work, but I couldn't find no job so I joined up with what they called a motorized circus.

My cousin was down in Pahuska, Oklahoma. He married a girl down there. He wrote me a letter and he asked me to come down and see him. So I decided to go down there and I didn't know how I was going to get there.

There was a fair going on. I went to Muskegon (Michigan) and started working for a guy who had what they called a motorized circus, a small circus. I joined up with that circus. He had an Indian show and I took part in it.

I done all the decorating, painting of trucks, and lettering.

I tell you, talk about losing a lot of sleep. I only slept about an hour and a half every night. I had to stay awake there all night all the time. Yeah, I lived a hard life.

Sometimes I'd catch up on my sleep when I was riding on the truck with the driver. They had a regular truck driver, just like chauffeurs. There were certain guys that was picked up to drive them trucks and one truck would carry the animals and another truck would carry the supplies, circus supplies, tents, and that stuff. Sticks too, they were about that long. When we put up the tent we had quite a system of drawing it out. We'd draw it out. It would be all flat. One guy would get in the center and start putting the center pole up. When we got that partly up, just the roof part, there was three of us started driving stakes. The way they taught us to do that, we had these big malls, weighed about ten pounds. Maybe I'd start off and hit that. They was quite high. I would hit just as hard as I could hit that with the hammer. When I'd come up with my hammer, the second, he'd give it a hit. When he come up with his hammer, the third guy then he'd hit it, and then I'd hit it again. That's the way we drove them stakes down to about that high. Sometimes we went through some hard ground. Boy, that was hard work.

When we got ready to move again, we had a long two by six for a handle and it had wheels on it, looked like wagon wheels. On the end of that two by six there was a chain. The three of them guys would handle this outfit and they had me take that chain and make a half inch rap
on it and then they'd come down with that two by six. That's the way we pulled them sticks up. We'd go along and throw them in a row and another guy would come along and pick them up and put them in a cart.

One night after midnight we was all in a hurry to get it tore down so we can, some of us, catch up on our sleep. I was picking up them sticks and I got too close and got under them guys coming down with the two by six. They got me on the back of the head and cut my head open.

I didn't know how bad I was hurt and I was lucky that the boss phoned an army doctor. It all didn't cost them much. I thought maybe he was gonna give me anesthetic and put me out so they could take care of my head but that guy he said, "You just take your hands and double your hands up like this...and I'll work on your head," he says. One guy washed my head while he was doing I see everything was getting dark. Thought I was going under. Two of them guys got ahold of my hand and started squeezing my hand. He said, "Squeeze his hand and wrist and squeeze them just as hard as you can squeeze em."

I don't know why he told them that. By that, you know, I didn't go clear under, completely out.

He had this instrument there and he sewed the skin up and boy, I just sat there and took it in. I don't know how many stitches he put back there. And by God, I done all right.

I told him, I says, "Does it bother you to take care of Indians?"

He says, "Oh, God," he says, "Young guy, heck, I take care of Chinese and Indians of India and European people. I've worked on a good many different race of people." And he said, "Don't think nothin of that."

But, by God, he really took care of me. When he was done he said to the boss, "You don't owe me nothing." He didn't take no money from my boss...

It wasn't long after that I was working with the circus again, just like nothin had happened to me...

We ended up in Quapaw, Michigan. There I met up this guy from Rosebush. He was an Indian guy. I got acquainted with him and we got to talking. We decided to go to Oklahoma. I spoke about my cousin being down there so he decided that he'd go with me. He had a regular camping outfit with him.
Well, anyway, we went down to Oklahoma and we started out with fifty cents. That's pretty cheap traveling. The way we make the trip down there, we stopped at some town and get the police to help us find gas for the car. We'd tell them we just wanted to get out of town, so then they'd make out an order for a gas station to give us gas. Some of these gas stations, they'd give us more than what was written on the paper. Some actually filled the tank for us. Well, that's how we got to the next town. We done the same thing at the next town.

He left me in Pawhuska, Oklahoma. That's where all those oil wells are where the Indians have them oil rights, the Osages and Quapaws.

I chummed around with a Sioux there. We went all over from one town to another. Sometime after that guy come back and he decided to stay there in Pawhuska. Him and his wife got a room to rent. I stayed with them there all winter.

When I was down in Oklahoma, them guys, they'd braid their hair and let it come behind their ears and hang down. They wore them big ten gallon hats there and had one feather on the side of their hats. I seen a lot of Otos dressed that way and Sioux. I seen more Indians down in Oklahoma than I did anywhere in the United States.

At the time I was down there I was living upstairs. I looked out the window one time and it was getting towards night and pretty soon I seen a brand new Buick—looked like it just came out of the factory—a brand new Buick. I seen a guy, a chauffeur in the front seat, driving. He had a uniform on, a regular chauffeur. What surprised me, there was an old Indian sitting in the back seat with a blanket over his shoulder.

I asked some questions and found out he was one of them Osage Indians. He had about four oil wells on his land, pumping oil. The government, they got guardians for them—especially the old ones. He didn't know how much he was worth—how much money he was getting.

