JOAN TURNEY, Chippewa
JOSEPHINE CLARK, Chippewa
PEARL CLARK, Chippewa
August II, 1975
White Earth Reservation, Minnesota

This transcript is one of a series of interviews with American Indian people throughout much of the United States by S. I. Myers of the History Department of St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley, St. Louis, Missouri, 63135.

The purpose of these interviews is to bring the Indian peoples' own comments to students in classrooms, and to foster greater understanding among the peoples of the United States by providing Indians the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions to a wider audience.

This transcript has been edited for clarity and ease of reading, but every effort has been made to preserve the original feeling. Conversations and opinions were encouraged on any subject of interest to interviewees; questions and responses do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the interviewer, the National Endowment for the Humanities, or St. Louis Community College.

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LISTENING TO INDIANS

NO. 17

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Glen Rock, New Jersey
Microfilming Corporation of America

1978
JT: It was about '67 or '68.

SM: In '67 you were running into some prejudice in high school.

JT: Yes. The teachers weren't too enthusiastic about helping Indian students. If we were a little behind, we were left behind. They really didn't give us a one-to-one basis teaching. You know, we were always at the back of the class, and if we needed help in our math or American history, whatever subjects we were poor in, they really didn't have time. And that made quite a few of the students lose interest because we were so far behind, and . . . well, just out of home problems, within our communities, it was awfully hard for Indian students.

SM: So your experience in high school in Park Rapids wasn't the best?

JT: No, it wasn't. We didn't have the clothes that most of the other students--the white students--had. They made fun of us, and we felt very uncomfortable in their surroundings.

SM: This really kind of surprises me, because I grew up in that same school. I don't remember it being like that. But maybe I was blind too. What did you do after you got through the 11th grade?

JT: Well, I now have a nine-year old son.

SM: Did you go to school any more?

JT: I tried to go back to school--tried to go back to high school.

SM: I wish you were in the St. Louis area. You would certainly be welcome at our school.
JT: So then after I left school I had to support myself in some way. I supported the church quite a bit, and I guess I was recognized as a young person who was reaching out and recognizing problems within our community and surrounding areas, and also that I was still interested in education. What I did learn, I felt that I could be of some service to the young people in our community, so I applied for a job at the school as a teacher aide.

SM: Which school?

JT: Pine Point school, here on the reservation. So I worked there under Jerry Buckanaga, who is the principal, and I helped in the elementary grades, and I helped students in their reading classes, math classes, and I worked with them in art, and I was really satisfied with the job, because I knew what I had left behind, and, you know, the schooling that I could have had, and I hated to see the younger generation coming up to lose. I tried to use my background as a way to show them how hard it could be without an education, as far as getting jobs, and recognizing how valuable an education really is, and just by helping the young people at the school there with what I learned in my 11 years, I was really satisfied with the job. So then I took my G.E.D. test, and I passed that.

SM: So now you have a diploma.

JT: I took that, and I made that with flying colors. Then after that I started school in Rochester, Minnesota. I was going to school for a medical secretary. At that time, then, my father passed away, and I didn't want to leave my mother home alone here, so I moved back to live with her. I started working at the Pine Point Youth Services when that was developed. It was under the Governor's Crime Commission. There I was a liason agent or counselor, a teacher, anything that the young people here needed, we had to change our job to their needs.
That was also a satisfying job, 'cause we had so many young people that were in and out of trouble so much that, you know, they needed help.

SM: The young people that you were helping to counsel--what kinds of trouble would they get into?

JT: Well, they were juveniles--they really didn't have recreation facilities here in our community. We had the school, and they have softball, and their school auditorium is open to them for basketball in the winter months, but as far as any other recreational facilities, we just don't have anything like that.

SM: And so they get in trouble drinking, and things like that?

JT: Yes, and vandalism.

SM: You were working with the young people in this area here after you came back from Rochester?

