Listening to Indians

JOSEPHINE CLARK, Chippewa
GEORGE FAIRBANKS, Chippewa
GEORGE STONE, 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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NO. 15

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Glen Rock, New Jersey
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Sam Myers:

Today we're at the Pine Point school, near Ponsford, Minnesota, and we're talking to three people: Mrs. Josephine Clark, who works on maintenance here in the school building; George A. Fairbanks, Sr., who is the Chippewa language teacher, and George Stone, who is the groundskeeper and has the nickname "Captain." This is the southeast end of the White Earth Reservation, and the nearest town is Ponsford. That's not on the reservation, is it?

George Fairbanks:

No, it isn't, it's off the reservation.

SM: So we have the place fixed—it's on the White Earth Reservation in north central Minnesota. We'll start with George Fairbanks, our Chippewa language teacher. Is it right to say Chippewa or Ojibway?

GF: Ojibway language.

SM: You see, you got a little different sound in there than I do, and I'd like to capture that. Would you say it again?

GF: Ojibway.

SM: And that is the whole group, and the Chippewas are one part of that?

GF: Right. It constitutes all different dialects of the Ojibway language, but from my viewpoint of the language, there is different dialects of the language itself, and you take Red Lake, they got a different dialect; Walker's got the same; Leach Lake and ... I had the opportunity of work with a couple people from Mille Lacs, and they had a different dialect.

SM: They're all Chippewas; they're all Ojibways?
GF: Yeah, they're all Chippewas, but ... you know what they're sayin', but it's just a different dialect to it.

SM: Someone told me there are as many as 1,600 different dialects in this area we call United States.

Josephine Clark:
And Canada.

SM: And then Canada more yet. I'd like to get a brief biographical sketch of you, first of all, George. Did you grow up here in this area?

GF: Yeah, I was born here in 1933, here in Ponsford, and went to school here at Pine Point, and then went on to Park Rapids. Then the 8th grade from there I went to Pipestone, Wahpeton, and I come back to Park Rapids and I finished out until 10th grade there. Then I went into the Service, and I come back here again, because this is my roots, you know, here. And I've been here ever since, and doin' all kinds of odd jobs around here, and workin' in Park Rapids, and eventually I got into teaching here through Mr. Buckanaga; that was 1968.

SM: Mr. Buckanaga is the principal here?

GF: Um hm. He was the principal then, and he hired me to work here as a Chippewa language teacher, and I've been here ever since ... well, 1975, but for the first two years I was workin' under the Community Action Program; then I got on to the staff payroll, and I've been workin' here ever since then.

SM: Do most of the students come to the Pine Point school already speaking the Chippewa language?

GF: Well, that is one thing that I was tryin' to work on with the teachers themselves—to have the teachers speak it, and the parents
at home too, but it didn't work out that way.

SM: Do most of them speak English?

GF: Yeah.

SM: So actually, then, instead of coming to school speaking Chippewa, and coming into an English-talking class, they come speaking English and have to learn their native language. Is it a hard one to learn?

GF: No, it isn't. It's pretty easy. The little kids... the ones that I'm workin' with now, are the pre-schoolers, because those are the kids that got the vocabulary; they can understand it, and then they can speak it right out. And those little kids are really goin' at that good.

SM: Now then, next let's ask our "Captain" or George Stone (we're smiling when we say that because they're kind of teasing him) But, George, did you grow up here in this community also?

George Stone:
Well, I was born here on this reservation here, Ponsford here, on the White Earth Reservation. Well, I'm 60 years old now--the only time I was out of this reservation I was out servin' in the Armed Forces in Europe in World War II. I was in the Service three years.

SM: What branch was it?

GS: 601st Field Artillery.

SM: You were in the Battle of the Bulge then?

GS: No, I was right next to the Battle of the Bulge. See, the First
Army was between us and the Third, and I was in the Seventh Army, you know. To begin with I was up in the Aleutians, you know. That's where I started in '43, you know, in the Aleutians. Well, from there on, half of our outfit went down to South Pacific, then we took amphibian training and mountain training—I guess this is the reason why we was sent back to the States, and was shipped across to Italy and then went to the mountains there.

SM: In Italy?

GS: That's right. And from there we went as far as Rome again. You see, we was with the Fifth Army, so they pulled us off from Rome—it's supposed to be a neutral city in Rome—so they pulled us off from there, and then, so we made another invasion in southern France, you know, so we didn't join up to the Third Army until we got down to Leon, France. From there on, this is where the new army come in—the First Army, that's that Army that was wiped out. That's where they had this German bulge; that's where they broke through—these troops were green, see; well, that was quite a deal there. We seen a lot of things, you know . . . I guess people wouldn't realize how it happened. A lotta these boys there froze there standin' up in the cold weather in December . . . these German boys. See, when they first come through there, you know, they went through there about 60 miles and took the American equipment and everything, you know. Later on they [the U.S.] had to change the insignia, the orange insignia, in order to . . . strafe by air, 'cause these Germans were usin' the captured equipment—tanks and all that, you know—American tanks were fightin' each other at that time there.