Just like when I went to school in Kansas. I got homesick. I wanted to get back to Michigan. That's the reason I came back when I did. I don't know how I'd be now if I went out of state. It probably wouldn't bother me now if I lived the rest of my life in some other state, but at that time, I was young and it was easy for me to get homesick. I took off back to Michigan. I came back here. I couldn't stand another month.
Settling Down, Marriage

Iassac's married life is remembered as a happy time, a time of sharing, and a time of personal growth. His wife was a good woman. She cared for him and stood by his side even though her own non-Indian family made heated objections to the interracial marriage.

Iassac's wife's terminal illness was a hardship on him, emotionally and physically. When she finally died, he was totally drained, empty, and alone. It is still a very difficult topic to discuss without renewing the pain.

Iassac briefly mentions the drinking problem, here is perhaps responding to stereotyping; i.e., the drunken Indian image, and is trying to justify his own drinking patterns.

Iassac. I stuck around here about four years. Then I joined up with Albert Michol. I helped him paint signs for some time, then I went down to Bay City and did some painting down there. That's where I met this woman. About two years after that I got married. I've been here ever since. I didn't travel around anymore. I stayed right here.

I met her in Bay City. I was doing some painting down there. We didn't get together right there just like that. I just talked to her at that time then we started correspondence not long after that. Then she went to this institution and stayed there for a while. There she was still in her school age when I first met her, and she didn't want to go to school and her mother got mad at her, and made up a court hearing, and the judge put her by force in that institution. She depended on me to help her get out of there. When she made a promise to me, she kept it. You take a person like that, when they really are true, when they make a promise, they don't break it. If she wasn't true, she would have broke her promise. But she didn't. That's good to know that in a person. It means a lot. A person a lot of encouragement. I think it helps the other person a lot. But when you break that promise and then the other person gets discouraged--maybe they're all like
that... (referring to whites) they give you a lot of line
and then they tell you got to hell... they're evil you see,
and a lot of discouragement builds up in you that way.

I'm referring to young people that way, because they
have the future ahead of them. Once you go through so
much experience in life, the basic part of your life, you
haven't got too much future left after that. So if you
play it wise basically at the beginning, then you're really
gaining a good life for your future. But if you fall down
basically when you're young, then what you've got left?
Then you either make the best of it or you're just a com-
plete failure.

She was the one that got me to build this house the
way I built it, and I went to work and I bought, with the
money I made, I bought all these, all this building
material, the doors and windows, and it run into quite a
lot of money, but I got it up and I would have completed it
better than I did, but when she died I got discouraged and
said, "Why, to heck with it, it's good enough for me." You
know, for the rest of my time, I thought. Otherwise I was
going to lift it up and I was going to build a foundation an
I still might put siding on it yet in some time to come.
When she died I got completely discouraged. And I'm tell
you, Betty, I never drank one drop of beer or liquor all the
eighteen years that I was married to her. You see, what
encouragement she gave me, I felt ambitious. After I
married her, I felt that I'd go out and support her the way
any other husband would support a wife. But when she died,
it was just like I wasn't married after all.

I felt bad and I felt discouraged and so I got to
started drinking again. Now I shouldn't get drunk as re-
gular as I do. But it's just like I told you, once you
get in the habit, then it's hard to break it. It can be
broken, a person can break the habit; any bad habit a per-
son's got, they can break it, but for some of us it takes
quite a while to break it, but it can be done, you can
break it. Albert Micko, he made—he was pretty near the
same way. When his wife died, he kind of let go of every-
thing he had, he had started. But to come right down to it,
I don't think it... Would you think it hurts for a man, or a
person to just like a beverage or a soft drink, you know,
you drink one or two bottles of soft drinks and you like
cokes sometimes you buy another bottle on the road or when
you're at home. Well, that's the way I look at beer or
liquor. But, like Albert now, he made darn good money.
I heard a lot of white people say, if I made money like
he does, like he's been making, I'd be a rich man. And
he could have been a rich man. He was something like I
am. When his wife, before he got married, why, he was
always gettin drunk and that's the way he felt. He felt
what's the use of trying to start a good business, oh, he'd get a lot of trade. That's part of the racial nature.

When Albert's wife died, well he got to drinking again. With the heart trouble he's got, he still drinks. And just like I say, it's hard to break away. But it can be broken. When I married her, I quit. Like I told you, I didn't drink a drop of liquor or beer, for the eighteen years I was married to her.

The way the cost of living was coming up, I had to get right out and--when I didn't have a job I was right downtown to find another job. Sometimes it was a small job and sometimes it was a big job, but I wanted to keep a going all the time because our daily expense kept a going all the time, general expense. I had to be ahead of that all the time, in order to have clothes once in a while and then she'd like a little something, furnishings for the house, and like I said before, when I got married I didn't have nothing. I didn't know I was going to get married. That's why I didn't get prepared for marriage. You know, a lot of young people, they get prepared. But I never did think I'd get married. It just come just like a sudden moment of time when I got hitched in front of the wagon.