JT: Yes, and right now the Youth Services has closed down, and they moved it to White Earth and, so far, I haven't been involved with them. I haven't heard that much within our community of how much they're doing now. But we had a building that we were using—we provided recreation for the kids; took them places; we also went to court with a lot of them, and, you know, in other words, spoke for them so that they could get out of jail, come back to the reservation, and we'd provide things to keep them busy. We took a lot of them aside, and got them their G.E.D., and sent quite a few of them on to vocational school and several are now attending Bemidji State College.

SM: Those are real success cases. I want to clarify something. We are sitting here in your home on the White Earth Reservation, but we are in the southeast corner of it, aren't we?
JT: Yes.

SM: And then the nearest town to us is Ponsford, just off the south edge of the reservation?

JT: Yes.

SM: But the town, White Earth you spoke of, that's off to the northwest, isn't it? About how far is it?

JT: About 25 miles.

SM: Twenty-five miles off to the northwest, towards any other town?

JT: Toward Mahnomen.

SM: And we're also south of the Red Lake Reservation?

JT: Yes.

SM: O.K., now we have the geography squared away, for people who aren't familiar with it. You were working with the kids, and you did have some real success stories where some of them ended up in college?

JT: Yes. We're awfully pleased. The program that we did have, we felt very strongly that, amongst our own Indian people, we could handle the top jobs in it, but they did have to bring in other people, you know, non-Indians, to be our supervisors and directors.

SM: Was this the BIA now we're speaking of?

JT: No, this is Governor's Crime Commission.

SM: From the state of Minnesota?
JT: Yes. And for the jobs that we did do, we felt that we knew our people best; we knew their needs best, and that we could work better, but under the supervision of a non-Indian we felt that it made it a little more difficult for us. So then after I left the Youth Services, I guess the young man that was working there as a liaison agent, he took control—he was the supervisor and director then, and ... well, I guess he couldn't get the right help that he needed at the time, and then the funding—they weren't refunded again. So I guess it has moved to White Earth now, and I guess the people that had the say of the program is the tribe—the White Earth Reservation Business Committee. They are overseeing the program now.

SM: Does their location in White Earth make them more interested in that area than this one?

JT: I guess so, because I haven't seen anything out here as far as youth services is concerned.

SM: Is George Fairbanks on that committee?

JT: He's on the White Earth Reservation Business Committee, but we don't have any facilities, you know, in connection with that any more here. I felt when it was here it was real good.

SM: Is there any chance of getting something going again?

JT: I think it would take just a few interested people who are interested in working with the youth here.

SM: How about HEW? Is there something they can do?

JT: That I don't know. Right now I'm working as a program extension assistant, and it's out of the University of Minnesota, and my job is
to set up programs here in Pine Point, and to bring in resource people, check out resources, anything that's available, to set up programs--and right now I'm trying to think what would help as far as setting up something for the youth here. If we can get a better form of recreation, and help out in education, that's what I'm interested in right now.

SM: George Fairbanks was saying something about some of the senators, representatives and other people coming up to a meeting which is going to take place soon. Are you aware of that? Are you going to be there?

JT: At White Earth?

SM: Yes.

JT: I'd like to be there. I asked the chairman of the Reservation Business Committee if I could attend because I'm interested in what's going on. I told him that even if I didn't have anything to say, it would be a way of learning for me.

SM: You could see what's happening anyway. I don't imagine there's any way they can keep you from going, is there?

JT: No.

SM: The only question is, would you have a chance to say anything.

JT: I think I would speak up if I felt I had something to say. I'm like that. If I feel I can contribute in some way, I would speak up.

SM: There's something else about you personally now. You did get your G.E.D., and you went to school in Rochester some after that. And then you got married? I want to fill in your whole life here if I can.
JT: Yes, I was attending Morehead State College—I went for one semester, and I met my husband, and we decided that he was going to re-enlist in the military.

SM: Mr. Turney. Is he an Indian?

JT: Yes, he is.

SM: A Chippewa?