SM: It appeared to be because of the color mix-up. You finally got back to the United States safely, though?

GS: I ended up way up in Czechoslovakia.
SM: Well you really got around during the war.

GS: Yeah.

SM: From the Aleutian Islands to Italy.

GS: I had seven battle stars. Yeah, seven battle stars. I went through the roughest deal, I guess, of all of 'em.

SM: Did you volunteer for the Service?

GS: No, no. Heck with volunteer. (Chuckle)

SM: You were drafted so you had a chance to serve the country that now sometimes you don't agree with.

GS: I really see a lot of country then. We made this invasion of southern France; we hit Marseille, France, you know; then I went on from there to Leon, France; that's border along Germany; then we set there till December--that's when we crossed the secret line, crossed river there. Then from there we went to southern part of Germany, all the way down to Austria, Czechoslovakia, that's where the war ended was way down on the border of Czechoslovakia.

SM: That's where you were when it ended, in Czechoslovakia. Then you came back to the States?

GS: Yeah, I didn't come back to the States. Our outfit down there, they volunteered for military police duty at Salzburg, Austria. So we had to be in occupation forces for purt' near a month.

SM: In Austria?

GS: July, and then August 8 I left my outfit there. There were only 16
of us; we were screened, you know. See, I could of got my discharge on the 6th of June; I was eligible for discharge, but our company commander, he volunteered for that job, so on August 8, I flew from Salzburg, Austria, to Marseille, France--about 800 miles there, that was a rough flight--it was twin-engine C-54 bombers, and we were sittin' on the floor, and sometimes they hit a pocket and we went down about 40, 50, 60 feet. I didn't like that, you know. I was supposed to come home by plane but I refused, you know. On the 16th of August I was supposed to leave. I refused--I didn't want to ride in the plane, you know, so I didn't leave France until September 7th, so it only took us about seven days until we hit Boston. At Boston there was the 16 of us, and we came to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, you know, where I got my discharge. The 16th of September is when I got my discharge.

SM: Did you come back here from Camp McCoy?

GS: Yeah, that's right.

SM: And you've been here on the reservation ever since?

GS: Yeah, I've been here . . . I was workin' at Grand Forks here in that sugar plant for four years.

SM: A sugar beet plant?

GS: That's right. That's where I lost my eye. See, I'm blind on this eye.

SM: Oh, it doesn't show.

GS: This one here is partially blind, and I'm gettin' a Veteran's pension and all. I'm gettin' $179, so this principal down here--I guess he's an agent--got me a job down there. Yard work, maintenance.
SM: How long have you been working here now?

GS: Yeah, it'll be about the fourth week this week. Yeah.

SM: That brings you up to date with George Fairbanks.

GS: That's right. See, I have five children at home, you know, and I lost my wife in '65, July 20, 1965, she died you know. Since then, you know, I'm father and mother to my kids. I've been father and mother. See, my youngest one was only five years old. See, at that time, you know, the welfare, they just refused to help me at that time, you know. My wife, when she was dying—she died of cancer—see what happened was she had a gall bladder operation, and that's when they had this hospital, before they took that out. She had an operation there, you know, that new intern—doctors, you know, they were just inexperienced doctors. Well, all of them doctors they come through here, they just take their training through here, you know, about a year; then they take 'em off and put new ones on again.

SM: Is there a hospital near here?

GS: No, they took that out quite a while ago. When was that, Josephine?

JC: Oh gosh, it's quite a while. About 1960, I think.

SM: And you haven't had one here since. Where is the nearest hospital?

GS: Park Rapids and Detroit Lakes.

SM: They're about the same distance, are they?

GS: No. Park Rapids is 20 miles and Detroit Lakes is 30. Yah, she had
a gall bladder operation, and then, well, she didn't know it, she didn't know it you know, that the cancer set in both sides--part of her lung, her right lung, she got cancer. And then the doctor release her, the cancer set in her liver, see. Well, I had quite a time gettin' a doctor, gettin' a good doctor to get her X-rayed, you know, and a doctor came from Duluth in order to X-ray her. It was done by St. Joseph's in Park Rapids, and then that's how they detect her, she had cancer. From there I contact a Cass Lake doctor that's staff down there from Cass Lake. I didn't have the money, you know, so they entered her in St. Luke's Hospital in Fargo then. So they operated on her; they took quite a part of her lung, you know, but they couldn't do nothing with her liver. But they wrote to me about the whatcha call it . . . the doctor down there wrote a letter that she wouldn't live, not more'n six weeks. It was on the 2nd of February, 1965, and the doctor, he wrote a registered letter to me, just for me to read that alone, you know. Told me that she wasn't gonna live very long. On the 2nd of February, that's when she had that operation, see. Well, she lived all the way down to July 20, 1965. That's when she died.