But I tell you, I really am glad I found a good companion. I mean the way she used me, you know. If I fell into somebody that would give me trouble all the time, not that I...I'm all right myself. There probably would have been faults on me. But you know how married life is. If it isn't good, you're losing a lot of happiness. But if you make a success of it for happiness, then it's wonderful. Marriage is wonderful. If you can find good happiness, I mean gain good happiness, and that's the way it was when I got hooked up, why she knew I didn't have nothing and I don't know why, I don't know how she got interested in me like she did, but she went as far as telling me--I told her, I says, I haven't got nothing to support a wife. I haven't got no home, I don't even have no land. But we started right from the bottom. We went to the land auction. We bought that small strip of land, and I was going to buy more land later on, but her life was shortened before I could go ahead and do enough. So it's just as well I didn't get any more because when she left it didn't mean anything to me. I just felt like I didn't have nothing again, after she went. Of course, I don't feel that way as much now. I feel a little more secure now. Materially, I feel a little more secure. Since I forgot my--I got away from the feeling when she died--the day that she died, I got away from that now. I began to feel like my natural being again. But, you take some women, if the man hasn't got security, just like that, to hell with you, I'll take
somebody else that's got something. I don't say all women are like that though. In the thinking of the woman or the man, when there's love, they understand each other. That's the way I think it is. If the man don't understand the woman and they don't understand each other, you don't gain no happiness. So this way, it just happened that I got a big boost when this woman had patience for me to build up security. It took about a year or two to get up good enough security to gain so much happiness. She was happy with me all the way through.

Another way, she had depressive feeling on account of surroundings, my relatives and hers. Because, like I told you, she wrote a letter to Bay City several times to try to get her mother to come and visit her, but she never came. Same way with her brother, because, partly on account of that racial interference. He knew she was with my relations around here, you know. I got relations in Mason County and Oceana County, you see. And I felt, even my mother felt the same way, with them over there you see. She didn't have a good feeling about her relations on account of what they were doing to me. That made her feel ill on account of the way they were using me.

But anyway, we was gradually gaining good security, and she lived long enough, and we was going step by step, you know, getting better things all the time, but when she come down sick she couldn't do much for her part anymore, as far as meeting her household duties, and that stuff. Of course, in a way she was a burden after that. I mean, on her sickness, you know. Otherwise, I had to take care of her; besides working out I had to come home and take care of her.

When she got right down sick I never went to bed till about 2:00 and I was out 4:00 next morning starting out to work. Sometimes I'd walk eight miles to go to work, after I got up. I'll tell you something else, when I got ready to go to work, I put everything—she got so she was an invalid—she couldn't walk around the house or anything—wherever I set her, that's where she set all day long, eight or nine hours a day. I had a little table. I put her glass of water there so if she wants a drink, where she could reach, you know and if she wanted a little lunch, something that don't have no salt, sodium, that would affect her diabetes, diabetic case. If she got all hungry, then I'd have a plate there for her food, so she could reach to eat it you know, because, otherwise, nobody there to take care of her.

I'm telling you, when she wanted to go to the toilet she just couldn't do nothin. I had to clean her. Not
everyday I had to do that because sometimes she couldn't get up to even go to the pail, although I left a pail there, just in case somebody might come along—somebody willing to help her.

Tell you, I didn't get home until about 7:00 because I stopped every night to pick up certain foods, special food made, and the only place I could get that fixed is in the tavern, because they were doing the cooking there for lunches. They were doing it in the restaurant too, but they wouldn't bother with it fixing up one batch of lunch for one person especially. When they cooked there, they were cooking for the whole whatever number of customers they gained from the business part. In the tavern, well, sometimes just one or two people calls for lunch, but that woman who did the cooking there, she had that much more time to fix up a special lunch. I had to pay her a little extra though, to have a special food made up.

I'd take that home with me sometimes I'd carry a box that size of groceries and carry it all the way home with me eight and one half miles. When I got by the corner on that swamp road I had to pick up my rubbers, because in the morning I had to wear them to walk through that wet grass and wet ground because I had to leave so early—heavy dew, see. Then when I got to the corner, I'd go walking—if I got a ride I was a little better off, but I had to walk all eight miles to work. Then besides that, I worked seven and one half, eight hours every day.

No one to watch her or take care of her while I was gone to work. I didn't have no woman, couldn't find a woman. That's when I really went through hell.

Then when I got to work I had to carry my ladders and planks when I went in to the next job because it was close by. There was three jobs I done that. One job, the fourth job I done, the doctor's wife, seeing as I didn't have no car, after she learned that I was hiking to work and back home, she had a station wagon and she helped me move my ladders to the next job after I got through working for her husband, the doctor. Pretty good people, you know. She helped me—course I loaded the ladders on the wagon, but she carried them in the wagon to the next job. I made about four trips back and forth to haul my tools to the next job.

You know, there's one guy that'll tell you the same thing that I went through. He knows all about it—one guy in Hart. You know, I went through so much of that, my heart was starting to give a little bit. I was coming to an exhaustion. Too much strain on my being, you know. Not enough sleep, not enough rest. Working every day, and then
walk to work like I said, and then home again. And then take care of her when I got home, and cook my supper and I had to fix her lunch up for supper, and besides that, stay by her there and help her when she wanted to get up, and I'd get ahold of her and help her stand up. If she wanted to go to the pail, well I had to help her, put her down on the pail and then I'd go in the other room and wait and she'd holler when she was done I'd come back and I'd get ahold of her and put her down on the bed because she couldn't sit down on the chair because it was too hard for her, so I set her down on the end of the bed and then after a while she wanted to lay down and I had to help her lay down, let her down easy. And then when she laid down, all that fluid would start coming up on her head, start crawling up her face like that, around her neck. And then when she was sitting up, when she'd sit up all that fluid would start working down to her legs and feet. Her legs were about like that, and couldn't wear her shoes. They tore her stockings. And they was tight on account of that swelling. And she had to sleep sitting up. The doctor try to keep that fluid from going either way too much. But she didn't want to do that. She wanted to lay right down to sleep.

