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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Sam Myers:

I am talking with Gabriel Brisbois, his sister Georgianna Gattenby, and Lorraine Kotschevar, at Hibbing, Minnesota. Gabe, you had something to do with the Pine Point school. Would you explain the situation at that school? It used to be a federal school at one time, didn't it?

Gabriel Brisbois:

Yes, just like all Indian schools, it was supported financially and administratively by the Indian Department, and most of the administrators were non-Indians.

SM: And the teachers also?

GB: Right. And so, as a result—it was called an Indian school but it was anything but—the only thing that was Indian about it was that it had Indian students, but the studies within it were all designed to teach the Indians the same way that the white or non-Indian students in other schools were being taught. And consequently, you have things like happened in one Indian school—there are many boarding Indian schools—where the Indian students would leave home, and stay for months at a time at this boarding school.

SM: Like Carlyle?

GB: Carlyle, Flandreau, South Dakota. And at one of these Indian schools, an observer was witnessing Indian students watching a movie, and it was a cowboy and Indian movie, and the Indians were surrounding this wagon train in the movie and harrassing the settlers there. And the Cavalry came over the hill, and when the Indian students viewing the film heard the trumpet, the trumpet charge, and the Cavalry was coming, they cheered. Which kind of shows you the success that the white, dominant society had in taking their Indian-ness away from them,
because here were Indians students cheering the opposite side coming
to demolish or kill their own people.

SM: They didn't even think of them as their own people?

GB: No, no. They thought of them as bad guys, that's all. Everything's
reduced to good guy and bad guy.

SM: Then the Pine Point school, now, was a federal Indian school, so-
called, supported by federal funds, and then it was changed over to
become a part of one of the local school districts?

GB: Right. The Park Rapids School District, right.

SM: And it was operated that way for a number of years?

GB: Right. And then the local Indian people there at Pine Point, under
the leadership of a person by the name of Jerry Buckanaga, decided
they wanted to try something different in the way of Indian education.

SM: He had become principal of the school?

GB: He was principal of the school when it was first under the Park
Rapids district, and then he went away to Harvard under a Bush
Fellowship, I believe, to get more education, and he's got his
master's degree in, I don't know what, but he got a master's degree
there, and came back and had this idea of an open school.

SM: Could you describe that?

GB: An ungraded school, and I can't describe it very specifically, but I
can tell you generally that its theory is that Indian students pre-
viously had been treated to dominant society curriculum, you might
say. And as a result, when they got away from the so-called Indian schools to what we call the public school, where all of the people around them were non-Indian, and they were very much a small minority, they felt very inadequate, and consequently did not do very well academically. And so the idea is that, I think, they need to be taught to be proud of their Indian culture and the fact that they are Indians and their Indian heritage, and this is what the thrust of this Indian open school is. The idea isn't so much on getting A's, B's, C's or D's, but let's become proud of what we are, and when we get to this place where everybody else is different, and where everybody else is non-Indian, you know, you can be somebody. You were born somebody, but then you'll believe you're somebody. And I think it has value, and we won't know for a few years yet whether or not it's going to make a difference, but I think it has made a difference at Point Point, because I'm told that instead of where they used to run away from school, now they seem to come to school.

SM: They like to come—that is, to the Pine Point school?

GB: The Pine Point children like to go to the Pine Point school now, whereas before, when it was a sort of an establishment-type school, they spent most of their energy trying to get away from it.

SM: I can confirm that because I was there, and several of the people gave me the same impression, and they are making the school quite attractive now, and it is an interesting place. Well then, the school was a part of this other district, this Park Rapids School District, and then, under its ungraded or open school system, is it still a part of that other district?

GB: Yes, from what I understand, unless now it may be that at the last legislature they had special legislation to make it its own school.
SM: A separate district?

GB: Right. I'm not aware that it was. If it's still like it was in the 1973 legislature, then it is a school district within a school district, you might say. In the winter of 1973, the Park Rapids School District unilaterally said that they were going to close the Pine Point school for various reasons that I won't try to relate, because I don't want to be inaccurate. The fact is that they wanted to.

SM: They were going to close it?

GB: Yes. And so the citizens at Pine Point were very distraught because they really wanted their school. Their school was the center of their little community, and besides they had tried this program for two years of becoming a school that demonstrated to their children the value of being Indian, and the citizens were caught up in the school. If you went there then--I don't know how it is now--you'd see many of the citizens there themselves, aiding in the instruction, or just coming there because they like the atmosphere. And so they were very much saddened by the fact that their school was going to be closed; and angered; and the only way that they could keep it open was to either get the Park Rapids School Board to change their mind, or to appeal to higher authority on the governmental level.