SM: Was she at home all that time?

GS: She was home mostly all the time, 'cause they knowed she was gonna die, and I had to keep her and I had to give her all the shots . . . all the pain shots, you know, durin' her days, you know. Well, I had to leave somebody down there to watch her, because I had to work same time, you know, to buy groceries for my kids. They wouldn't help me at the welfare at all, that time. Well then, so after she died and all, then here the welfare, they come over. Now they wanted to help me, you know. They wanted to place a homemaker at my place. "No," I told 'em, "I couldn't do that now," I said, "Because I tried to get help from you people," I says, "while my wife was dyin'," I said, because she was sent home, you know, at that time.
And they wouldn't help me at all.

SM: Do you live near here, George?

GS: Yeah, I live here. I live down here just a little ways from the school.

SM: So the kids are at home now. How old are they?

GS: The youngest was five at the time my wife died, but he's 15 now.

SM: He's getting grown-up now.

GS: Since then I've been with my kids ever since.

SM: So this is your fourth week here?

GS: Yeah. Just started, yah. Veteran's pension down there, I'm gettin'. $179.00. Yeah, that's the only income I got now. The welfare was supposed to help me, but they took me off on that 'cause I'm gettin' Veteran's pension.

SM: Well, George, I hope things go well now for you now that you are settled down out here, and the kids are growing up. Do you like the job here?

GS: I like the job, yeah.

SM: The building looks good too. You must be doing a good job on it. Now let's turn to Mrs. Josephine Clark, who also works at the school, and, Mrs. Clark, I guess you and I have known each other maybe 25, 30 years.

JC: Thirty years.
SM: And George is gone now, and the kids are pretty well grown up?

JC: Yes.

SM: And you've got the school pretty well under control, haven't you?

JC: Yes.

SM: That's good. Did you grow up here in the Pine Point area too?

JC: Yes, I was born and raised here. I was born in 1908.

SM: You're old enough to vote now then, I guess.

JC: 1908.

SM: And then you went to school here too?

JC: Um hm.

SM: Was there a school here in those days?

JC: Yes, I was 10 years old when they started here. We lived way out in the woods--way out in the country, Basswood Lake.

SM: What was your maiden name?

JC: Lowden, but I went by my step-daddy's name--Taylor, after my mother got married again.

SM: And then, after school here, did you go to school anywhere else?

JC: Yes, I went to school in Pipestone.
SM: I'm going down there very soon. Do you know the pipestone quarries? Is that closed-off territory now?

JC: No, they still . . .

SM: Will they let me in there?

JC: Oh yeah, they'll let you go over there.

SM: Can I get a little piece of stone?

JC: Oh, maybe they'll let you have it, but I don't know. They're tight with it now.

SM: Yes, I know. It's getting scarce, and there's a limit as well. I would love to have a small piece of it. I'll ask them when I get there, that's the best way.

JC: Yeah, I was just talkin' to a guide two weeks ago here. I was askin' him if anybody can go over there and dig pipestone like they used to--people used to just go over there and dig up what they want, but he said they don't do that any more.

SM: It's controlled. Who controls it now?

JC: Well, I couldn't tell you. I didn't find out about that. It was the Sioux Indians had it, but they can't even take pipestone out of there any more.

SM: The Sioux don't either?

JC: No.

SM: Without permission, that is. Is the government controlling it somehow?
JC: The time I was there, the Indians used to come camp there in May and make all kinds of stuff; we used to go stand and watch 'em, you know, making stuff out of pipestone.

SM: It's a nice soft rock, and when you polish it, it gets a rich, red color.

JC: Yes. Uh huh.

SM: I think most people have seen some of it some place or other.

JC: Yeah, they got a big building there where they sell all that stuff they make now.

SM: Well, who does this, the Sioux Indians?

JC: No, it's the white people.

SM: White people are doing that? That's a surprise.

JC: This is what I mean, you know. Everything the Indian had has been taken away from us.

SM: Even the pipestone?

JC: Um hm, yeah.

SM: I'll check on that when I get down there, and we can bring this to the attention of all the people who will listen to our tape.

JC: See, I wanted to get a pipe made for myself, you know. That's why I was askin' this guy. I met him in powwow, and I asked him about that--I know he's from that way, Pipestone, and he told me. I used to have a friend that used to work there--I went to school with him--
and he gave me a piece of pipestone when they came visit there, about 10 years ago. He was workin' with it. He gave me a piece of that pipestone, and I brought it home, and my brother took it and he made pipes out of it--little ones, you know. I guess he was selling them at the park. I want to go back and get some more.

SM: I will check on that the first chance I get in a couple of weeks.

JC: I wanted to go back and get some more pipestone, but they told me I couldn't do it. I guess they charge now if you want pipestone.

SM: Then you have come back--you lived in Park Rapids for a while.

JC: Yes, I lived in Park Rapids for 25 years. My mother died in Park Rapids, and after she died I went to St. Paul. We lived there--George worked.