I never went through so much hard going in my life before she went to the hospital.

She was a darn good worker when she was all right. The first eight years that I was married to her. She was right out hoeing the garden, she was out washing and if she wasn't doing that, she was mopping the floor and she was--she even done a little painting once in a while around the woodwork and the walls while I was out working. Of course she was a worker.

She didn't want much either. I even gave her all the freedom, Betty, even when she was all right. I gave her all I could. I even told her if she wants to go home and visit her mother she could be gone a month, two months. That didn't bother me any; but she didn't want to go. She stuck with me. When we first got married she says, "I'll live in a barn with you." That's how she was when we first got together. She stayed with me till she died. That's what I think you call good companionship. With a good understanding, you know.

Remembrances and Comments

Well, I just lived like anybody else lived. I didn't have any intention to do any good for myself. I have no feeling I had made good in anything although I had got a good education.
I could have gone into business life, I could have went to business but I felt like the way most the Indians feel when an Indian goes into business. He doesn't make it good like white man because naturally a white man gets trade on account of a white man's nature. I mean they... they give him business without them even thinking that they has to look for that he doesn't give him business. With the Indian he feels like he is by himself and he feels like the white man wouldn't give him no business even if he was capable of running good business for profitable living... because of his race. I mean because he's an Indian, he feels that nobody would give him any trade, so he gives up. He just don't try to enter business even though he could run a business. He feels he couldn't get the trade like the white man would get the trade. That's one reason why we don't try to do anything like that for ourselves. We just stay calm and live a calm life. We feel like we're licked before we do anything.

You be probably heard so much about the Indians' drinking and drunk and just the same as good for nothing. They're not exactly good for nothing...I mean for a white man to look at an Indian as he is, for a while, "That's all they do is just get drunk and they never have nothing. They never advance any. They just none of them tries to stir up any specialty where they can show good standing."

But you know from my experience when I was young guy, after I finished school, everybody who was Indian that I noticed that tried to stir up some business, they lack very much of encouragement. And by nature, the Indian gets discouraged awfully easy. If he don't make a success of what he's after, he gives up.

Now I think that's one reason why a lot of us drink beer. We go to taverns and drink up a lot of our money because we have to depend on the white people to help us start a business of some kind. Without the white man's help, we can't get very far because the Indian themselves can't give us enough trade to start a business of any kind and keep it a going. So the white people, they sort of put their foot down on our heads and didn't let us get up. Now that's the way I feel about it.

Now, like you, young people, you're recognized more than I was or my father or mother. In their time, there was so much hatred for the Indians. The same way, the Indians hated the whites too, as a general feeling.

So at the time when the Indian would try to start a business, he didn't get no encouragement from the whites, so, like I say, he gives up awful easy. So he gives up and says, "Oh, to hell with it. I might as well have good times
from the time I'll be living. To hell with trying to do something. The whites don't help us out anyway."

So the Indian, he goes drinking and gets drunk. At least he enjoys himself. He just figures just to exist till he dies. That's the feeling we had.

But now it begins to be different. Some of the white people are paying more attention to the Indians now, especially the younger generation. But that's in your generation see--them kind--not mine.

Now see, that's the reason why us older people paid more attention to drinking. You know yourself, in the first place, the white man introduced drink, intoxicating beverage, to the Indians. They didn't know nothing about drinking. It's the white man that introduced it in the first place...and then turned right around and give us a bad name for it.

But like I said before, you people from your generation, you people are getting a higher education. Then you can go into business of some kind and you're into business of some kind and you're going to get a lot more encouragement than we did in my time because there was that much more hateful racial feelings.

A lot of us in my generation, we can't hardly change now. You know once you fall into a certain habit it's hard to break it. It's hard to change again. Well, it's just nature.

I understand they've got some houses built over in Hart, west of Hart. Now I'm going to tell you, Betty, when they first organized this housing program they started out for Indians, the other minority groups becoming closer. You know how colored folks get along with Indians at times. They're gonna be a lot of Indians that won't pay no attention to them (housing project).

That thirteen and a half acres was given to the Ottowa, Grand River Band of Ottowas. Just like you, before you moved into one of them houses, you feel you ought to stay right here. You feel this is your home here. This will always be your home. It is the same way with me. If I already got settled over there, I'd rather be there than to move in one of them homes.

They're big homes, well modernized and all that. What I want to tell you, Betty, especially a family man or person with family, kids, gonna be pretty hard to get along from one house to another. Furthermore, the Indians
are going to be under the same as a segregation to a certain extent with the whites. I'm already seeing that. There's no Indian family gonna get along very good there, if they move in there. A lot of them don't want to move in, as it is.

When they get it all done, to move in, you know who's going to move in there--the colored people and the Mexicans and the whites. Yet it was given to the Indians. The land was given to the Indians.

