

Betty Nore – Interview Transcript
Individuals Present: Elizabeth [Betty] Nore (B); Joshua Ream (J)
Interview Date: March 3rd, 2012

1. Personal Background (00:00-03:06)

J: So it's March 3rd and I'm here today with Betty Nore who is Kiks.adi, she's a friend of mine and she also agreed to help me with my schoolwork by doing this interview so I thank you very much Betty for talking to me. So I just have a number of questions and if you have answers that you want to give please do so. You can be as thorough or as short as you want to be. We may not get through all of them which is fine and if you get tired or feel uncomfortable we can just end whenever you feel okay even if we haven't gotten through all of them.

B: mmhmm

J: The first question I have is how familiar do you consider yourself with Tlingit culture and in particular being Kiks.adi?

B: Well, I... Not too (much). Because my mother... I lived with my grandmother till I was eight then my grandmother took me and I never learned anything about my culture. I was talking to my aunt Hankie, and I said "I don't know anything about culture." I just learned from Sue and Lou. She said well you know we were not supposed to do that. They wouldn't let us, they wouldn't teach us our culture. I couldn't figure out why. Marge was three years younger than us but they taught her everything and dancing. They wouldn't teach us how to Indian dance or do any of those things. Just cut us right off. Then here three years later they got Marge and Emma, our cousin, they all got to learn the culture.

J: Why did they change?

B: I don't know why they cut us off. Then they brought it all back in again. There's something there I don't know what it was but they didn't want people, they didn't want anybody to know their culture. For some reason. Might have been somebody in the... I don't know where. Some organization or something that didn't want us to know.

J: Did your parents go to the Wrangell Institute?

B: No, my mom was born here and my mom was born in Douglas, Alaska.

J: And you were gone for 8 years you said? You left for 8 years when you were younger?

B: Yea, when I left when I was 8 and I couldn't get back here until I was 16. Too Sad.

2. The Love Birds: Raven and Eagle (03:06-04:31)

J: And recently you've been learning about your culture though?

B: mmhmm. That's because of Sue and Lou and Chris. Only thing I knew was the love birds. That's all I knew about it.

J: What's that?

B: The raven and then the eagle are love birds. And when we have, like if Sue needs a Raven she'll invite me to the ceremonies and if I need somebody I'll get an eagle to come into mine. But I was sitting here looking out the window and a bunch of seagulls were in the yard. Pretty soon they all flipped and took off. And then the ravens they were just eating away and I looked out and there was a big eagle above the house and the seagulls had to run. I mean they had to get out of there. And then I have a picture of a big eagle sitting down in the yard there eating with the ravens. So they were the love birds.

J: So the ravens weren't scared.

B: Right. The eagles and the ravens were sharing their food that was out there. So that's proof. I said no wonder they call them love birds.

3. Frog Relationships and Spirituality (04:31-06:39)

J: So, you're Kiks.adi. What does being Kiks.adi mean to you? As opposed to other clans like the Naanya aayi. Do you feel a close relationship being Kiks.adi, with the clan, with the frog?

B: I think so. Yea.

J: When you see frogs, what do you feel?

B: No emotion.

J: You had told me a story before about a frog in your basement when you were going through hard times, do you mind telling me that again?

B: Oh yes. We were having a hard time in the 50s and it was a hard time getting money even for groceries. I went downstairs and this little frog was sitting near the water spout down there, the drain, and I knew every morning it would be there. It didn't hop away from me. I didn't know how it got in because all the doors were shut. I don't know how they could squeeze underneath the garage door. That went on for a couple months and then Kjell got a better job. He got hired at Wrangell Seafoods and we started to prosper. We had money, we could put it away, we could do things now that we had what the money had to be used for. Then the frog never came back. I said "Oh Grandma, Come Back." The frog just never came back again.

J: So you think your grandma was talking through the frog?

B: mmhmm. .

J: Helping you?

B: I believe so.

