

Page 35 - Annie Battiste: a Mi'Kmaq Family History

ISSUE: Issue 64

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1993/8/1

ed there was only one thing to do. He would have to go to Maine to work. Annie had heard terrible sto? ries of men leaving their wives and living with unattached women in the camps there. The prospect and ru? moured stories convinced Annie that she would have to go with her hus? band. At first this thought did not sit well with John. How was he going to take care of children there? Where were they going to live? And the oldest, Eleanor, was now 7 years old. She had already started school. They would be living in shacks be? hind potato houses. How could they send her to school? She would need clothes and many things that they could not imagine getting easily, including transportation to school. Annie talked these things over with the family, the extended family, and a solution was proposed. Why not send her to Shubenacadie to school? (The Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia.) It was reported to be a good school run by religious women who loved and cared for children. They fed them, clothed them, and there were lots of kids there now and it had served John's sisters when they were young. They all had attended from as early as 1931 and learned much from it. It was reported to be a good school and why not send her there? The fact that Eleanor would need religious training soon to get her first holy com? munion sealed the idea. They then packed a bag, dressed Marie Eleanor in her best dress, went by train to Shubenacadie, and turned Eleanor over to the nuns at the school at the age of 7. The nuns at the school were very kind to the new visitors and to their new student. The nuns assured Annie of everything, and said she could send letters and gifts and Eleanor would receive them. John and Annie went to Maine with their other two children, Geraldine who was now 13 months old and Thomas who was 4 years old. Annie wrote often to the school, and she received letters from the school nuns, reporting that Elearior was happy, doing well, learning well, thanking her for the gifts she had sent. These personal messag? es assured Annie that all was well. Martha, Mattie's wife, later told her dif? ferently. She urged her to go to the school and get Eleanor. Her own children were there, but Martha had gone to the school at the end of each year to get her kids and then brought them back in the fall. She re? ported to Annie that Eleanor was not being treated well, and that she was being spanked every day. She urged her, for EI? eanor's sake, to go get the child. After hearing this, it was not long before they readied themselves to go to Shubenac? adie. John and Annie packed up all the children. Another child Marie Ann had been born and was nearly 2 years old. They ar? rived (after) a long car ride from Maine. They surprised the school authorities with their desire to take Eleanor and were re- IIA 1 INHOIME IIV?I HEATING • State of the art heating equipment • Trained heating technicians • Largest Fleet of Home Heating delivery • Ways to save you money • Budget Payment Plan • FREE Fumace Efficiency Tests IN SYDNEY CALL: " We want you to go away. 181 STEVE BLUNDON i IRVING 567-3000 Charlotte Street 5394800 MayflowerMaU 5640600 I Maritime Mariin Travel We Know Travel Best. 35