If there's enough minority white groups moves in there they'll get along all right and it will bring better business in Walkerville. But if any Indian move in there, they won't get along with the whites.

No, we're not welcome in there, but they accept our money when we buy a beer, a glass of beer. They'll bring us a bill because they're getting that twenty-five cents everytime we get a glass of beer. But to come socially to talk to us like we're talking together, why all the white group's by themselves together over there talking, and the Indians on one side, they're together by themselves. Then the Mexicans, they're maybe at one or two tables at some other place again. Just as soon as one Mexican gets up to try to give a friendly talk to some white group or some other race of people, then that woman, she come along and say, "You'd better get out. You're making too much noise."

Yeah, that's their excuse, you know that she don't want mix. We're supposed to same as mix in American, by rights. You know we're supposed to live like one big family. I mean understand each other like one big family. But there is just the same feeling as way back, just about the same things. The white's still don't want to recognize Indians as they are. They like that money though.

Individually, though, like my wife, she was a white woman, but she used me good. I mean she was good to me. And you take that Clarence, whether he's white or not, he's got a good nature and he proves his good nature. He don't hide around. Why, you see there's a few good white people they understand good. They understand like they should the Indians. They've got that special feeling, you know that special feeling. There just groups here and there that has that hateful feeling for the Indians.

I liked reading that (Indian) paper. Sometime ago I heard there was somebody trying to stop that circulation. ...too much talk against white people. You know in America you got a right to do what you want to do as long
as you're not hurting somebody. Yeah, it's a free country. You're free to do what you want to do, especially what you do to yourself, that's your business. Free...like trying to put a stop to that circulation.

Have you visited any of the houses they're building? They went up fast for a lot of money. But like I say, I wouldn't move into any of those.

You know what they should have done? That's what that guy that gave that 71 acres to the Indians, Grand River Band, he was hoping they would build those houses there. It would be far enough away from the town. You'd have more freedom to live the way you want to live. People would probably get along better. The Indians would have moved into one of them houses.

The way it is out there in the residential district, right amongst those white families, they wouldn't get along. Because if anything, if they were going to get along at all they would get along better in the tavern than they would get along out there.

I have to laugh sometimes...talk about hatreds turning up between the whites and Indians! I was parked on that street by the courthouse. When my wife and I got already to come home, we done all our shopping. I got in that car and I looked back before I started out and I didn't see nobody coming. How that guy come to beat us so quick from the other street we just turned the corner. He came whizzin around through the street just after I was pulling out. When I looked back. We didn't see nobody coming down that street. All of a sudden, about the time I started to go, this guy, he come around from the other street, turned that sharp corner quick, and come whizzing by there. I didn't stop in time and I hit him broad side. I didn't hurt my car any but I give a big long scrape clear across the body of his car.

Right away he got out and he started giving me hell...bawling me out for hitting him. He said I hit him on purpose.

I had to laugh what my wife said to him. She said just because he work for the judge he think he can go around here doin just what he want and get away with it, she told him. And then he said something back to her and she said, "You Goddam white puke, his car gets just as dirty as yours!" I had to laugh, because a white woman talking against a white guy.

Another white fellow, he come up from the courthouse and he says, "I was standing looking out that window and I
seen everything." He said, "That old Indian there, he purposely drove right out and hit that guy."

The sheriff come along and he looked at everything. He couldn't find anything wrong with me. I wasn't drinking anyway. I never did drink all the time I was married. I stayed sober all the time, eighteen years. The cooper he says, "Well I guess I'll have to let you guys fight it out."

I explained to that copper I was already on my way out when he come along. He didn't have to come that fast and he didn't blow his horn. My wife was witness to that.

Well, he went over and figured out how much it cost to get that body and fender done...$32...and this cooper, they got to talking together and whispering together. That's one reason my wife got madder than hell at them, but I went ahead and paid that anyway, $32. A lot of guys do that in a small town. $32 was a lot to pay out at that time.

To go back to the old warfare when the Indians fought the white people to keep their country, to keep their lands, the white man overpowered the Indian because he had these explosive powers. They had guns, Indians were dropped before they had the chance to fight. All they had was the bow and arrow in those days against the white power. They just didn't have no chance to fight like the way they could have if the white man didn't have all the explosive power and the advantage in those guns, I think the Indians could have pushed them back to the Atlantic Ocean again.

The white man came here and cultivate our lands but I don't believe in the way they commercialized this country. I don't believe in the way they brought up so much waste of nature. Nature provided us with anything we wanted. Nature took care of us well. Like the timber, we left the timber alone. When we left the timber alone the birds and animals got the good out of the woods that was left there. God put birds and animals here for a good reason. He didn't put them here just to waste without a good reason.

The way it is now, timber was cut out so much that the deer and all the wildlife is almost livin on a highway or have to cross the highway to go from one place to another. In the old days they were so that they could go here and there and nothing bothered them.

When we wanted to eat meat we could go out and kill a deer and that was enough. We didn't try to kill and slaughter all we could see.
Out on the plains there was white people who sent out and shot buffalo just for the fun of it...and left the carcass there to rot. A lot of plains Indians went hungry on that account. There was millions and millions of buffaloes that was killed. That's what I call just plain waste. That waste caused a lot of western Indians to go hungry, to actually starve, starve to death.