JT: Yes. So we moved to North Carolina, down at Fort Bragg.

SM: That's quite a change from northern Minnesota.

JT: It sure was. Military life was an awful change for me also. I didn't know what I was in for.

SM: Does he like the military?

JT: Yes, he does. He's making a career of it.

SM: Oh, well then, he isn't home all the time?

JT: No. After we moved to the Carolinas I didn't see him for, maybe six months out of two years, he was gone so much.

SM: Do you have children?

JT: Just the one boy.

SM: The little boy I met here?

JT: George.
SM: So here you are— you have a lovely home, doing fine as far as I can see, except you are very concerned about problems that seem to be frustrating.

JT: Yes.

SM: You seem to be willing to take action, like checking with the governor to see if there isn't something that can be done. But you don't have to be satisfied with the state either. You can go to the federal government, the HEW.

JT: I think I can. Right now I'm in the process of checking out resources— asking various people who I can see.

SM: If Mr. Eugene Wilson of HEW could help you in any way, I'm sure he'd be delighted to. He's been here; he's been in every state; he knows people up in Bemidji, and he's given me names of people to see all over the United States practically, and I have a lot of admiration for his almost tireless energy working for the Indian people in the United States. What's going on now around town, around the area that you're working in?

JT: Well, I'm the program assistant, like I said, setting up programs on the reservation.

SM: Is this for the tribe, the program assistant?

JT: Well, it's to assist people on the reservation.

SM: Whom do you work for?

JT: The University of Minnesota. Their office, their extension office, is in Detroit Lakes, which is in Becker County, and, since Pine Point
is part of Becker County, I'm working out of their office.

SM: So you're working for the University of Minnesota now as program director.

JT: Yes.

SM: But you need funds.

JT: Right. We don't have any funds on the job that I'm working with. I have to check out my own, you know, find my own funding. And if I wanted to bring in resource people, I'd have to go to the Community Council or the Reservation Business Committee to get money to pay resource people to come in, or if I wanted to set up a camping program, I'd have to ask them for the money, so I just have to work with the people who already have organizations going on the reservation. Right now I'm involved in the Bicentennial flag presentation. I was trying very hard to get the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe involved in the Bicentennial. I wrote up the program for Detroit Lakes--that's been declared a Bicentennial City--and we're to have a flag presentation on August 13.

SM: At Detroit Lakes?

JT: Yes. The lieutenant governor is supposed to be the presentor of the flag.

SM: This would be presented to... ?

JT: To Detroit Lakes. And I tried very hard. They asked me if I would write up the program for their bicentennial activities on August 13th. So I felt that I wrote up a beautiful program showing all colors, all flags that exist in Becker County, and I also wanted the Minnesota
Chippewa Tribe to be involved. We would carry our eagle-feather staff, and also the American Indian Movement is an organization that was born here; it is here.

SM: Born here? Do you mean on the reservation here?

JT: Yes. And it is here, and I also wanted them included because, you know, they're part of the Minnesota tribe.

SM: Are you a member of that?

JT: Y...e...s.

SM: Just refuse to answer if you don't want to.

JT: All right. I believe in a lot of things that the American Indian Movement stands for.

SM: A lot of people do, except that they have been sort of conditioned by the publicity.

JT: Right. And when you do live here, after so many years you recognize the problems that we do have, and we do have the right to speak up, and if there's freedom of speech, why not? You know, we have a lot to bring out.

SM: Would you tell me more about this flag presentation now? You wrote the program for it; they have adopted the program?

JT: Well, I took in a meeting two weeks ago at Detroit Lakes, and I took some representatives of the tribe--just local people who were interested in being part of their celebration. It was voted upon that they would accept my plan, my program that I presented; then a week
later we were opposed. There were more representatives from the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Legion and various organizations throughout the country, there were more present at this second meeting, and when it came time to vote, they said they wanted no part of the flag presentation if the American Indian Movement was to be involved.

SM: They singled out AIM, but they didn't single out the Chippewa Tribe?