SM: George worked in St. Paul?

JC: Yeah. And then I didn't like it over there in the cities--I couldn't take it. I had my little ones, and I had a hard time living in one little room with them, you know, and I couldn't wash clothes in there.

SM: You lived in one room in St. Paul with the children?

JC: One room.

SM: How many children?

JC: I had three.

SM: Three children and you and George trying to make it in one room. That wasn't a very happy situation, was it?
JC: No, I didn't like it, so I came home, and I told 'im to stay and keep on workin', and in three week's time he was home.

SM: So you came back here to Ponsford?

JC: Uh huh.

SM: Is that the way to say it, "Back to Ponsford," or "Back to the reservation?" What's the correct terminology?

JC: Back to the reservation.

SM: Ponsford is just a village on the edge, and you don't live in Ponsford?

JC: No, no.

SM: People speak loosely of that, and I'd like to correct that. O.K., then, how long have you been working at the school?

JC: 1970, that's when we got the school back. We had to fight.

SM: Who were you fighting, and what was the problem?

GF: Well, see, the way it stands--we were with Park Rapids.

JC: You see, some of our kids goes to Park Rapids High School, see; they go to school there, and they couldn't get along with them.

SM: This school goes through the eighth grade, and then they still go to Park Rapids for high school if they want to. And you were attached to the Park Rapids District?

GF: Yeah. And they were handling all our federal funding through the
state ... Johnson-O'Malley funds. All the reservations got it back—they handle their own funds now.

SM: This board here handles its own funds instead of going through the Park Rapids School District?

GF: Um hm. And Park Rapids didn't want us to leave there, so we pulled away from them. Autonomy is what we worked on, and eventually we got the senators to back us on this.

SM: The state senators?

GF: Um hm. And eventually we got our own school back, and now we run it the way we want to.

SM: This was a state-made decision that you would run the school to suit yourselves? So then you have a separate school district?

GF: Right.

SM: And Park Rapids is another school district, and you're not tied together any more?

GF: No, we're not.

SM: Except that your school goes through the eighth grade, and then the school children can go to Park Rapids, or they can go to Detroit Lakes if they wanted to?

GF: Right.

SM: How many students do you have going to Park Rapids now?

JC: I think we have 40 left.
SM: Do you have very many going to Detroit Lakes?

GF: None.

SM: They all go to Park Rapids. Are things going well for them there?

GF: No, not . . . no. Not too well.

SM: Are they running into problems there?

GF: We had a sit-down strike over there; the kids had a sit-down strike here about three months ago, at the Park Rapids school.

SM: Were the Indian kids sitting down to strike?

GF: The Indian kids all sat down, and they had a strike there, because for the simple reason Mr. Fred Bettner, the superintendent over there, and the teachers over there didn't recognize our home-school coordinator, our Indian home-school coordinator's title over there, and the kids rebelled on that, and they had that sit-down strike. I was the one that went up there, and one of the school board members and one of the RBC staff members went over there.

SM: RBC? Could you explain that?

GF: Reservation Business Committee, and I'm a member of that too.

SM: You're a member of that too, as well as being on the faculty here at the school?

GF: Right.

SM: And the strike--did it accomplish what you set out to do?
GF: Yes, it did. Ed Miller got his authority back.

SM: As coordinator?

GF: Um hm. Home-school coordinator, and he handles just the Indian kids over there.

SM: Yes. Will you explain to me what the home-school coordinator does?

GF: The home-school coordinator is like a teacher over there. If they have a counselor, well, he is more or less a counselor for the Indian kids over there.

SM: But they weren't recognizing him?

GF: No, Park Rapids wasn't recognizing him.

SM: But now he is recognized as a regular official coordinator or counselor for the Indian students at that school. Does he work with any of the white students there?

GF: No. Just the Indians.

SM: Do you prefer to call them "Indian kids" or "white kids," or "Indians" or "non-Indians?" What terminology do you like best.

GF: Non-Indians.

SM: O.K., then things were a little tense for a while, and now it's straightened out?

GF: Well, not exactly.

SM: There is still a little tension? Is this mostly between the kids and
the staff over there, or between the students themselves?

GF: No, you might say the whole community is involved in this—the Park Rapids community.

SM: The whole town of Park Rapids?

GF: They're real biased over there.

SM: They are? That's too bad. I remember back when one of the Annette girls was the homecoming queen, and things were going along very well, but it isn't so good now?

GF: No.

SM: Do you have any explanation why it got worse?