Indians down in the southwest actually starved to death too and yet there was plenty of food in this country.

I tell ya, when I think about it, it's a very sorrowful thing, the way Indians met hardships in the past. Like I told you here before, I sometimes think that we (Indians) could have just as well be exterminated. Then we wouldn't have to go through all these hardships.

When the white man come in and took over everything, overcome us by their power of the advantages, they took advantage of us. They overpowered us. We didn't have the chance to defend ourselves in no way. We left everything to the government and the government could have wiped us out entirely.

Sometimes I think that would have been a good thing if the government went right to work and exterminated us in the first place rather than leave us go on living.

A lot of us in my generation, we did get a lot of good when we went to school. A lot of us don't feel that way but I feel that I got a lot of good...this schooling I got. I learned to live like a white man. I can't go back anyway to live like Indians used to live. So I am glad I went to school as long as I did. I had the potential to go on but I quit school when I should have kept on going. I should have went on through college and graduated.

Again, sometimes I feel maybe it wouldn't have done me any good if I did finish college. Maybe it wouldn't done me no good. Maybe I done all right I quit while I did. I got my high school education and I think that's enough for me. Like I said an Indian tries to start something and the other people (white people) put their foot down on his head and keep him down and they don't let him get up. That's the way the whole things looks to me. The Indian don't have no chance. He's got his head pinned down and he can't do nothing, but the other race of people go out and run what they want to, or run a business, or have a professional life. They seem to have all the chances in the world. The Indian, when he tries to do something, he hasn't got no chance. He's pinned down all the time. That's another reason why I think we should have been wiped out entirely.
To me, to come right down to judge, he should have been forgot entirely, never to be thought of any more unless we could have got the good, same as any other race. I mean the superior race which is supposed to be the white man. White man has always been under a sense of superiority to other races like the colored people and the Indian people.

The white man colonized here. They started colonies along the Atlantic and they gradually pushed the Indians to the west, pushed them out of the way. We didn't get the good we deserved to get. Manmade judgment put us in the position we are in now. God left it like that but I think God will see to it that we're rewarded for what we went through. We can forget what my people went through and what hardships they went through but I think God will take up and reward us.

Now that's just what I'm thinking myself. I don't know maybe it wasn't that way...I don't know. Maybe it wasn't that way, but that's the way I feel.

If man will see that but an Indian he lives, lives to himself all the time...
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

The familial enculturation process in an ethnic group is perhaps the most basic means of maintaining cultural stability. The identity of a people is preserved and maintained within the family even in circumstances of rapid or enforced change. Despite concrete changes in cultural elements, value and behavioral patterns remain persistent. The rate of acculturation proceeds at a relatively slow pace as long as a child's education in the values and traditions of his people remains within the sphere of his family or group.

When Iassac was born, his parents occupied a log house, wore cloth garments, and worked for wages. Yet they were Ottowa. The Jesuits had been in pursuit of heathen souls for some 400 years in this area, yet Iassac's parents were not Christianized. They still held firm to Indian spiritual beliefs and practices, and although these beliefs had perhaps been modified by contact and circumstances they were basically Ottowa. They still depended largely on home remedies and other Indian medicines for illness. Most importantly, Iassac's parents still identified themselves as Ottowa despite all outward cultural changes.

The significant question for many non-Indian Americans today is: Why do Indians continue to choose to
be Indians when they have the alternative of a supposedly "superior culture"? The common misconceptions about cultural change and acculturation probably foster this kind of attitude. Most non-Indian Americans have sincerely believed in the theory of the melting pot for a long time. They have also believed in the myth of the Vanishing American: that Indian cultures either have disappeared because of wars and decimation by disease or are rapidly disappearing and that those who are left will eventually assimilate. This myth has been used to justify the most outrageous behavior toward Indians, toward Indian values and culture, extending even to the seizure of Indian lands whenever and wherever another utility for it had been discovered. The enforced assimilation policy of the Federal Government has only recently been subjected to critical analysis. Until very recently the idea that an alternative to total assimilation might exist was never explored by non-Indians, never voiced by those concerned with Indian affairs although Indians have been suggesting just such a policy for hundreds of years. The self-determination legislation of today does not represent a radical or even a new concept to the Indian people, they have advocated self-determination as an alternative to total assimilation for a long time.

One explanation for the endurance of the ideology of total assimilation can be found in the economic policy of the U.S. Government. Perhaps the essential falseness of this doctrine will be more transparent when the issues
involved are removed from their usual cultural context and viewed in terms of dollars and cents. During the treaty period it seemed cheaper to the U.S. Government to place Indians on reservations and feed and clothe them, because to allow them to remain hunters would require too much land. Once on the reservations it seemed beneficial to encourage the Indians to become farmers, they could then feed themselves and become economically self-sufficient. Of course this was still cheaper. Then it seemed even better to the U.S. Government to educate the Indians in the skills of the white world because then they could leave the reservations and become part of the white culture. This meant that the final break with the remaining land base and Federal responsibility could be made. To paraphrase Shakespeare's Hamlet: I know not 'seems', I know only the destruction of lives and values.