JT: No. What the Chippewa Tribe did was that we took a stand that, if you can single one portion, then we wouldn't be involved either, because they're enrolled in the Chippewa Tribe--these people that were present from the American Indian Movement.

SM: AIM, you mean?

JT: Yes. And they were enrolled members of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe.

SM: You'll forgive me if I ask these questions that sound maybe a little repetitive, but a lot of people don't understand this as well as you do, and so they have to be--and I have to be, too--informed about distinguishing between the Chippewa Tribe and AIM, and the parts played by each in this event in Detroit Lakes, this ceremony. These other organizations said, "No, we won't have anything to do with it if AIM is going to be in there?"

JT: Right. And I think they were kind of swayed by a letter that was written by our representative, Mr. Frank Grot. He wrote a letter saying that. . . .

SM: He is the state representative from Detroit Lakes to the Minnesota State Legislature?
JT: Yes, for our district. And he wrote a letter to the Bicentennial Committee saying that he didn't think there should be a flag demonstration if the American Indian Movement was going to be involved. So that was read to all the people who were attending the meeting, and it was voted on again, and they kind of followed our representative. The Legion said they wouldn't carry the United States flag if the Indian people.

SM: Did they have a reason, did they explain why?

JT: They said why should our people, who don't believe in the American Indian Movement, recognize the American Indian Movement flag with the United States flag. They didn't want any part of it—they didn't even want it to be shown, and that's what we were going to do—just show that all these organizations that.

SM: Aren't you talking about the Chippewa Tribe's flag? Isn't that a different one?

JT: That's different also.

SM: Yes. Now you were proposing to present a Chippewa Tribe flag?

JT: Just carry it in there.

SM: In the ceremony?

JT: Yes.

SM: And the AIM flag was also going to be there?

JT: Yes. And they were going to have two members of the American Indian Movement riding horses as Veterans of Foreign Wars, because these two
young boys fought in Viet Nam.

SM: This seems like it's getting all tangled someplace, doesn't it?

JT: Yes. See, we made the offer; we made the effort to work with these people, but when it came time to . . . they asked if we said the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag; they questioned our patriotism to the flag; they really questioned us. In other words, they were so unsure of the American Indian, you know, they just had to ask, point blank, right there, "Do you say the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag every day?" Then they based their whole story, you know, the whole opposition to the whole presentation, on whether or not we said the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag every day. So then they decided to cancel the presentation completely.

SM: I don't know if I understand this all yet. I've talked to people who are in AIM. One man, for example, who was at Wounded Knee, said, "We had to do this, but I dropped out because it got to be too violent, and I don't want the violence." He said he still believes they did the right thing, and I've talked to many others who said if they had really started shooting they would have gone there too, but they don't want the violence if they can avoid it.

JT: Right.

SM: Then, because of a few of these incidents, like the BIA thing in Washington, and Wounded Knee, and the one over in Wisconsin, you know, the Warrior Society and the Menominees, it seems like those incidents and others have--what should I say--tarred everybody with the same brush. The publicity these events have brought about makes other things you try to do almost impossible?

JT: Right. That's what they brought up. All the news of the past that
SM: And the Bicentennial flag.

JT: And a Color Guard. But, like I said, you know, we tried. We offered our help and to be part of it, but we were turned down.

SM: I do hope you don't give up yet.

JT: No, there's been so many writings in different newspapers--The Fargo Forum and two of the papers out of St. Paul.

SM: It appeared in the St. Paul papers as well as Fargo papers? Has that helped any?

JT: So far what it's doing is opening up people's minds. They would like the Indians' reaction, and they would like the non-Indians' reaction to be in the newspapers so that... in other words they say, "Cast your vote through writing."

SM: Through letters to the editor?

JT: Yes. And this is what we're going through right now. But since the program has been changed to September, it's going to be just a private ceremony that...

SM: September, 1975?