SM: How did that turn out?

GB: Well you see, it was a before-the-fact announcement, and they announced it in the winter of 1973 that at that spring closing, that would be the last time there'd be a school there.

SM: So the people had a warning, so to speak?
GB: Yeah. So they themselves had several meetings, I think, with the Park Rapids board, and which were not very fruitful. There was a man in Detroit Lakes by the name of Reverend Ed Otway, who deserves a great deal of credit in this thing here dealing with Pine Point school, in that he got his ministerial group that he belongs to to put pressure on the state board of education to come to Pine Point, and learn first-hand the value of that school for the people there.

SM: Do you mean the state board from St. Paul came up to look into this situation?

GB: Yes.

SM: That's a little unusual in itself, isn't it?

GB: Oh yeah. That's why they would never have come, I don't think, if Reverend Otway had not aided and brought to bear the pressure that he had available to him. So I was at the time the executive secretary to Lieutenant Governor Perpich, and Reverend Otway requested that the lieutenant governor send somebody up too, and being that I had been born on the White Earth Reservation, 15 miles from Pine Point I guess it is, he said, you know, "Why don't you go up there to attend that meeting?" So I went up, and the state board of education sat down as an audience and listened to the Indians give a presentation as to why they needed that school. And that was about the most moving experience that I've ever had. You mentioned a few of them. Jerry Buckanaga gave a very stirring, I call it an oration, as to why that school is necessary. I mean, that was, you know, inspiring!

SM: It would have been great to have a movie camera there, or T.V. camera.

GB: Right. And I don't know if you've ever seen Jerry, but he's a very
striking Indian person, handsome and tall and articulate, sincere, and believes every word he says, and he makes you believe he believes it. Anyway, he did a good job. And then you talked to one person, Josephine Clark--she got up and she told them why she thinks that school is necessary--and then there were, I think three, yeah, three young ladies there who had been to various teacher's colleges around there, who had come back to Pine Point to teach, and who had experienced the unpleasantries at the public schools around the area, and had dropped out for a while. And anyway, they got up and their presentations were tougher than the others, and they were young ladies but they weren't pulling any punches. They told them exactly how they felt, and that a school like Pine Point, an open, ungraded school at Pine Point, was necessary for their kids down there. And so the state board of education was very impressed. So they went away from there . . . to the Park Rapids School Board the next day--it was a two-day visit--and got the Park Rapids board's side of the story, and they left the area saying that they were going to try to attempt to see that the Park Rapids board could transfer its state aid funds that they would ordinarily get from educating the Pine Point children, to the Pine Point school; have it administered at the Pine Point school, so that the Park Rapids board would not be responsible for the use of the money. The Park Rapids board, I think--now this may be open to contention and debate by the Park Rapids people--but one of their statements was that they didn't want to be responsible for the education at Pine Point, and then they thought that they could have more control over it if the children were in Park Rapids.

SM: Well then, the Pine Point school gets its funding from the state, through state aid, right?

GB: Right.

SM: And where else?
GB: From the Johnson-O'Malley federal program, which is monies allotted to school districts for the Indians to support their schools.

SM: But no local tax base?

GB: No, they have no taxing powers unless, like I said before, unless the 1973 legislature would have changed it somewhat.

SM: So there was quite a bit of struggle going on in the state board of education, between the Park Rapids School District, the Pine Point people, and down in the legislature about all this. Can you describe how that all unfolded?

GB: As I said, the intention of the school board, the state board of education, I should say, was to go back and have the attorney general see if it would be legal for this money transfer to be accomplished from the Park Rapids board to the Pine Point, and then have it administered at Pine Point. The attorney general's office did not hand down its decision until two weeks before the legislature was to adjourn, and the decision was negative—that this could not be done. So it was necessary to change some state laws to see if it could be done, or to make it possible to be done. And so, Lieutenant Governor Rudy Perpich was very sympathetic to this cause, and I'm not saying it just to be political. He was very, very sympathetic to it, and he said we'd better spend full time on getting that situation cleared up, and so he allowed me to take an amendment that we drew up—it was too late for a bill, it couldn't be introduced any more 'cause the deadline had been passed, it was too close to adjournment—and it was too late to go through the committee process because all the committees had stopped meeting, except for the conference committees, and so the only avenue we had open was to take the amendment to the conference committee on the state aids, state education aids.
SM: Let me interrupt there to ask or to clarify this point—the reason that you were involved here was that you were the executive secretary for the state's lieutenant governor, and he, being sympathetic to this problem, gave you the time and the freedom to go ahead and work on it?

GB: Right. He was favorable to the Indians having their school, and he wanted to work it out so that the Park Rapids School Board could allow them to have it and still maintain their independence.

