

[Page 26 - Annie Battiste: a Mi'kmaq Family History](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 64](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1993/8/1

trah. cat, sank, sees, set, weet, nuff, dees"--she counts out and then goes on to fifty just to show how well she got it down. Then she names the days of the week in French and the family names they taught her for mother, father, daughter, son, etc. If she had had more exposure, she laments, she would assured? ly be trilingual today. Annie did get some schooling in Barra Head as there was a school in the community run by various employees sought out by Indian agents. Annie went to school for about six years. She repeated the last grade; she reports it was very difficult. The books were very hard to read, she remembers, because she had little experience in English. Her father and mother, both literate in English and Mi'kmaq, helped her. Her father like to read to her. Some stories were particularly memorable, like the story of Bertha, a young girl who had many problems and was very poor. Annie remembers after first hearing of Bertha, she was so sad for Bertha that she cried as her father told the story. She laughs at herself as she remembers how sorry she felt for Bertha and the story her mother related to friends of her father making her cry. John and Annie in Houlton, Maine, 1953 She remembers one of the teachers at the school. He had a temper which could flare up at various times. His abusive power over children was well known. Once when she asked for a pencil, he threw it at her and stabbed her hand. These were not isolated incidents and she suffered under his tutelage. Her father and mother finally insisted that she stop going to school. As long as Annie could spell "poison" and could read "danger," her father reasoned, there was no need for her to have to go to school and get abused. Thereafter, Annie stayed at home taking care of her family, helping with the household chores, learning how to make baskets to help the family economy, and led a carefree life of a young person in the Mi'kmaq family network. Her father and mother continued to teach her to read both in English and in Mi'kmaq. HomeEnergy ?? FURNACE OIL ?? STOVE OIL ?? LUBE OIL ?? KEROSENE ?? AUTOMATIC DELIVERY ?? BUDGET PLANS - SERVICE PLANS Serving SYDNEY, GLACE BAY, NORTH SYDNEY, NEW WATERFORD and Surrounding Areas 24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICES LeBlanc Fuels.Glace Bay..849-4626 Mercer Fuels....Sydney 539-7580 Cogan FuelsNorth Sydney.794-2010 Annie's mother Harriet was a warm and affectionate mother who had learned well the skills of family care from her mother. She cooked, cleaned, sewed, and made baskets for her family and for people in town where she worked as well. She was a smart woman, energetic and thorough in her work. Her beautiful care in making baskets made her peddling go easier as they were frequently purchased, but Mi'kmaq baskets as everything else, were bought for very little money. Her baskets sold for five cents to two dollars. Harriet had many responsibilities when her mother died and cared for her father Peter Cremona as well until he died. At the age of 15, Annie's family moved to East River Point near Chester Basin in Lunenburg County because the lumber for making baskets was abundant there. They made baskets all summer, using the maple tree which was soft and white and made beautiful fancy baskets. After a day of making baskets, they would then peddle the baskets in the town. Many times



Annie and her mother would have to look for lodging for the night in the town as it would be too late or dark to go back to their camp. For those who took them in for the night, Har- CONNORS ' We carry one of the largest inventories of Office Supplies Furniture and Machines in the Maritimes OFFICE CEIMTRE We now carry a complete line of Drafting Supplies and Drafting Papers Computers and Computer Furniture for Home and Office Your One-Stop Shop in Cape Breton! Telephone (902) 562-7900 Fax (902) 539-8672 350 Charlotte Street, Sydney, NS