JT: Yes. We're not going to take part. We took the stand that if they were going to say half of us could come in, "We'll accept the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe but not the American Indian Movement," which we recognize as Indian people and part of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, we figured... you know, why should we be there?

SM: Can you understand some people's reaction to AIM--things that wouldn't
bother you that might scare them or bother them, when the only thing they know about it is Wounded Knee and the BIA take-over? Can you see how they might be . . . that's all they know? And they might say that they don't want anything to do with a bunch of people who do those things?

JT: I can understand that. But one thing I can't understand is that they can go out and take all these pictures like--they're basing their reaction on--an incident out at the Chippewa Ranch which is located out by Mahnomen, just a few miles outside of Mahnomen.

SM: What is the Chippewa Ranch?

JT: It belongs to the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. It used to be a Job Corps.

SM: Oh yes, it's an area in the country over there?

JT: Yes, and the American Indian Movement is now using it for a drug and alcohol program.

SM: Rehabilitation?

JT: Yes. They're trying to get it set up so that they can help the young people on the reservations, and they're living out there now. And apparently somebody from the Mahnomen paper went out there and took a picture from the road where they were flying the U.S. flag, and it was turned upside down. So they're saying that we have no respect whatsoever for the United States flag, and one of the reasons why we turned that flag upside down, it's an old tradition. Years ago when the Indians had clans, they had totems, and they had, well, maybe an animal hide as their totem. And when the Indians made promises to one another, if someone broke their promise, one clan would turn that totem upside down to show that, you know, promises were broken. Well, that's the way it is today.
SM: In other words, if one clan had the bear for a totem, and had made a commitment to another tribe that this is our area and that's your area, and then their word had been broken, their totem would be turned upside down. And that's all it meant, "Look you guys, you haven't kept your word."

JT: Right. And that's how the American Indian Movement is using that American flag right now. Treaties--maybe 300 treaties.

SM: Everybody agrees that treaties have been broken, but they don't understand what the upside down flag means. They think it's like burning it or spitting on it.

JT: You could say it's a sign of distress.

SM: So it's a problem in education too.

JT: Yes. Promises have been broken, so we turned that totem upside down.

SM: So it's a problem in educating all these millions of other people--non-Indians--that's a big problem too.

JT: Right. This is where I feel that in the Indian studies programs that are offered throughout the states now in colleges and universities, this is where I feel very strongly that they should get resource people in--not professionals, you know, paid professionals who were taught in the white man's schools--but people who live on the reservation; the elderly; some of the younger people who know about the problems that exist now in the schools; get them in as resource people to talk to the Indian studies classes, you know, to get the real truth. We have a lot of elderly people here that they bring in to the Pine Point school now, teaching the young people the old ways; trying to bring back our Indian culture.
SM: Like the lady we took a picture of this morning--Daisy Butcher?

JT: Yes.

SM: The American Indian in some parts of the country is almost not visible.

JT: Right.

SM: They deserve the same options as everybody else. It's an educational program, it seems to me, and that is what we're working on right now, sitting here this afternoon.

JT: We do use our traditional ways, and we want to teach our young people the traditional ways.

SM: By the way, this resource person thing. . . . You are a resource person right now on this tape, because I'm going to take this to my classes where you will talk to all the dozens of students who will listen.

JT: I've done some of that in the past. When I was on the Governor's Crime Commission as a liason agent, I was asked to go to various meetings throughout the state, and speak about the youth and the program, and I went to several colleges and spoke about our programs, and even Indian studies programs in the Fargo-Moorhead area asked us as resource people. So instead of hiring a professional to come in, they decided they'd let their students listen to American Indians who live on the reservation. They felt they could learn more that way.

SM: Not only that, but the students have a way of relating to someone like you, for example, a young person who actually comes from a reservation. Is there anything more about the flag ceremony in Detroit Lakes you might mention, or have we covered that pretty well?
JT: Oh, it is creating problems. We feel that ... you know, we did our part, we offered our assistance.