SM: Did you have any sympathy from some of the people in the Park Rapids School Board?

GB: Oh I think that they were for this type of solution.

SM: So they weren't fighting it?

GB: Oh no. If there could be a way to work it out so that they wouldn't have to be responsible for the funds expended at Pine Point, then they were perfectly willing to do it. There was only one person in the area who was opposed to it, and I don't think it serves any purpose to mention his name. But anyway, the lieutenant governor took time out to follow me around a little bit, and we went to see the majority leader of the House and the speaker of the House and the majority leader of the Senate and both chairmen of the State Aids to Education Committee, and I had the lieutenant governor looking over my shoulder all the time when I was talking to these people, so they listened, and they were all very favorable to the project, not because the lieutenant governor was there—it helped, it helped them just pay attention—but they all thought, "Boy, this would be a good idea." So they kind of broke tradition and allowed this amendment to be added to the state aids bill without going through the committee process. And so that meant it had to be put on the floor of the Senate
and the House by somebody, and both the Senate and the House had to agree; all the people had to agree to put it in there in that bill--a first. And I'd like to mention that the Senator from Park Rapids, Jerry Willett, did a tremendous job of presenting it to the Senate as a whole, to get it in; so if any of this ever gets in the history books at all, or anything like that, or somebody listens to it, they should know that he gets some credit for that. Well, anyway, what it did was just give the Pine Point people a chance to operate their school the way they wanted, and I think what we were mentioning earlier is that the important part of this is that it gives them a chance to go at this thing in a unique way without following a traditional pattern, and give their children some Indian identity, which is very important.

SM: Another factor that seems important to me is that the dominant society, as the Indian people would say, did have enough people in it who were concerned enough, or at least willing enough, to listen, to facilitate the happening of this decision also. In other words, it wasn't a blind alley, a blank wall that you ran up against, but some sympathy.

GB: Well, starting with Reverend Otway, who was always right there all the time saying, "What can we do, what can we do?" You know, "Who can we speak to?"

SM: And Senator Willett and other people?

GB: Yeah, and the lieutenant governor and the majority leaders and the speaker of the House.

SM: You even sort of revolutionized the processes of the Minnesota Legislature there for a while.
GB: Yeah, it doesn't happen that way too often though. It has to be a pretty unique case.

SM: I have the letter here from Jerry Buckanaga, who is the executive director on the White Earth Reservation, and the principal of the Pine Point school. Your blushes won't show on the tape, so I'm going to read this anyway because I'd like to get it in here. He says quite simply—he's speaking to you, Gabe: "You did a magnificent job and I am very, very grateful for your time and effort. Thank you for everything, Gabe. Tremendous job. Take care. Peace." Signed, "Jerry." And in this same letter, since it's a short one, and we can get it in, there's a unique little point here. Buckanaga is an unusual name, and he said, apparently in answer to a question, "For your information and curiosity, the name "Buckanaga" has unique meaning. Actually it is supposed to be spelled Puckennawgay—the literal definition is—a winner. In this case it is most appropriate, but I doubt if we could have saved our school without your help." Well, that's a very, very nice letter. I imagine you were pleased to receive that.

GB: That's why I saved it.

SM: And Jerry Buckanaga is still over there as the principal of the Pine Point school, where the school has taken on a new look, and some of the people—one old lady, I think in her 90's, named Daisy Butcher—comes over every day just to visit. Her picture is framed and hanging on the wall, and she is white-haired and obviously a very old person, and the people there are pleased to have her come; and the little kids come and everybody else. Like you said, it has become a center for the community, instead of a place where the kids spend all their energy trying to play truancy.
GB: Um hm. I'm not sure if Jerry is the principal, he might be now--there was another man who was the principal there, a white man, who was all involved with and agrees with this theory--and so Jerry might be the principal now if this man had left. I wish I could recall his name... Roger somebody.

SM: Well, frankly, in talking to the people at the school, they sometimes called him the principal, sometimes the superintendent, and sometimes Jerry Buck.

GB: (laughter) Yeah. Well, I know he is involved. I think he has some title in there, and they work together in developing the program, because both of them really agree that their program is great and good for the kids.

SM: Do you think this is a good attempt at improving the situation--to have this open, non-graded school?

GB: Oh yeah.

SM: You agree with the idea?

GB: Um hm. Definitely.

SM: The people there, the ones I talked to at least, seem very enthusiastic about it.

GB: Especially in this case. It's a place where open school is really a good vehicle for helping the students, you know, not only learning to read--which is the most important thing I suppose a school can do for a student in elementary school--but to establish a heritage that's been destroyed, literally.
SM: This same system, though, might not be as desirable in an average town, or would it be good there too?