JC: Well, one thing I found out. My kids went to Park Rapids school. I think where it started, I had one little girl that was really dark—still dark. When she started school over there, the kids started calling her "nigger baby." And she didn't like that very well, and I didn't blame her. So one day I asked her, I said, "What's bothering you? Why is it that you don't wanta go to school?" So she started to cry, and she told me why she didn't wanta go to school. So just before the bus came to the door I made up my mind I was gonna go over to the school and find out what was all the trouble. So I told her, I said, "Come on," I said, "I'll take you over to the school; I'll go find out what's happening over there." So I came to school, and I asked for the superintendent and I went in and asked him if he could do me a favor. So he said, "What is it, Mrs. Clark?" I said, "One of my little girls don't wanta come to school; she hasn't been to school for two weeks," I said. And he said, "What reasons?" Then I said, "Well, they been calling her 'nigger baby', she doesn't like
to be called 'nigger baby' just because she's dark; she's not no
nigger, she's a Chippewa Indian," I says. So he said, "Well, I
don't know, sometimes I don't know what to do. I don't know what to
think of these kids sometimes, the way they call people down," he
says. "Well, there's something you can do about that," I says. "One
thing you can do is go in ever' school room and tell them not to call
anybody a name, I don't care how the kid looks," I said. "I know,
I found that out too," I said, "on account of the clothing they wear,
some of 'em say, 'You're ragged, or you ain't . . . you know, you're
not rich, you know, things like that," I said. "It hurts people," I
says, "although we know," I said, "we're hard-up Indians," I said,
"we can't help it what we don't have," I said, "like you white people
have," I said. "There's many of us," I said, "even me," I said. "I've
been going lotta places, people call me down," I says, "it bothers me
sometimes," I said. "And then again," I said, "maybe that shouldn't
even bother me, it's a feeling I have," I said. So he said he would
do it. So I guess they did, and I straightened that out. I said, "I
don't want nobody to call my baby a nigger baby any more," I says.

SM: Or any other name.

JC: "Or any other name," I says. "If I hear that," I says, "I'll be back
here again." And that was stopped.

SM: Do any of your children go to the Park Rapids High School, George?

GF: Yeah, I have one more goin' to school there.

SM: Do they have any troubles or problems?

JC: Yeah, this is the trouble they have. The kids are not dressed decent,
you know, they call them down, you know, "dirty Indians," and all that
stuff. I had a girl started--the one I showed you in the picture
there--she started school, and the kids started makin' fun of her because she didn't dress like the other ones was dressed; you know, she didn't have too much decent clothes to wear, and they started callin' her down. And then after they found out that she was an Indian it got worse, and she had to quit school.

SM: She did quit?

JC: Um hm.

SM: But now, has she got back again?

JC: Well, she wants to go back this fall, but I don't know.

SM: I'm surprised, because usually the students themselves are not the biggest problem, but sometimes I guess they are.

JC: Yeah, we'd like to see our kids get an education, too, you know. This is why we're raisin' them.

SM: They have the same rights as anyone else.

JC: Yeah.

SM: Do you have any other kids going to the Park Rapids High School now?

JC: No, just only one that is gonna start there.

SM: And she may go back and she may not? What is her first name?

JC: Patty Clark, Patricia. And she wants to go back.

SM: George Stone, you have one of your children over there?
GS: Yeah, I have one of my boys down there— that's the one that's 15 years old. He'll be 16 in December. Well, I have other boy down there, is gonna be 17, you know, Georgie.

JC: Well you had a girl there, didn't you?

SM: Are they getting along all right?

GS: Well, they're gettin' along all right, but that's the trouble. These kids now, most of them don't wanta go to school. Well, they can't afford to have new clothes, you know, different clothes every day. Like my boy down there, I think he had about three set of clothes change a week, you know, that's all. And I have quite a difficult time myself, gettin' new clothes each month, 'cause I wasn't gettin' much on my pension, see.

JC: Another thing I found out—they have what you call "Dress up Day," one day. Well, the kids here, when they don't have anything to wear, then they got to miss school one day.

SM: Do you mean when they have this Dress up Day when everybody sort of puts on nicer clothes, then the kids feel left out, and so they want to stay home?

JC: Because they don't have the dress or whatever they wear.

GS: They got a record over there now for the best-dressed kid in school.

SM: Somebody gets a prize?

GS: Yeah, somethin' like that, yeah.

SM: Of course, by and large the students nowadays don't dress up too much,
do they? They wear jeans, sweatshirts, and so on, so it isn't a problem of wearing suits and ties or anything like that, is it? But, Josephine, could you tell us anything more about the school here, and how things are going?

JC: Well, one thing I can say is I'm really happy to have the school back.

SM: You're running your own school now?

JC: Yes, running our own school and doin' everything, workin' hard to keep the school open for our little ones. We'd like to have 'em have an education; we'd like to have 'em to learn something...what they didn't learn before we had this school, I might as well say.

SM: Now they're learning the usual things--reading, writing, arithmetic, plus the Chippewa language with Mr. Fairbanks?

JC: The Chippewa language they're learning. Is lot of things that's gonna come up this year--they're gonna learn more.

SM: You're putting an accent on Indian history now too, aren't you?

JC: Yeah. Joe and I here have been on a school board quite a while since the school started, and, well, I might as well say, I didn't know much about school board work before I started, because seemed like I really educated myself sitting here listening to different ones speakin', you know, about the school, you know--how we should run the school, and how we should do this.