SM: And so now the end result is they're having no flag excepting the U.S. flag and the Bicentennial flag.

JT: Yes. And, really, I don't feel that we should sit back and take this. We shouldn't let the news media cover it as a one-sided story. I feel that we should print our side and tell our side of the story ourselves, and we're going to do this.

SM: I hope you do. Even if someone didn't agree with you, they should defend your right to tell your story.

JT: So we're hoping.

SM: O.K., then. You're going to keep working on that, you, the various people who are interested. And then, the situation over at the ranch, that's coming along, but there are problems there too?

JT: Well, right now they're waiting for their funding; they've asked various organizations for funding for their program.

SM: Church groups?

JT: Not necessarily church groups.

SM: The government?

JT: Yes. They put in proposals, and they're waiting for their funding to get started. They operated last year on just local contributions that they got from people.
staffed by Indians before.

SM: They used to have white teachers and principals?

JT: And we were under Park Rapids at the time.

SM: And for a while you were a federal school, I believe, but now it's run entirely by Indians for Indians with Indian students?

JT: Yes.

SM: And this has been going on for four, five, six years?

JT: About five years.

SM: And is still considered an experiment in the nation?

JT: Yes.

SM: And it's been turning out well, hasn't it?

JT: Yes, it has.

SM: I was over there today, and the school looks better than it ever has, I believe. I even took pictures of the walls in the hall because they're so colorful and attractive.

Pearl Clark:

What we're trying to do is get Indian designs, paintings and different things on the walls. It makes the students there feel more at home with Indian culture around them.

SM: And you're a teacher aide at the school, Pearl, so you know what's going on over there too.
PC: I'm a teacher aide. Yes, I do.

SM: What else is going on at the school? You have an athletic program?

PC: It's really changed.

SM: You have a boxing team?

PC: Right.

SM: And they go into Golden Gloves later too?

PC: They've been working for the last two years now pretty steady on their boxing, and we've had two boys out of White Earth that are training with Mr. Buckanaga here. They have gone to the Golden Gloves this year already, and I haven't heard the results on that yet, but the boys are doing real well as far as boxing.

SM: Anything else going on with student activities that we can tell our people about?

JT: Well, so far they've changed their curriculum--they have Indian teacher aides--they try to work on a one-to-one basis with the students, and they work at their own speed.

PC: Our students here are not graded--they don't go by grades. They work--taking our students through by their I.Q.--what they're able to do. You take a seven-year old. If they are able to do 10th or 11th grade work, then that's where they're put.

SM: Wherever their performance puts them, rather than their age?

PC: Right, so there is no level of grade here.
SM: Do the students seem to be more interested?

PC: Oh yeah.

SM: Do you find less apathy?

PC: Um hm.

SM: That's an accomplishment, because this is a problem everywhere.

PC: We have some that were to be going to school in Park Rapids, but they came back to Pine Point because they were given a chance to work with their own ability. And we have two boys comin' out of Pine Point and going right into vocational training, and they were accepted at Detroit Lakes.

SM: Vocational technical high school?

PC: Right. They're doing well over 12th grade work. We've got three of them that are doing college work now, out of Pine Point.

SM: Out of Pine Point over here now? Well, that's interesting. In other words, you're going way beyond the eight grades, or the 8th grade level that you were scheduled to be?

JT: We're not holding them back; [we're] giving them every opportunity.

SM: If they can do the work you let them go as far and as fast as they can?

JT: Right.

SM: And you must have small classes then?

JT: Yes.
SM: So you can give them more personal attention.

Josephine Clark:  
   It's like this boy, George you see here, he done 8th grade work last year.

PC: Joan's little boy.

SM: How old is he?

JT: He's nine, nine years old.

SM: He's nine, doing 8th grade work last year already?

JT: Um hm.

SM: That's quite a thing. Is that because he's got a bright mother—or grandmother? (laughter)

JC: Both, I guess.

PC: I think the teacher should get some credit too.

