

OHIO INDIAN TIME

A VOICE FROM THE EASTERN DOOR

Volume 10, Number 21 June 5, 1992 Price 50 cents

Akwasasne Elder 1992: by Heritage Canada



Photo: Kevin King.

Our first interview we did was with Cecilia Mitchell, Mary David and Bessie Lazore. The first day we sat in Ceci's bake shop drinking coffee and eating homemade donuts. We looked through some of Ceci's many old photographs and their stories came out very easily. The following day we finished interviewing Mary and Bessie. But let's start with Bessie...

Bessie Lazore was born in St. Regis, in 1927. She's lived there all her life. She remembers when there were few houses there, when there was room for cows to pasture, and gardens to grow, unlike the St. Regis we know today. But she's never wanted to move away. She says, "If I could fold up St. Regis and put it in my purse, I'll move away."

She was raised by her grandparents, Annie & Jake Day.

She remembers her grandmother cooking breakfast on the woodstove, she always kept one section clean. She'd mix up biscuits, and instead of frying it or putting it in the oven, she'd cook it right on the stove top. They'd have salt pork, fried till crisp, and dip their bread in the grease from it.

They had a small root cellar with a stone foundation and a dirt floor. In one corner their grandfather would line a box with hay and put potatoes in it. Cabbage would hang from the ceiling, carrots were buried in sand. It was cool in the cellar, the vegetables would keep all winter. There was a hole in the ground with a crock in it, that was their refrigerator, where they kept their butter and milk. Everyone planted gardens, and had livestock. People took care of themselves.

She says they didn't have garbage either, everyone had pigs and fed their scraps to them. They made soap from meat drippings and lye. If you needed to mop the floor you'd chip a piece of the soap off, make a solution with it, sprinkle it on the floor and scrub it with a broom. "Nothing on the market today will beat it" adds Mary David. Their bleach at that time was the sun, they'd lay their clothes out on the lawn if it needed whitening. Of course you could leave anything out without worrying about it being stolen.

Back then children started school at age six, Bessie started at age five. She went there one day to visit and after that they couldn't make her stay home. She lived across from the two room school house, so she didn't have too far to trudge in the cold winter months. The school was located on the same ground where the new school is now being built. She completed grade nine, and wanted to go on. There was only a handful of people in high school at that time. A common saying was, "You don't need to go to school to learn how to wash diapers." Nonetheless her grandfather supported her decision and encouraged her to go on. In the morning he would row her across the river to Cornwall where she went to high school and return later to pick her up. When the weather was really bad she would board with her uncle, who lived in Cornwall.

One spring her grandfather told them "This is my last summer for a garden." In the fall when they harvested, everything was abundant, better than any other harvest before. He had so much he was giving it away...big potatoes, beautiful corn, string beans you couldn't pick fast enough, carrots by the handful, beets, cabbage, tomatoes. That was his last garden, somehow he'd known he became sick the next year, then he passed away.

She began teaching in 1972, and taught Mohawk language for 16 years. She said her teacher explained to her how language works... She said you put a pitcher under a leaky faucet and put a hole at the top. The water from the leaky faucet will begin to fill the pitcher and eventually it'll spill out of the hole at the top. In other words, you throw all the Mohawk language you can at the children. Every now and then they'll hear a word that sounds good, they'll put it in and store it in their mind. Their mind will begin to fill up with all the language they're hearing, and eventually they'll begin to speak it. She says it sounds so nice to hear children speak Mohawk.

She says in Mohawk what her grandfather used to say, then translates it into English, "If we don't work hard to preserve our language we're going to lose it." She adds, "We're on the brink of that now." English is too easy for everybody. When children started going to school and speaking English the parents would struggle to understand what they were saying. The parents learned how to speak English from their children, instead of teaching the children to speak Mohawk.

Bessie was married to Tommy Lazore in 1957. She has (3) three children, Vicky, Alice and Darryl and has raised them well. She had also taken into her home Harold Jacobs at the age of 3, and raised See Bessie
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W.W.F. Superstar Visits Cornwall Island



Photo: Derrick Paul.

Tatanka and Natasha Thompson at the North American Travelling College on Wednesday June 2. Natasha was the winner of a National Poster Competition for Aboriginal Awareness Week. It was also Natasha's birthday on Wednesday. The wrestler from North Carolina was in Akwasasne to speak to the kids and sign autographs. Later that night he was involved in a match at the Cornwall Civic Complex as part of a WWF card. (More photos and story on pg. 6.)

General Motors To Start Cleanup of Site

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that the General Motors Corporation (GM) has agreed to perform the first part of a two-phase cleanup of the GM Superfund site in Massena, N.Y. This first phase of the overall cleanup of the site will cost an estimated \$78 million to complete. GM will perform the cleanup under the terms of a Superfund Unilateral Administrative Order (UAO) issued last month (April) that requires the company to start work for the first-phase of the remedy. The first-phase of the remedy, selected in 1990, addresses contamination in the St. Lawrence River system, on the neighboring St. Regis Mohawk Reservation, and in several areas on the GM plant site. Superfund is the federal program to address the nation's worst hazardous waste sites.

EPA Regional Administrator Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff said, "We are pleased that the company has agreed to perform this part of the cleanup in response to our Order at one of our most significant Superfund sites. Under EPA supervision, GM voluntarily carried out all the investigations and studies that led to the Agency's selection of the cleanup plans at this site. The company's continued cooperation means that the public is spared the expense of financing a hazardous waste site cleanup. In addition, this extends the amount of Superfund money available for sites where no responsible parties have yet been identified or are willing to step forward and perform the site cleanup."

In December 1990, EPA selected a remedy that addresses the majority of the contaminated areas at the site and targeted as a priority the removal and treatment of contaminants that most directly threaten the Reservation of the St. Regis Mohawk Nation and the St. Lawrence River. EPA's decision on the second-phase remedy for the remainder of the site was

announced last month (April) and involves cleanup measures that will utilize a combination of excavation, treatment and containment for two areas of the site, the East Disposal Area and the Industrial Landfill. EPA will seek to have GM implement the second-phase remedy. The cleanup of the landfill and disposal area will cost an estimated \$38 million to complete.

Concerning the first-phase remedy selected in 1990, the areas of contamination at the site that will be cleaned up by GM under the terms of the Order include:

- * contaminated sediments and soils in the St. Lawrence and Racquette Rivers, Turtle Creek, and associated river banks and wetlands (the St. Lawrence River system)

- * runoff from the East Disposal Area;
- * contaminated sludges, soil, and debris in the North Disposal Area, in and around the four Industrial Lagoons, and in other areas on GM property;
- * contaminated soil on the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation; and,
- * contaminated ground water associated with the site.

During the cleanup, GM will collect additional data to better characterize these areas. EPA will review these data to determine whether certain materials at the site should be contained, rather than treated.

To date, as a result of EPA regional enforcement efforts, private parties have contributed

See Superfund
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Snye School Celebrates Heritage Week



These students participate in the festivities held at the School last week. (More photos and contest results on page 7)

Akwasasne Baby Wins Contest



Congratulations to 3 month old Trenton David on his victory at the 5th Annual Maxville Fair Baby Contest. Trenton weighing a whopping 17 lbs. 7 oz. won the title of Chubbiest Baby.