SM: How many people do you have on the board?

JC: We had 11.
SM: Eleven people on the board, and your board is autonomous then. You are the boss, you raise the taxes, you set the tax rate on the reservation. And then do you get funds from the federal government?

JC: Yes.

SM: Do you get anything from the state government?

GS: We got state aid comin' too.

SM: Do you get state aid same as other schools? And you have federal assistance, so all in all, it works out then, so that the tax base.

JC: We got Jerry Buckanaga here as principal. He's well-educated man, so I'm proud of that, you know. That's what I like to see—all the Indian kids be educated so they can go on with their school, and by the time I'm gone, that's the feeling I have, 'cause I got a lot of grandchildren too that I'd like to see 'em get somewhere.

SM: About how many students do you have here?

GF: One hundred and twelve.

SM: Do you start with kindergarten?

GF: We don't go by grades here. Age group. 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11 or 12, 13 or 14.

JC: Then we got Indian teachers in our school.

SM: And you have some Indian teachers for each of the grades?

JC: Yeah. Indian counselors—what do you call 'em—aides, works with the teacher, you know.
SM: In other words, if you have a teacher here, a white or non-Indian teacher, and that teacher is teaching one of the age groups, arithmetic, let's say, then you have an Indian person in the classroom helping out also, in all the rooms, and now you have a Chippewa language teacher here, George Fairbanks. Do you have anyone else teaching language besides yourself?

GF: No, I'm the only one.

JC: No, we had . . . how many teachers did we have last year? Six.

GF: Six certified teachers and 12 aides.

SM: Twelve age groups, so each teacher teaches two age groups. And you teach the conventional subjects, like any other school?

GF: Well, you see, the way they got that going on, in the mornings they have the regular, conventional program, curriculum; then, in the afternoon from 1:00 till 3:00 the kids sign up for different programs they wanta take up. They have Business Machines, Cooking, Sewing, Outdoors, and different things.

SM: Like a vocational school. The regular curriculum in the morning, and a special curriculum in the afternoon. When do you get your language courses in?

GF: I get mine all in the morning, a half hour for each class, from 9:00 in the morning until 12:00.

SM: So they have classes in English and in Chippewa also. Do you have any other Indians, like any Sioux Indians or any other kind of Indians besides Chippewas?
GF: No, they're all Chippewas.

SM: Which figures, of course, being a Chippewa reservation. Once in a while they do get others. We were talking about Pipestone, Josephine, a little while ago. Would you call that Sioux country or Chippewa country?

JC: That's Sioux.

GF: But still it's termed "Indian country."

SM: Yes, but the Indians in that area are mostly Sioux. That's in southwestern Minnesota. So, now, school is going very well?

GF: It is.

SM: And the board is functioning, and the funds are adequate; the building looks good, and I notice you've taken the interest and the pains to decorate the building with some colorful Indian insignias, symbolism, paintings.

JC: We have recreation for young people.

SM: You have a gymnasium?

JC: Yes, we got gym back here; we have all kinds of games they play, you know. Then they have boxing in the winter time.

SM: You have quite a boxing team, I notice, from the pictures. Do they get into the Golden Gloves too?

GF: Yep, they do.
JC: Then we got ball teams, girls and boys. Football.

SM: You don't mix the girls and boys on the ball teams like they're talking about in the cities?

JC: (laughter)

GF: Well, we got one women's softball team, and the men, and the young girls, and the little boys Junior League baseball.

SM: Now the women's and the men's, is that outside the school?

GF: That's all over.

SM: That's over the region. And the rest of them are connected more with the school?

GF: Yeah. And our school here, it's never closed. It's always open.

SM: It's always open--year round. People are using it, the facilities, year round. We're sitting here in the library now, and people can use this during the summer as well as in the winter? I think that's a good thing. The gymnasium likewise?

GF: Yep.

SM: Outside, the grounds too, George Stone?

JC: Anybody can come in and visit any time they wanta visit.

SM: Well, I'm glad that you're open, or I might have missed you all.

JC: We like to have our old people come in and eat dinner with us, you know, it's like home, you know.
SM: It's kind of a center for the community. That's good, great.

GS: We have a court over here too where they can play basketball.

JC: Then we put on a powwow here once in a while, have dancing out there.

SM: Do quite a few people come?

GF: Yes, they do.

SM: The powwows are becoming more authentic than they used to be. I mean, everybody's working a little harder to get back to the way the culture used to be.

JC: That's what we're tryin' to do—we're tryin' to get back the way the people lived from way back. I notice a lot of places now, they're gonna go back to their own religion, especially in the Dakotas. 'Course there's quite a few of 'em that's usin' their own religion now.

SM: I notice on this Pine Point Experimental School booklet you have a very attractive design in black, yellow and orange, and this has been painted by Jerry Buckanaga, your principal. What does this represent?

GF: I don't know, he just drew that off there.