4. Frog Treatment (06:39-08:45)

B: I don't know if I told you this story. We were probably about five or six. We were out, probably Anita Bay because there's a place you go up and there was a little cave but it doesn't go too far and a crick going through. And (there was) this great big frog. First time we ever saw such a big frog. Hanky got scared so I got a rock and I threw it on the frog. Oooo, did my grandpa get mad at me. He said, "you get up there and you take that rock off of that frog." I was just shaky and I went in and then I went to pick up the rock and the frog wasn't even there. It had hopped away. I don't know how with that big rock, it was like that [shows size]. I don't remember if I seen it cross the crick or not but I never did anything like that again!

J: So do you think the frog was helping you to learn a lesson?

B: mmhmm.

J: With your grandfather?

B: Yea. He said "you get up there and you get that rock off of that frog." (laugh).

J: So did that tell you something about how traditionally people would treat animals?

B: mmhmm. Yea. The frog wasn't sacred I don't think. Just a tradition wouldn't that be?

J: That they should be handled with care?

B: Yea because I didn't ever go into much with the frog. We respect it, because it's the clan.

J: How old were you when that happened?

B: Must have been five or six.

5. Personal Challenges (08:45-14:44)

B. My mom came and got me when I was eight. That was so hard. I hung onto my grandma's leg crying "I don't wanna go, I don't wanna go." Cause I thought I was Hanky's sister. We both did, I kept hollering. Grandma said "get away from me, I don't want you anymore, I don't like you." Oh I felt so bad, my head down crying. I had to get back on the boat. See mom was suppose to drop me off and have me stay there and after they seen grandma, I don't know what happened but they made me, go down south with them and I didn't get home until I was 16. But I was 12 and I knew my way all around Seattle and I went to this movie, Bambi. I was just enjoying it and pretty soon ya know, Bambi, a little boy raised it and they grew up together. He had to make Bambi realize that he can't stay with him anymore. He threw rocks at him and said go away, I don't want you anymore, I don't love you anymore. And just so the deer would leave the boy. I thought "oh no", then I started crying thinking "that's why grandma told me she didn't love me or like me no more." She had to do that to make me leave. It was sad. Actually I didn't have any happiness in my life until I met Kjell.

J: It sounds like you had a hard childhood.

B: mmhmm. I lived in Cordova and Seattle and West Seattle. Moved so many times I think I went to twelve different schools. That's why I never got to graduate or anything because I didn't know anything.

J: And you traveled with the pastor right?

B: mmhmm. Pastor Hall. Then they took me in. That was a big help. They did a lot for me, and Kjell too.

J: You visited Mrs. Hall recently right? Did you go to Kodiak to visit Mrs. Hall?

B: Yea. The church convention was there. I just told everybody I'm going. I voted myself in it and I'm going. "Oh no Betsy, you cant go, that's hard to go to (Kodiak)." "Oh no, I'm going! I'm going to Kodiak. I want to see Margaret. I've always wanted to go up there and I'm going."

I kept digging around. I found a letter from her. "It was so nice having you here." A real sweet letter from her. They took me in when nobody else would. My aunt, my cousin, her husband didn't want me in there anymore. My grandpa didn't want me in there. My grandma did and my cousin did.

I don't know where I ended up at. Oh my mom left and went to Juneau, I was staying with her when I took a trip to Minnesota with the Halls. She didn't tell me she moved and so I didn't know what to do. They told me "you can live with us." I didn't know if they were serious. I came up there and my suitcases, they were still on the floor, ya know where I left them. I just started crying. "No Betsy, you can live here! We just haven't had time to put your suitcases in your room." So father took them up the stairs. So I feel like I was the first homeless person in Wrangell. Then they took me in. I guess I stayed there two years. Time went so fast but I learned a lot.

J: Have you forgiven people?

B: mmhmm. And then this one priest Anna Frank. She was sitting here, she enjoys the view "I made my sermon from your window." (Laugh). And she knew about the girls getting murdered, Cheryl and Adrian. "Betty do you know what? Before you heal you have to forgive." And I said "it's hard to forgive." I'm mad at Cheryl because she took the two girls with her. She told me if she stayed with Bill any longer, with Jim, the first husband any longer, she would be dead. And then when we were up at Juneau when it happened, February 24th, all 3 girls were murdered. I said "at least you wouldn't have taken the girls with you. It would have been just you." And I said "I couldn't forgive her for that." And then after a while, after I listened to Anna Frank, I said "Oh Cheryl, I'm sorry I held a grudge so long." And then I started feeling better. A lot better. I didn't have this heavy burden on me and that was really, really a good feeling when I forgave Cheryl.