Perhaps education can break this cycle of money, land and greed. Perhaps education can ease or slow the transition, but as Iassac's life illustrates the present educational system must be used with caution. Education can only represent a positive value to the Indian if it furthers his capabilities for self-determination.

The human dimension of the economic policy of the U.S. Government toward the Indians may be further clarified if we examine it more closely in terms of the Ottowa and Iassac's parents. The Dawes Act of 1887 provided for the breaking up of Indian lands into individual allotments.
These allotments could after twenty years, or sometimes even earlier, be sold by an administrator’s actions to whites by the Indian owner or an agent acting in his behalf. During the 50 year period after the Dawes Act, 90 million acres of Indian lands in the United States were lost (N.A.C.I.E., 1974: 245-246).

The purported intent of this pernicious bit of legislation was to give Indians equal rights with other citizens. Among these rights was the right to farm his own plot of ground. But by this time the Ottowa had long since given up large-scale agricultural pursuits because of the inter-tribal wars and through participation in the fur trade. The Ottowa, like Indians throughout the United States did not become agriculturalists. A combination of factors ranging from the economic to the lack of education combined with cultural expectations prevented them from being able to compete successfully. One significant difference was that while the Indians were farmers, they were never exploiters of the land.

Iassac’s parents owned a small plot of land but were not able to produce enough to subsist. They worked for non-Indian farmers who were obviously more successful in cultivating Indian land. Their meager wages were supplemented by addition of wild fruits and vegetables to their food supply and a limited amount of trapping by the older sons. Despite the extreme poverty in which the Battuce family existed, the family unit remained intact and survived
by continual struggle.

Tuberculosis, smallpox, measles, and other diseases introduced by non-Indian populations, were responsible for the rapid decimation of Indian population. These were new diseases and Indians had no natural resistance to them. Today tuberculosis is still one of the major diseases afflicting the Indian population. Tuberculosis was the cause of death of several members of Iassac's family. After the death of Iassac's father, it became increasingly difficult for Iassac's mother to support her family. When the plight of the family came to the attention of the county welfare authorities, Iassac's home life ended. The two children were forcibly taken from Mrs. Battice and despite pleas and tears placed in a government boarding school. It may of course be argued that it was to the children's advantage to place them in a situation where sufficient food and clothing was provided along with the inevitable white education; but to an Indian child, or to any other child for that matter, forced separation from his home and mother is a never forgotten trauma.

Boarding schools are, probably by their very nature, cold and impersonal institutions. These boarding schools had been assigned the enormous task of re-cycling Indian children for participation in the dominant culture. To accomplish this, they employed whatever dubious methods seemed necessary, despite individual needs or desires and certainly despite their functions as institutions of
education. They were (and still are) rigidly structured, parochially operated, and like military organizations used extreme forms of punishment to create discipline.

Iassac, like most Indian children, arrived at the school speaking only his native language. He was faced with a language code that demanded that he speak English only. This code is still functioning in public and boarding schools today. Only a few experimental bilingual, bicultural schools have been created and their programs have only been in existence for a few years. Iassac's situation continues to be repeated, punishment is still being used to force children to discontinue the use of their native language.

In these boarding schools the Indian child, in addition to his white-oriented education, received Christian indoctrination. Despite the long history of the Catholic church in their area, the Ottowa have continued to practice their own religious ceremonies and other so called "heathen practices". Iassac's religious ideology demonstrates the persistence of the basic Indian belief in Gitche Monitou, the Creator, or as it is literally translated the Great Spirit. His concise description of the hypocrisy which he, as an Indian, perceived in Christian doctrine versus Christian behavior continues to be the main criticism which Indians have of Christian religions today. This kind of hypocrisy is also one of the main objections which
Indians have to the enforced assimilation policy of the Federal Government.

One of the basic elements in all attempts to assimilate the Indian into the dominant culture in the Americas, from the time of the Spanish conquest onward, has been the attempt to replace Indian religion and ceremony with Christianity. Shortly after education legislation was passed, the Federal Government contracted the management of Indian boarding schools to interested Christian denominations. A major part of the Christian training which the children received was the kind which demanded the rejection of and alienation from Indian religious beliefs and practices. In making new Christians, all heathen or pagan elements had to be rejected.

Boarding school education replaced for Iassac the usual familial enculturation process. He was taught to read, to play the violin, he was taught a trade and he was taught to march in parades for white people. While its true that he was removed from a home life of extreme poverty and taught a trade with which he supported himself as an adult, it is also true that this was only at the expense of his native language, his culture and the freedom to determine his own values.

As institutions of education, the boarding schools functioned effectively enough. They created a cultural discontinuity by disrupting traditional enculturation
processes. They created conflicts between the generations, among peer groups, and within the individual himself.

Theoretically, this method of education was to make it possible for Indians to take their place with other Americans, to be assimilated. Those Indians who completed the process of "white-washing" were eventually faced with the cold, harsh reality of a world in which there was no place, no social system into which they could fit. Roles had been created for them, but not the performance space. Non-relevant education combined with a false ideology creates unrealistic aspirations and places the graduates of such institutions in the precarious position of marginality between their own people and white society. They are simply being prepared for a future in a cultural system that does not exist (Spindler, 1970: 241-245).