SM: It looks sort of like a Peyote bird, or maybe a thunderbird.

GF: Thunderbird.

JC: Well, one thing I can tell you about that is—all the colors you see here, like if you go to powwow. All the colors you see they wear—the costumes—that means something they dreamt about when they were young—the old people. I know I got my colors.
SM: What are they, Josephine?

JC: My color is blue and black, and then I got the color of the rainbow.

SM: And you dreamed about this as a child?

JC: Yes. Uh huh, when I was a child.

SM: And you keep those as your colors from then on?

JC: And I wear 'em. And then, bein' a champion dancer, I got the eagle feather what I wear on my hair.

SM: Did you win a championship dancing here?

JC: Yeah, I was dancin' for four years.

SM: You were in competition. . . .?

JC: This was different reservations.

SM: Oh, several reservations. Well, that's quite an honor then.

JC: Yeah, it is. And that feather was given to me at Red Lake. That's where I first won.

SM: This other word here now?

JC: Lotta white people don't know, they don't know about Indians, you know, and they don't sit down long enough to visit with them and talk to 'em and ask them how they live—they're tryin' to live from the way the people lived from way back. This is what they don't know. They can't understand the Indians.
SM: And you're trying to preserve the cultural traits?

JC: Yes.

SM: What does this say here? How do you pronounce that?

GF: Ah-nish-en-abe.

SM: What does it mean?

JC: That means "Indians."

GF: "Indians," "the people."

SM: And is this the Chippewa word for "the people?"

JC: Yes.

SM: Ah-nish-en-abe, the people, in Chippewa, or Ojibway. Interesting. Most of the Indian tribes had a word for themselves that means "the people," or something like that.

GF: Like the Sioux, La-ko-ta.

SM: La-ko-ta, or Da-ko-ta. Someone translated it "friends" or "allies," but it really means "we, the people."

JC: Yeah.

GF: Um hm.

SM: And the Navajo, same way. And this lady's picture I showed you, a Klallum Indian, they have a name that means "the people" also.
SM: That's interesting. It helps us to understand a little better what you were saying, Josephine—that everyone is trying now, a lot of people are, at least. What else are you doing now to bring back some of these things people are tending to forget? You're teaching the language, George.

GF: And one teacher here, Virginia Rock, she's got a drum group here—little kids, little boys.

SM: Teaching them to drum?

GF: Yep.

SM: Now she teaches them to drum the old way as well as the new, like snare drum rolls, and so on?

JC: Um hm. Also I teach kids dancing. Well I had to quit in January, I started in White Earth. I've been teachin' a year and a half, and I found lotta good dancers in there.

SM: You're teaching dancing?

JC: Yeah. And I have my own drum and I sing.

SM: The dancing moves in a circle usually, doesn't it? Would you tell me why, because this is what people don't understand. You move usually in a circle, clockwise, or the way the sun goes?

JC: Yes, the way the sun goes. And then we have ceremony before we start having the powwow. We're putting on a powwow at the ranch on the 8th or 9th or 10th.
SM: At the ranch?

JC: Yeah, out here by the reservation.

SM: Oh, near Mahnomen? Do you have a ranch there?

GF: Yes, a Chippewa ranch. It used to be an old Job Corps center, but the tribe owns it, and the American Indian Movement up there now is starting a survival school up there.

SM: Oh they are, at the ranch?

JC: They're not up here to start trouble or anything like that. That's what I can't understand why people wants to hate 'em, you know, and they think they're just comin' up here to start trouble, but that isn't it. They're tryin' to get their kids--they wanta have their school goin' over there, because they're havin' trouble in White Earth and Callaway--is that where they go to school?

GF: Yeah, Waubun.

JC: They're havin' the same trouble we got--yeah, with their youngsters, and this is what they're tryin' to start over there, but Detroit Lakes don't understand that--they look at it the other way, that AIM is in here to start trouble.

SM: Well, don't you suppose some of that comes from the publicity from . . .

GF: From Wounded Knee?

JC: Yeah, Wounded Knee.

SM: And the BIA take-over in Washington? Because that's what got the
publicity. And the other things that you're trying to do don't get publicity.

GS: That's what taking place now over at Wounded Knee—they're bombing all these government buildings, big places, like in Denver there.

SM: Well, maybe your comments will help correct some of this impression or misinterpretation.

JC: No, I couldn't believe it the other night when we had meeting in Detroit Lakes all last week. A woman got up and she says to me, she asked me, "Are you an Indian?" I said, "Yes, I am." "Well, I don't like you, then."

SM: Really, right like that?

JC: Just like that. Same way with my daughter. A man asked her, "I don't like you." My daughter turned around and asked him why. "Why don't you like me?" "Because you're Indian." Just like that, see. I just couldn't believe it. Of course, I found that out. I lived in Detroit Lakes almost three years; I found that out all the while I was livin' there. They never did like Indians.