6. Ancestral Help (14:44-17:02)

J: Do you think that your ancestors have helped you just through life, to be able to learn about yourself and to get through hard times?

B: I believe my grandma Louise Bradley did. And my Aunt Amy. She took care of me. I had to go. She would help me with everything. That and my Uncle Harry. He would buy things that my dad didn't get me. And so they really took good care of me. After I met Kjell it was a lot better for me. We just went in the army and came home. But I don't know why, cause I wasn't... Somebody thought I was a rougheon, and no I didn't go to parties or do anything. This one girl "didn't we have fun at parties?" "I wasn't in your group." "Oh I'm sorry." Then she didn't talk about it. I wish I would have said "yea" then I would have known what went on. But I didn't. I didn't ask.

You didn't want stories like the ones I'm telling did ya?

J: No, that's fine!

7. Frog Encounters (17:02-19:37)

B: Cause I don't know frog stories, except trying to kill them. Haha. I sure got in trouble on that one.

J: And your grandfather was Kiks.adi?

B: Yea

J: Do you remember what he said when you did it?

B: "Oh you and get that rock off of there!" I think someone told. Marge told on me. She always used to get me in trouble. (laugh)

J: Was she with you when it happened?

B: mmhmm. All four of us ran into the crick. because it was a hot day and we all went in. Because it was a nice place to swim and to sit.

J: Do you remember what the frog looked like? It was a long time ago.

B: It was a bullfrog. Big. It wasn't a little toad. It was a big frog. I thought it would have been green but it wasn't green.

J: Was it like this one (shows Boreal Toad picture). It didn't have a white stripe down its back?

B: uh uh. Too long ago for me to even remember.

J: What did the one look like that you had in the basement?

B: More like that one. More dark. Not as many spots on it. Mostly one color. Dark brown / greenish. (Pointing to Columbia Spotted Frog).

J: Do you remember if it had a mask on it? On its face?

B: No. It looked more like that but not as big. It was more like this.

J: When you were little did you ever go looking for frogs or salamanders?

B: No. We weren't supposed to.

J: Why?

B: I don't remember because up the river, there are bunches of them. I guess we could have caught them but we had to let them go. My kids used to like to go frog hunting, then they'd let them go.

8. Amphibian Pets (19:37-20:32)

J: How do you think traditional Tlingit people feel about bringing those animals home as pets? Is that okay or should they be left where they are?

B: I don't know. I don't think the frog would want to be a pet. Like if it did, that one downstairs would have stayed with me. It stayed with me a long time until we started prospering.

J: But it was okay to go whenever it wanted right? Sometimes kids bring frogs home and put them in aquariums. Do you think that its better for them to be outside or is that okay for them to come into the house?

B: I think it's better to be outside. Like when I had a frog, they were in the flowerbed out here. I know a couple frogs were in there.

9. Clan Connections (20:32-24:11)

J: What do you think are some values that the Kiks.adi share that maybe some of the other clans don't? Is there anything that is specific to being Kiks.adi?

B: What we share with each other? I don't know.

J: Do you feel a special bond with the Kiks.adi as opposed to the other clans in town?

B: I'm not really sure on what other clan there would be.

J: The Naanyaa aayi? Or the Kaach.adi?

B: Is Sue and them in that one?

J: Yes. Sue is Nanyaa aayi.

B: No, we are all friends here. And Chris I think is Kiks.adi. Her nieces are that. No, they're lovable people. Really likeable too and stuff.

J: So sometimes the ladies call themselves the frog ladies or the frog women. Do you really feel a strong sense of being a frog, identifying with a frog, I am Kiks.adi, I am frog woman.

B: uh uh

J: You don't feel a strong sense of that?