GB: I think it could be good there, but it always depends upon the individuals running the system, whether it's good or not.

SM: In other words, if the people, teachers and everything are effective, the system isn't as important as the personalities?

GB: Right. I believe so, but I think it would be more enjoyable working in a system like this. But again, if the people there felt more comfortable in a traditional, Carnegie unit, then any system that you put on them would not be good. You have to have the people who are right for the system.

SM: Well, it will be very interesting. How soon do you think it can be said to be established that it has worked and it has been a success, or has that already been established?

GB: Well, I think it has, just in what it has done for the community. Of course, that's probably a secondary goal or a spin-off of the program.

SM: As far as the children learning is concerned?

GB: The primary thing is, I think, to enable those children going from Pine Point to Park Rapids school, and then, eventually, into life, to be able to cope, and we won't know that for years. And there may be failures and successes, and you have to measure....

SM: It will be hard to measure, I suppose.
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SM: It will be hard to measure, I suppose.
GB: But if it makes the community happier, and children happier growing up in their community, and feeling more like, "I want to be here," you know, instead of, "Gee, I want to get away from here" then. . .

SM: That should be worth something.

GB: Yes.

SM: At least two of the people there said that when they left the old Pine Point school and went to the Park Rapids high school, that about eight out of ten dropped out before they graduated. So it wouldn't be hard to make an improvement, would it? Almost anything would be an improvement over an eight out of ten drop-out rate.

GB: That's right. And then, going beyond there, there's an awful lot of Indian people, especially males, in our state penitentiaries, just like those statistics you were citing before about the alcoholism. A disproportionate amount of Indians are in the state penitentiaries as to the proportion of the population.

SM: Have you an explanation for that?

GB: Well, a lack of hope.

SM: It's more a case of the attitude of the people themselves?

GB: Speaking sociologically, I suppose you might say that, but there's just a lack of hope, and so I think it's a lack of culture.

SM: A lack of identity?

GB: A lack of identity in their culture. A lack of being proud of their heritage. That's why Jerry's school has so many different ramifications that it could effect, you know. And it's caused the Indian
population—this lack of hope—I think it's caused them to take the
short-term pleasantries, you know, like alcohol.

SM: Get drunk for an hour to drop out of the world?

GB: Right. And everything is short-term, you know, to get them away from
the world now. And they have so much to, I think, contribute—not as
white people. The dominant society wants them to become white. I
don't think that that should be. I think they should maintain their
heritage as much as possible. They can't do it, you know, wholesale,
but as much as possible they should maintain their heritage and
contribute to our society as Indians.

SM: Do you think we're moving in that direction?

GB: Not very fast, because I can give you an indication. Maybe as well-
intentioned as the state is—maybe Minnesota might be farther ahead
than other states—in dealing with the Indians and their problems a
lot of people make the mistake of saying, "In dealing with the Indian
problems. . . ."

SM: And Indians resent the idea of being "a problem?"

GB: No, it's "the Indians and their problems." I went to a state park on
the Fourth of July with some relatives from Illinois, and after a
tour of the park—this is an underground mine four, five or six miles
from an Indian reservation up there—we went into the souvenir shop
there 'cause our relatives from Illinois are Indian, and they wanted
some Chippewa artifacts, handicrafts. And so we went in there, and
we looked around and we looked at all the Indian handicraft that they
had and we very quickly determined that it was all from Oklahoma.

SM: And sometimes, worse yet, it's from Hong Kong.
GB: Yeah, well, there's another thing I did in that session when I worked down there—we passed the bill that all non-Indian things that looked like Indian things have to be labelled.

SM: At Itasca State Park the things not made by Indians were labelled, "non-Indian made."

GB: Right, and that was another law we passed when I was down there. But I went to ask the question here of the clerk, and she said that that was a state-owned souvenir shop, and that the products come from the state buyer, and so you can't blame private enterprise here, so I wrote a letter to the lieutenant governor, and he is working on it now.

SM: Is that still Perpich?

GB: Perpich, yeah.

SM: Well, anyway, the Pine Point school is still going—it looks more interesting out there than ever, just the appearance of the place, and that was on a summer day when there were no classes. And there were several people around even then—young people and adults. And they're teaching the Chippewa language, which certainly is an innovation in these last years. It will be interesting to see how it works out.

GB: I just thought of that person's name, Roger Kemp, who was working with Jerry. I don't know if he's still there or not.

SM: When the school was finally put into their hands, did they receive the news with enthusiasm?
GB: Oh yes, they celebrated.

SM: At Ponsford with a powwow and a party?

GB: Right. At Pine Point. The lieutenant governor and I were invited, our families were invited too.