The boarding schools can certainly be blamed for being overprotective while at the same time instilling unreal expectations in the Indian student. The school itself was usually sheltered in a small and isolated community, and relatively protected from the realities of even the community in which they were located. Over a period of ten years of continual exposure to white values and Christian beliefs, the projected changes in the personality of the Indian student were usually attained.

When Iassac re-entered the world outside the boarding school he quickly learned how few opportunities actually
existed for Indians within the greater society. The areas open to Indians were restricted to trades and other menial positions. His expectations, to "make good" for himself were blocked by institutional racism. He found that prejudice does not separate "educated" Indians from "heathens".

Iassac's interests and education in his own Indianness began to reappear and become more refined during the years which he spent in aimless travel and exposure to different peoples and life styles. He started to explore other Indian groups and the extent to which they had remained "Indian." He saw that even the oil rich Osage had retained his Indian identity and had found Indian life style more comfortable. Much of the romanticism which Iassac expresses in his statements about Indians was probably developed later in his life, in an effort to find his own identity and in search of his own kind of self-esteem.

The culture shock which Iassac has sustained upon leaving boarding school became less stressful and anxiety producing as he became relatively comfortable again as an Indian. He eventually settled down, married, and worked for wages in the trade which he had been taught. Yet in Iassac's discussions about Indians and Indianness, aspects of fatalism and ambivalence are readily apparent.

If we look at the models which Iassac had during his developmental period, causative agents are readily cited. Poverty, disease and death are difficult enough for adults to handle, but for a child the days of laughter are
crucially blighted by hunger and the sudden loss of family. Separation from his mother and the type of education that followed instilled in Iassac a deep question of his own self-worth. If being an Indian, if talking Indian and worshipping in Indian ways were to be rejected as valueless, then what was left for this child to be?

The love-hate which Iassac displays for whites, and especially for white education, are a direct result of the kind of educational process to which he was exposed. When he says, "They (whites) should have killed us all off", this fatalism reflects the negation and rejection of Indian culture by school administrators, by the Federal Government, and by the dominant culture as a whole.

Iassac's life history can be viewed in terms of a much broader perspective. The problems he faced are not that remote from the situation faced by Indians in the United States today. The Indians who attend public school may have a family for a home base today, but what they are offered in public schools is not conducive to the maintenance of self-worth. Indian students will face outright prejudice, stereotyping, and institutional racism, all of which foster negative self-images and threaten self-esteem.

Millions of dollars are spent yearly on administrative costs for so-called "Indian Education". What we have seen to date is not Indian education but an educational system developed by non-Indians that is both non-relevant and
ineffective. The extremely high drop-out rate of Indian high school students, compared to other groups in the United States, is proof of the continued failure of white-oriented education for Indian children.

Educational policies must begin to reflect the needs and aspiration of the people they are to serve, rather than deciding for these people what their goals should be. Administrators, and other policy makers of institutions of education, should acknowledge the inherent difficulties and make committed efforts to revise and modify them, instead of continuing to utilize the educational system as an agent of enforcing change. The inevitability of total assimilation of Indians in the United States is no longer a valid concept and can no longer serve as a basis for Indian policy in education or in any other area which concerns Indians.
CHAPTER V

TYING IT UP

When old people tell stories, they often leave the conclusion to the listener, who must make a verbal conclusion either right away or after a period of time is given to thinking about what was said. In Ottawa he would say, "Can you tie it up?"

My immediate reaction was remorse, tears. My conclusion is a life's commitment to education, specifically to higher education where I feel that an impact can be made not only through opening minds to the problems of formal education of Indians, but hopefully, in assisting in some way those who choose to follow this road.

No words can portray or effectively describe the heaviness of heart, the pain wrought, as the toll is taken in my spirit as I began to look again at life through Iassac's eyes. For a time I am again blinded with tears and choked with anguish, sadness for a child, motherless, not through death or by choice, but orphaned by governmental policy. By taking children from "heathen" parents they hoped to complete the whitewashing began over 300 years ago. Tear out every last vestige of Indianness! Scourge the Indian of his savage practices! It is no surprise to hear in Iassac's own words, "Why didn't they
just exterminate us all and be done with it!"

The sadness, the anger, the hatred that we all face today is backed by hundreds of years of frustration. Iassac blames the white man for his troubles. Is he not justified? Can we not see in his ambivalence a reflection of his models? Is his fatalistic nature not a product of the institutional racism inherent in governmental policy, in the educational institution--then and now?

Today people talk of guilt, of blame, of lost cultures or faded ideologies. Many people seek a return of old ways, when worship will again be the center of life--a time when respect for the earth will be real, not just current dogma. Many pray for this, some fight, some die...

Despite the painful process he was forced to be part of, Iassac still believes that only through education can the problems caused by the interface of these two cultures be alleviated. In the striving for a common basal humanity, however, is it not possible to accept the differences of the disparate groups and search for a way to recognize these uniquenesses and allow them be? Must formal education serve only to produce look alikes? Perhaps my idealism colors my dreams.

For Iassac, as for many of us, the old ways are nearly gone. Our identity rests on those few remnants and demands a steady grasp on them. Our future remains in that chasm between the two worlds. As we attempt to bridge them we must find means for those who choose to do the same,
to be able to do so without loss of self.

We talk of finding the best of both worlds. It may yet be possible. It has to be.
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