B. Uh uh. No.

J: Do you think that others do?

B: Maybe. Ya know because I just don't feel that strong.

J: Do you wear frog clothes, do you collect frog ornaments, do you have any type of frog regalia?

B: Nope. I don't know why. I guess because my mom never did either. That's probably why.

J: Did her mother? Did you know her mother? Your mom's mom?

B: mmhmm.

J: That was Louise?

B: Yea she's the one that raised me till I was eight years old.

J: Oh I see. And your dad, was he Tlingit?

B: mmhmm.

J: Do you know what clan he was?

B: Uh Douglas. From Douglas. I don't know.

J: So he was probably with the Taku. The Taku tribe?

B: I don't know what clans are up there.

J: He never wore any regalia?

B: uh uh. No.

J: Did you know him very well?

B: Well I knew him when I was five. He came over. He was playing basketball and came over and gave me a hug and then I didn't know him until I was 14. He came to Seattle and came to visit me. So I didn't know anything about him until I was 14. So. Mom had divorce after divorce. She divorced dad and married Jim and Larry's dad, then she divorced him and married Robert Sole and that was Bobby's dad. And so, I didn't care for. He was okay but Sobert wasn't.

10. Kiks.adi Challenges (24:11-26:46)

J: How strong do you think the clan is today and do you think it will persist into the future here in Wrangell?

B: I don't know about that. It seemed to for a while it was going pretty strong and then all of a sudden it stopped. You know there were different things going on and now it doesn't feel like there's much of anything.

J: I know a lot of you ladies are pretty strong in it and you stay together as friends. How about men? Are there any men that are in the clan interested in the culture?

B: I don't think so.

J: And you said your son doesn't show any interest?

B: No he don't. He's strictly Norwegian.

J: So he doesn't have a blanket? He hasn't danced or anything like that?

B: None of the kids were. They just weren't, we weren't around it then.

J: And Betsy? She's not either?

B: She doesn't want to be.

J: Even today?

B: No she doesn't. She doesn't get into any of that.

J: Marge's brothers, she had said were pretty interested in it. Did you know Marge's brothers? Herb and...

B: Oh yea Herb and I think Hank, I'm not sure. Herb was into the culture I know. Cause he'd dance. I remember watching him dance.

J: Are you proud of it today, being Tlingit?

B: Yea, I'm proud to be a Tlingit.

J: Do you hope to just keep learning about your culture and continue?

B: Uh huh.

J: Do you plan to go to Celebration?

B: Yea. I told Kjell I want to go to celebration. I said we need to go.

J: Do you have a blanket?

B: No, I don't. I won't go into any of the dancing. I just want to be a, what do they call it, spectator.

J: And you'll go with Marge and Chrissy and they'll probably all go?

B: I don't know if I'll go with Marge or not, I'll go with JOM. Virginia (Oliver). I'll go down with her. I don't know, is Marge going to Celebration?

J: Yea, I talked to her today and she said she would. She turned in the paperwork for the dancers and everything.

B: Wow. Oh yea.

11. The Stikine River (26:46-27:49)

J: Have you traveled up the river much?

B: Just one time up to Kjell's cabin.

J: What was that experience like?

B: It was exciting. And we went up to Twin Lakes. But other than that... That's the only time I've been up there.

J: I hear a lot about Twin Lakes. People say there are a lot of frogs around there. Did you see any when you were there?

B: Yea no. I just stayed in the boat. Uh huh.

J: Did you think about your ancestors when you were up there?

B: Uh uh.

J: Do you know any of the areas around that used to be important to the Kiks.adi?

B: Hmm. There was. Some of the women were pretty strong. Like my grandma. A couple others I guess. A couple other elderly ladies.

12. Family Relationships and Names (27:49-31:01)

J: Do you know your grandma's Tlingit name?

B: Histiseek (sp?). They gave that to me too. Uh huh then I gave it to my granddaughter.

J: And what's your granddaughter's English name?