SM: How about the teacher aide?

PC: Right.

JT: I worked with him when he was small. I read books to him all the time. I took a lot of interest in him, because I figured, you know, he's gonna have to compete in school, and I wanted him to get a good education. From the time he was a baby I read to him, and I created an interest in reading and pictures. So when he was six years old and started reading, he could pick up a newspaper, at age six, and
start reading from there, and now he can pick up anything, and he
doesn't have no trouble reading, and he comprehends what he reads,
he understands it.

SM: Does he enjoy reading?

JT: Yes, he does. He'd rather sit and read than take the recess period
that they offer at school. You find him sittin' under a table in the
library, hiding so he can read.

SM: That's remarkable.

JT: His teacher was awfully pleased with him.

SM: If you could only motivate all the kids--Indian kids, non-Indian kids,
all of them like that--you would become rich and famous as somebody
who has solved the world's problem of motivating children.

PC: By keepin' these students in an environment where they're not graded
or anything, they get along much better too, because they can't say,
"Well, you're eight years old and you're only in the 4th grade." A
lot of schools have that problem, but we've been keepin' the school
ungraded and everything, so we don't have any problem with that.

SM: They feel less threatened, less competitive?

PC: Less competitive.

SM: I heard once that the Indian people don't like competition. That is,
if someone stands out too much, the other children tend to sort of
put him back in his place. Is that true, or is that in other parts
of the country and not here?
JT: That's other parts.

SM: Not here? In other words, someone who does excel and stand out is looked up to and admired?

PC: They're looked up to and admired. The smarter students in our school, the younger ones, are really trying to perform as well as they are.

JT: What the teachers do here is--like my boy, George, he's a good reader--so they send him off with maybe two other students in the same grade level that are having problems in reading, and he's also helping them to read. So they're using students and teachers to help one another, and so I think that's really good.

SM: I get the feeling that you're quite encouraged about the way the school is going, all three of you. That's a good thing.

JT: It would be nice to have our own high school here so that...

SM: Do you think you will?

JT: Some day, I hope so.

JC: We're trying.

PC: I'm hoping and praying for one.

SM: Now if you did get your own high school, would that be financed locally, by the state, or federal government?

JT: Federal.

SM: It would be a federal high school like, for example, Haskell Junior College in Kansas, I think gets federal funding. There are several
Indian schools in places like Phoenix that get federal funding too--maybe some of those people could brief you on their problems.

PC: We are thinking of using our auditorium and our gym for . . . we would like to keep our high school students back, after they get into Park Rapids--that's where they run into racial problems. The people in Park Rapids just don't want to accept the Indian children in their school over there.

SM: I'm sorry to hear that.

PC: And if we can get our auditorium and gymnasium divided up so we can hold a few classes down in there, then we will. We have a lot of fall-back on our students that do go to Park Rapids--they always end up back at Pine Point, and we end up teaching them anyway.

JT: The drop-out rate has really been high for Indian students.

JC: Yeah, it is high.

JT: Every year we have maybe one or two--out of 8 to 10 students that drop out.

SM: One or two out of 8 or 10 that drop out?

JT: No. Out of 8 or 10 students that go to Park Rapids, there's probably only one or two that graduate; the rest of them drop out. And this is where we pick them up.

SM: What happens to them? Do they come back here?

PC: We pick 'em up back at Pine Point, and we try to finish off their schooling here with them. And that's why I say the two that are doing the college work now are two that were drop-outs of Park Rapids.
JT: They take the G.E.D. test.

SM: When they get through here?

PC: They go right into vocational training, or they can go to Bemidji or Moorhead.

SM: We have lots of students in our classes who have the G.E.D., and, more often than not, they are either men from the Service, or older people, you know, in their 30's and 40's, who never finished, and then suddenly decided they'd better do it, and then go ahead. And they're usually some of the best students we have, because they're serious and they've got a purpose.