SM: Did you all go?

GB: My family went, and the lieutenant governor's family couldn't make it, but he made it. It was a good day, an all-day celebration. They had a softball tournament and powwows. They went far into the night--after we left they kept going.

Georgianna Gattenby:
You had Indian food too, didn't you?

GB: Yeah, we had hominy and wild rice.

SM: Hominy. Is that a Chippewa food?

GB: As far as I know.

GG: That's an Indian food.

SM: I knew it was Indian, but I always thought of it as Choctaw and southeastern Indian, but it was popular in this country too?

GG: Oh yes. I remember our neighbors always making hominy for the winter.

SM: Up here I think of wild rice and... what's the thing they used to make out of buffalo meat, pounded?
GB: Pemmican?

SM: Pemmican, yes.

GB: Of course that wasn't here, you know.

SM: No, but not far from here. Pine Point—which is about 125 miles west of here—that's where the prairie and the woodlands come together, more or less, isn't it?

GB: It's around that area, yeah. Just the one thing I'd like to emphasize is that the Indians themselves, the Pine Point people themselves, in their presentation to the state board, I think made their school, and made it possible to save their school.

SM: Do you mean the way the people presented the situation, they were the ones that put it over?

GB: Oh sure. They got the state board of education to commit themselves so that then we were able to take it from there.

SM: But according to this letter, you've got to admit that you played quite a part in working it through the legislature.

GB: Oh sure, I'm proud of that, but what I'm saying is that it would have been difficult to do in the face of opposition from the state board of education.

SM: So the Indian people at Pine Point sort of rose to the occasion and presented it very effectively, dramatically even?

GB: Oh yes. It should have been put on tape and televised, I mean videotaped.
SM: It would have been great if we could have seen that.

GB: Yeah, and, you know, if the state board of education hadn't been convinced to come there and listen to them, nothing would have happened, because that kind of message you can't transmit by writing letters or telephones or anything else--it's an inspirational, emotional-type thing that has to be transmitted by face to face.

SM: Like the three Indian women teachers standing up explaining their experiences, and how they would like to have them overcome.

GB: Right.

SM: Yes, it can't be done any other way. You have to use the visual situation and listen as well.

GB: And you can't get the sincerity of a Josephine Clark into a letter.

SM: Yes. And Josephine Clark is still there, by the way. Now she's not going to be on the school board this next year, because this summer they had an election and she wasn't re-elected. I don't know what that means, whether she didn't run, but she said she was not going to be on it again. But, she's getting along in her years--what is she, in the mid 70's?

GB: I would imagine. I wouldn't want to have her know that I guessed at how old she is. (laughter)

SM: Well, we were talking about it when she was there--she's an old friend of mine, I've known her for a long time--and I didn't get the impression that she was concerned about the trend of things going, it's simply that she wasn't on the school board. In fact, she was talking about hoping that the new school board would go along and
get some music classes going that they don’t have now, and so on, so it sounded like she was still optimistic and eager and interested, and that’s good. If we had people like that in all our school districts across the country, we might have greater results everywhere.

GB: Right.

SM: What else can we cover today before we terminate our interview here? Georgianna, is there anything else you want to add?

GG: No, I have nothing to add about that situation.

SM: That wristband you’re wearing—you have a beaded wristband about an inch and a half, two inches wide, and it looks thick, and you said something about the design. It’s a typical Chippewa Indian design?

GG: Yeah, it’s a typical Chippewa Indian design.

SM: And that’s a flower?

GG: It looks like a rose. You’ll find green leaves and you’ll find most of your Chippewa designs are flowers.

SM: It’s a beautiful band.

GG: It was made by an Indian girl who is now teaching Indian culture in Minneapolis, teaching other Indians to do Indian work, Indian beadwork. She’s married to our neighbor who is also Indian, and she’s an Indian girl teaching Indians.

SM: Are there very many Indians here in the Hibbing area?

GB: We have one large family, and, oh, maybe a couple small families. I
think the census lists the number of Indians in Hibbing as 13.

SM: Thirteen people?

GB: Yeah, 13 or 14.

SM: And the census, when they determine whether or not you're an Indian, they just ask you, isn't that it?

GB: I believe so.

SM: And if you say you are, then you are put down as such?

GB: I think that's a little off, because this one family itself is 13.

SM: So there must be a few more.

GB: Yeah, this family's name is Littlewolf. They live in Hibbing, and then there are some Goodmans, but it's a very small.

SM: A very small part of the population?

GB: Oh, sure is.

SM: And north of here there's a reservation called the Nett Lake Reservation. That's Chippewa too, isn't it? In fact, all the Indians in this part of the state would be Chippewa, wouldn't they?