B: Shandelle. No not Shandelle she died. McKinna. Sue helped me with that one. I said I'd like to give her my Indian name. Marge had a big blow out about that. I asked Sue to do it because she does it right and McKinna was real happy to get my name. I wanted to pass it down from my grandma to her. Marge without asking me, she gave my Indian name to her daughter Ethel. I think there are three of us, four of us now that have my Grandma's name. But my grandma gave it to me. Pointed right on my head (knock) "remember." She was sitting in a rocking chair and I was kneeling by her looking up. She made... I had to sit there till I learned how to pronounce it and say it. Quite a while I was sitting there (laugh).

J: Do you know what it means? How it translates?

B: No. I heard a long time ago a princess but I'm not sure. Somebody said that it doesn't mean anything but I'm not that sure.

Can I take a break a minute?

J: Sure, that's fine.

PAUSE

J: So did you happen to know your great-grandparents?

B: No they died when my mom was young.

J: Did she ever talk about her family or her time growing up?

B: uh uh. Her grandma maybe. Her grandma Bradley. She was more attached to her. My grandma's side I didn't know. I just knew a brother of hers but I didn't know her. Never heard about hers.

J: What was her brother's name?

B: hmm... I can't remember. Huh. But Ethel Lund's grandpa. It is her brother.

J: How is Ethel related to you?

B: I think a cousin. Distant cousins.

J: She's more closely related to Marge?

B: mmhmm.

J: That's her first cousin?

B: Yea.

13. Frog Treatment & Encounters Continued (31:01-34:02)

J: Is there anything else that you can think of? Any stories involving frogs? Or times that you've seen frogs that might be interesting?

B: Uh huh. Nope. I wasn't really into frogs cause I didn't know anything about them. Being away so long until I was 16.

J: Well now that you've kind of been back and you're building your knowledge of the culture, if you saw a frog would you feel differently today then you did when you were younger?

B: Probably.

J: How would you look at it? How do you think you would feel?

B: I don't know, it's hard to say. Just...

J: Respect maybe?

B: Yea. Respect em.

J: And if something happened that frogs no longer lived here, ya know, they died off. Do you think it would affect you or the other women at all?

B: I don't know. Probably not because I don't, don't see many frogs. Like they used to be around the house all the time now there are none.

J: So you use to see them fairly frequently?

B: mmhmm.

J: What time of year did you see them?

B: Spring time.

J: Right here in town? Right around this house?

B: Yea we use to have a box out there where that part of the house is, a flower box. They would always be in there. You'd find a couple of them in there all the time.

J: How long ago?

B: Oh I can't remember it was so long. I think quite a while ago.

J: 10 years? 20 years?

B: Let's see, we were married 16 years.. Probably about 20 years ago.

J: And since then you don't see them at all anymore?

B: Uh uh. The kids use to go out and try to find some but they were real gentle with them. That was our kids. The next generation but then that's that. No frogs around anywhere.

J: Why do you think that is?

B: I don't know.

J: Did town grow up more since then?

B: Maybe. Then I don't have a garden anymore either.

J: Do you think maybe that attracted them?

B: mmhmm.

J: Did you ever see salamanders or newts at all?

B: No. I used to but not anymore up here.

J: Where did you see those before?

B: I don't know. Probably when we went hiking as a teenager.

J: Here on the island?

B: Yea.

14. Final Thoughts (34:02-35:14)

J: Where did you go to high school?

B: In the 50s. Here in Wrangell. But I had to go to so many schools that I didn't learn anything anywhere. Had to learn on my own.

J: Because you had to keep changing in the middle of the year?

B: mmhmm. 12 different schools I went to.

J: Where was your favorite place that you lived?

B: Wrangell. Mmhmm.

J: and you came back here to live long term?

B: mmhmm. Wrangell yea. That was the only place that I felt at home.

J: And just one last question. Can you tell me, do you know how to spell your Tlingit name?

B: No (laugh)

J: Is there anything else that you can think of?

B: uh uh.

J: Okay. Well thank-you so much Betty. I appreciate it. I always learn so much when I sit here with you guys, I do. And it helps me not just with my schoolwork but just as a person, to understand the world. Thank-you.

B: It's always such a pleasure having you here.