GS: Well, that's been goin' on long time now. When I was young, when I was about 16, 17 years old, I and my brother, we took off. There wasn't no work around there that time, and we took off for Minneapolis, and looked for work. You know, they tell me, all the places we went for work, they just turn away from us. No, they wouldn't hire us at that time. They wouldn't give us no work at all, so we ended up comin' back again. But later on, when they found out that Indians were good workers and all, they've been acceptin' 'em ever since after '40's. They're hirin' 'em now, but back in the '30's, they wouldn't hire 'em. Call you an Indian, they wouldn't hire you.
worked around Park Rapids quite a bit too, but what I found out then, I know they didn't like Indians there at all. But these people, you know, like one time I tried to tell these Indian people that was performin' the powwow in Park Rapids, you know, that there were . . . this Park Rapids Chamber of Commerce came down here, and invited 'em to go down there—put on powwows in the town there. I'll tell you why they did that, why the people did that. See, they paid a dollar for each dancer, and three dollars for the drummer, you know, just for one night. You know how much money they give to the Indian drummers—they used the Indians for bait, you know, to draw tourists, so people could trade in their stores, you know. That's the only reason why they wanted the Indians.

JC: And it's still goin' on.

GF: I got Matt Starkey from the Civil Rights Committee checkin' on the Aquarium now, where they hold their powwows on Wednesdays.

SM: Is that where they're holding them now?

JC: Yeah.

SM: Does the Chamber of Commerce there sponsor them?

GF: I think so.

GS: It's the same outfit.

JC: They're havin' them in Walker too now, Saturday nights.

SM: The people here generally don't like it?

GF: No, because they're just exploiting our heritage.
SM: Now if you want to put on a dance here and invite people to come, that's O.K., but to be drawn out of the community for exploitation, like you say, that you don't like?

GF: See, what they're doin' up there is . . . well, when you change, put your costume on, what they got over there is just an old tent, and they went and tore that down when there was a couple of women chang­ing back there, and that's what this one teacher in Park Rapids had told me about, and he said to get ahold of Matt Starkey, so I got ahold of Matt Starkey in Minneapolis. He said he's gonna check up on that. And what they do there, they don't pay them—they give 'em beer, those dancers and singers.

JC: Well, that's what they used too, is whiskey when they got all his land. Yeah, they got the old people drunk, and made 'em sign paper with their thumb—that's how they got the land. The old people couldn't understand—couldn't understand a long time ago—they only used one language. They're telling them, "Well, I'm gonna buy your trees and that's all I want, I don't want the land," but . . . they got the land anyway.

SM: They got the land too. Do you think that the Indian people are making any progress lately?

GF: They are.

JC: They are.

GF: We're startin' to move now.

SM: Is there any reason for this? Just a general reaction, or is there any organization, or what is bringing it about?
GF: Well, it's our kids now. Our younger generation that are gettin' the education, that are startin' to get this thing movin', and they are the ones that are gettin' back everything--our land, our titles and everything else that were sold out.

SM: And you got your school back, for example, and you have control of that.

JC: Now we're tryin' to get our land back.

SM: Have you added any land lately, back to the reservation?

GF: We got 28,000 acres that were gettin' back here--that's in the 94th Congress right now.

SM: You expect to get 28,000 more acres?

GF: No, that's our submarginal land, our Indian trust land, but there's an Equal Rights Committee from Mahnomen that's fightin' the RBC about that. Reservation Business Committee. And we got Bob Ervin, Mondale and Humphrey workin' on that now, and it's all coming back in--28,700 acres that we're gettin' back, and the Menominee Indians around here are scared because we're takin' that back, and they got land that they own homes on it, so ...

SM: Well, then, will they be paid for their homes by the government?

GF: They got to pay us. They got to pay the Indians for the land now, after farming on it, living on it.

SM: On this same 28,000 acres, if they stay there. But if they choose to move, they can do that, of course, and the land would revert to the tribe. Would it be owned by the tribal council then, or the whole tribe?
GF: The White Earth Indians will get that.

SM: How is the tribe run? Do you have a tribal council, a chairman, or a president?

GF: Yes we do. Reuben Rock is the Chairman for the Reservation Business Committee here, and Jerry Buckanaga is the Secretary-Treasurer.

SM: And he's your principal.

GF: Um hm, and I am the representative from this district here of the RBC.

SM: So then you run the thing in a business-like manner. Did you have to go to court for this land?

JC: No, but we got lawyers.

SM: Working for you now? Are there some around the area here?

JC: Yeah, one lives in Walker. Ken Tooper.

SM: Is he a Chippewa Indian also?

JC: No, he's a white man. Then we got one started here, just a young boy, I forgot his name now.

GS: The one we used to have was in Duluth, but he wasn't too much good.

SM: Well, we've just about come to the end of our tape, and I appreciate being able to talk to all three of you. We'll go on from here with whatever else we can do to add more information, so that students in my classes in St. Louis and wherever else, can learn more about how you feel about things.