GB: The Nett Lake is made up of two parts—there's a Nett Lake area, and that's around Orr, and then the other part is called the Bois Forte, and that is over on the edge of Lake Vermilion, that's near that state park that I was telling you about where they had the Oklahoma
stuff. There was a controversy on all of our reservations in Minnesota here three years ago, because the Nett Lake band has a lot of very valuable shoreline along Lake Vermilion.

SM: Lake Vermilion is one of the big beautiful lakes in the northeastern part of the country?

GB: Yes, it has a thousand miles of shoreline. It's not that big, but the shoreline goes in and out and in and out, and the residents from the localities around had been renting, leasing the shoreline for cabins at a very minimal amount--something like $75.00 a year--and the Chippewa Tribe has allowed the reservations around the state to increase those leases and take the money, over and above what they were getting originally, for their own treasuries. The original $75.00, or whatever it might have been, still goes to the tribe, the way I understand it. But the Nett Lake Reservation Indians decided that they would just as soon have the land for themselves, and not have cabins on it, so they informed the leasees that they wanted them to move their cabins off at the end of their leases, and caused a pretty big controversy. I think they held to that position, I'm not sure.

SM: Did they move the cabins then?

GB: I believe they have, yeah, as their leases expired.

SM: There's a similar situation in Wisconsin which may have another complication. I think they sold the land around some of their lakes to non-Indians, and they're going to have a very difficult time ever getting that back, I suppose.

GB: I would think so. The White Earth Reservation did not ask the cabin
owners to move, but instead they increased the amount for the lease. And the intention for the Nett Lake Tribe was to try to get something commercial up there for the tribe itself—some commercial resort—something like Grand Marais is doing. The Indians at Grand Marais on that reservation up there, are building a Hilton Hotel, or one of those big hotel chains.

SM: Grand Marais is on the north shore of Lake Superior?

GB: Right. Right up in the arrowhead of Minnesota. And you've heard of the case where they are now testing whether or not they can have gambling on the reservation there? And that's to be in conjunction with that hotel, I understand, as a sort of an income-producing thing for the Indians there.

SM: And if the Indians can have gambling, then they could set up casinos or whatever, and begin taking in income that the rest of the state could not?

GB: Yeah, because of our laws.

SM: It would be interesting to see what might happen.

GB: Well, that's being tested now. The test arrest was made, they sold a lottery ticket, and the question is, does the treaty allow the Indians up there to be exempt from our state gambling laws or not, that's the question.

SM: And we don't know yet, because the state Supreme Court will get the case eventually?

GB: Oh, I imagine, and then probably the U.S.
SM: The U.S. Supreme Court?

GB: Another thing that I don't know if you've talked to anybody about--it's unique in Minnesota--and that went through that same year that this Pine Point thing did, it was a good year for Indians. It was that the Leech Lake Indians have control of the hunting and fishing in that area. Have you heard about that?

SM: No.

GB: Well, see, the treaty said that the Leech Lake Indians could hunt and fish any time they wanted to. Well, this was in conflict with our Department of Natural Resources rulings on seasons and stuff like that, so there right away the state government ran up against what the treaty said the Indians could do, you know. Well, it was taken to court, and the District Judge said that the Indians, according to the treaty, had the authority to regulate the hunting and fishing within the boundaries of the reservation, even though there're many white people, well, mostly white people, living in the area, you know.

SM: I believe on the Red Lake Reservation they fish all the time year round and don't have to buy hunting or fishing licenses. In fact, they can even fish commercially, which is unique to that reservation, isn't it?

GB: Well, of course, that's different, because the Red Lake is a closed reservation and only settled by Indians.

SM: In other words that is the definition of a closed reservation--that the Indians run it, control it, and only Indians live there? Can a non-Indian move on to that area if the Indians would permit him to?
GB: Well, I suppose. They're in total control of it, but I don't think they do.

SM: They usually don't though when the Indians totally control it, because then they would be a minority group at the mercy of some other ruling body.

GB: Yeah, I suppose they'd have the power to let anybody they want to live there.

SM: They have their own police too, don't they?

GB: They have their own department of natural resources regulations, you know—they don't fish during spawning season and stuff like that.

SM: Yes, they control that themselves, but not necessarily according to state law, according to their own law.

GB: Yeah, as I understand it, that portion of our state has never been ceded to the United States. That's still an original piece of Indian ground and never been made part of the United States. Anyway, getting back to Leech Lake, we had this conflict, and so it was settled by the state legislature setting up a permit system where anybody who wants to hunt deer buys a license, you know. But if they want to hunt deer on Leech Lake, they pay an extra dollar, and that money goes to the tribe. If they want to go fishing, like at Lake Vermilion, you buy a fishing license, but they ask you when you buy a license, "Are you going to be fishing on the reservation" and if you say no, then you pay the regular price; if you say yes, you pay a little extra and that money goes to the tribe.