JT: Like I said, when I was with Youth Services, we had the G.E.D. offered here through Bemidji. They had an instructor come out, and we had about . . . it was, say half and half, about 25 high school drop-outs at the age of 16 to 18, and then we had older people from age 30 to 60—twenty-five of each, say. It averaged out about 50 people who took that G.E.D. test that summer, in '72. They got their G.E.D., and some of them went on to Bemidji State College, and into vocational school.

SM: Did both of you girls go to the Park Rapids High School?

JT: Yes.

PC: Yes, I did.

SM: And you both dropped out of it?

JT: Yes.
SM: And got your G.E.D. diploma?

JT: Yes.

SM: So you are speaking from your own personal experiences, as well as from the others that you know about.

JT: Right.

SM: I think it would be a little shocking to a lot of people if they realized some of these things, because I think a lot of people are saying, "Everything's fine, there's nothing wrong, what's everybody kicking about?" Because they don't know the experiences you ran into.

PC: Yeah, I only had one year of high school left when my trouble started.

SM: That's what Joan said too--about one year, wasn't it?

JT: And when they do get into school--they have their high school band--they don't encourage the Indians to join their band. When I went, I had to ask if I could join their band. I got in, but when they passed out the instruments--I was a drummer at the time, I played the drums--I was always the one who got left out. They gave the drums to, you know, the other students, and I always missed out on being able to play the drums.

SM: The students don't buy their own drums, but they buy their own cornets, and so on?

JT: Yes, but the drums are available there at the school. Right now they don't encourage Indian students to participate in band.
SM: Seems funny.

JC: That's another thing. There's no school board set up. The day I got off the school board.

SM: The school board here?

JC: Yeah. The new ones'd be on now; they got on in July.

SM: This July? It's Pine Point you're speaking of, Josephine?

JC: Yes. This is another thing we want--we want our kids to learn music too at school here, so we're tryin' to get a music teacher to come here and teach the young people.

SM: You don't have music classes now?

JC: No, we don't have 'em now, but after school starts, maybe somebody will.

PC: The only music we have in our school is singing right now.

JC: Yes, singing.

SM: And note reading?

PC: Yes.

SM: Do you teach the children the old Indian culture too?

JC: Yes we do.

SM: Now you have a language teacher, I know. I met him today.
JC: And we have a teacher for two years now that's teachin' kids how to sing powwows and drum.

SM: And the meaning of the drum?

JC: Um hm.

SM: And all of those points of the compass, all these things, so that the symbolism that they were losing they're being taught again now?

JT: Yes. They're trying to teach them their culture, their traditional music.

SM: This thing is sort of catching on. You see, the old melting pot idea that we used to talk about, that's been pretty well given up now, and we're instead working, I think, toward a pluralistic society where everybody does, to use a colloquialism, everyone does "his own thing," but still we're all one nation too, which we can hardly escape, because none of us is going to go back where we came from.

PC: Well, once in a while you have a few people who will tell an Indian, "Why don't you go back where you came from?"

SM: That's a good one, isn't it? Well, now, is there anything that we can wrap this up with, so I don't leave something out that you want to say? Joan, I started with you.

JT: Here's what I'd like to say to the people who are going to be listening to this tape: to seek out the truth and to try to open their hearts to understand the American Indian, and to be fair and honest with them. We have our own opinions, they have theirs; to try to compromise and come together to a better understanding of one another. I think that's what we have to do.
SM: You just said it better than I did--that's what I was trying to say.

JT: And work together. I really think it's nice of you to come out here to talk with us.

SM: Thank you for that. I talked to your mother, Josephine, this morning. Is there anything else you can add now? Pearl, do you have something?

PC: The only thing I can say is for the students to look through their American history books and find the truth, or anything in it about the American Indian that's not written in there, and to do some research on their own about the American Indian.

SM: O.K. Well, I want to thank you, Pearl, and Josephine again, and Joan, for talking to me this afternoon, and I'll look forward to an opportunity to play this to my students.