GG: A dollar extra. I happened to be in Walker just a week or so ago,
and there were some out-of-state people buying fishing licenses, and they were intending to fish on Leech Lake, and they said, "Are you going to fish on the reservation?" They said, "Well, probably," and they weren't quite sure, and they said, "Well, if you think you're going to be fishing" and they didn't press it, they left it entirely up to these people. They said, "Well, if you think you're going to be fishing on the reservation it'll be a dollar extra," and the people were glad to pay, and then they explained to them where that dollar would go—that the dollar went to the Indian.

SM: How do they mark off the area which is on the reservation and which isn't?

GB: Well, there are signs up.

SM: In the lakes? On the shore?

GB: Well, on the highways, you know. When you enter a reservation it says . . . you are entering a reservation and must have a fishing permit, something like that.

SM: Well then, if someone were on the lake in a boat and went across a line, they wouldn't be arrested?

GB: Oh no, I don't think that they are. . . .

SM: Cut it that fine?

GB: And the fee is so nominal, most people get it anyway, just in case they're going to be there.

SM: That's another little income for the tribe then, isn't it?
GB: Yeah. I don't know how it's working out, but I suppose time will tell. Another thing that was interesting—that's one of the things where AIM came in, and there was a confrontation on the opening of fishing season at one of our lakes—I forget which—on many lakes, I guess. You know, where people would say, "Well, I'm gonna go fishing," and AIM was there, and it was a very peaceful confrontation and led to this agreement.

SM: The AIM organization was instrumental in getting this agreement made?

GB: They weren't in the negotiations at all, but they were one of the pressure groups, and some of the Indian leaders, I think—they might correct me—didn't exactly welcome them into it, but they didn't have any choice.

SM: It seems they have a problem in education or public relations, because many people seem to have only known AIM for the headlines they have gotten out of the BIA takeover, for example, and they don't know about any of the other things they do or want to do.

GB: Right. My cousin, Lorraine, has just walked in here, and she is more Indian than I, because her mother has a greater percentage of Indian in her, and she's also from a different band, Mississippi, which, by the way, they have some kind of a thing going with politicians because they got their payments (chuckle) but anyway, she might have some opinion as to the amount of payment and stuff like that. And also we were talking, Lorraine, about what progress is being made with Indian people as far as solving their problems, and what you think should be done as far as helping them solve their problems, and so forth. Those are some of the things we've been talking about, so maybe Sam could steer you the way he wants you to go.
SM: First of all, I want to get your name down here, Lorraine. Your maiden name was Brisbois, the same as your cousin's, but now it's Mrs. Kotschevar?

Lorraine Kotschevar:
Yes.

SM: Do you live here in Hibbing too?

LK: Yes, for, let's see, 11 years.

SM: Would you explain this Mississippi Indian? Is that the band of Chippewas who lived over on the Mississippi River?

LK: I really don't know. I feel that I was the last of our family who actually was told the least, and it bothers me sometimes that I don't know as much as I should know about my heritage.

SM: How about that, Gabe. Can you help us with that? Now you mentioned the Pembina band, the Mississippi band and the Pilliger band.

GB: I have no idea how the names were applied. It sounds logical that the Mississippis would be by the Mississippi River, but how Pembinas got their name and why, I have no idea. I think that Lorraine brought up a good point that we've been talking about all along in connection with the Pine Point school. It's that very few of us know much about our heritage. She just said, "I know very little about my heritage, and it bothers me sometimes," and I think that's something that most Indians have in common.

SM: Yes, I suppose.

GB: I read in a book that they have in Brainerd that, you know, the Chamber of Commerce publishes, and I read this just when my sister
was here that, at one time, Indians that live on the White Earth Reservation used to live around Brainerd in Crow Wing County, and when they wanted that land, they had the Indians moved to White Earth, to the White Earth Reservation, because they wanted that land the Indians were living on there.

SM: That's a possibility all right, because this trend was general throughout the 19th century, moving west again as a treaty was made, and so on. Lorraine, that's a good point you brought up, because you sort of emphasized the thing we've been talking about here for an hour, about the value of recapturing or relearning some of the Indian culture before it's all lost.

LK: Well, I really don't know what they're teaching now in history in school as far as the Indians are concerned, so that I would really like to know just what are they teaching?

SM: Gabe, can you help us with that in regard to elementary schools?

GB: I can tell you that . . . oh, five, six years ago, or just two years ago, in our schools here, our histories would start with the age of exploration and be purely European, from a European viewpoint. But now our history starts with the migration across the land bridge from Asia, and I'd say six weeks is spent, before Columbus, you know. So the histories of Indian tribes throughout the country are now emphasized at the beginning of American history where it should be. So I like Dick Gregory's statement, that the American educational system is trying to teach Indian students that Columbus discovered America. And that's how far off we were, but we're starting to get straightened out.

SM: Does that help any, Lorraine? Flip Wilson said on one of his T.V. shows, "We're 'in' this year," and Indians are kind of "in" at least among the student body.
LK: A little recognition.

SM: Yes. And it's a very popular thing to be able to say, "I'm part Indian, or my great grandfather was."

LK: And not have to be ashamed of it, yes.

SM: People are looking and hoping to find an Indian in their ancestry someplace nowadays, as contrasted with 50 years ago.

GB: As long as they don't have to live on a reservation.

SM: Yes, or suffer the prejudice that one encounters sometimes; but in St. Louis, a Seminole boy from Florida said that he has it very good, gets a healthy grant from the BIA to go to school, and everybody's been very friendly. And he's a pleasant, good-looking young fellow anyway, and is having a good time. Lorraine, I'm glad you came over today. Is there anything else we should add here before we leave?

LK: I was going to see if I had some of the papers on me of the payments that we got.

SM: Some of the correspondence on the payments? What payments were these, Gabe?

GB: Well, I was telling you that they take some of the money out of the awards of the money to be paid to the Indians for expenses in distributing the money?

SM: And this was payment for lands that had never been paid for?

GB: Right.

SM: And so now the money has been awarded by Congress, but they're taking
the administrative expense out of the awards?

GB: Right. I said that, and said I didn't have any documentation, but Lorraine's here now, and she...

SM: Lorraine has a letter with her. What does it say, Lorraine?

LK: It says, "This is for the Treaty of February 22, 1855, with the Mississippi band," and the awards were for $1,671,000, and the attorney's fees taken off of that were 10%, which is $167,000.00, and out of this amount, as a member of the Mississippi band, I received $99.40.

SM: May I repeat that here? The total award to the Mississippi band was $1,671,000, the attorney's fees were $167,126.21, and you got $99.40, and that is because there are enough people dividing the remainder of the award that's one person's share. So every person got that, I presume. But it is surprising—and here are attorney expenses $56,000, payroll and program expenses $10,000, program fund $231,000—whatever that is—totalling expenses of $464,000.00 taken out of the award, which brought it down from $1,671,000 to $1,391,000. That doesn't quite add up, but here's another $184,000.00. I guess that explains it. And then the Pillager band and the Lake Winnibigoshish band were treated similarly? Those are the bands, the Mississippi band, the Pillager band, the Lake Winnibigoshish band, and then the Pembina band?

GB: We haven't gotten anything yet, not even $99.00.

LK: Not even a notice that it's coming?

SM: Well, Lorraine must have had more political clout than you did.
GB: It's just like I said before, that if I owed you money and was going
to pay you, and instead I took 10% off to pay my attorney, what would
you say? You'd say, "Baloney, you pay me everything."

SM: Is there any way of contesting that now?

GB: I don't believe so, because that's the way the legislation was
written when the law was made.

SM: Well, Lorraine, how's everything else going?

LK: My mother was one of the last of the Chippewas to be given her land
acreage in Waubun.

SM: In Waubun, Minnesota?

LK: She received 80 acres of cleared land. She was one of the last ones
to be. . . .

SM: Would that be in the 1900's? She wouldn't have been old enough to
have gotten that in the 19th century. That was in the 20th century?

GB: This is the division we were talking about earlier where they opened
up the White Earth Reservation, and ultimately it ended up with the
Indians being shoved out into the woods.

SM: Instead of on the richer valley land?

GB: And Waubun land is really nice land. That acreage that she had is
choice. Didn't your family live there for a while?

LK: Yes, quite a while, till I was five years old.
SM: Did you go to school over there at Mahnomen too?

LK: Yes. I went there for the first five years, and then my parents moved to the cities.

SM: Minneapolis?

LK: Minneapolis, and, see, I always followed my dad during the war, and then I came back to Mahnomen and graduated from Mahnomen High School.

GB: What we could probably do here is use Lorraine as a comparison to Bunny's experiences. Bunny expressed the idea that she felt very discriminated against at Mahnomen as an Indian.

LK: See, I didn't at all.

GB: Years later, 'cause Bunny's so old. (laughter)

SM: He's teasing you, Bunny.

LK: I just can't believe this when I hear how they were treated back home.

SM: Our tape is about to run out. It has been very interesting talking with all of you. Thank you sincerely.