

[Page 36 - Annie Battiste: a Mi'kmaq Family History](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 64](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1993/8/1

quired to wait a very long time. John said they probably had to give her a bath. When she finally came out some hours later, she looked very pretty in a yellow dress, and bow in her hair. The nuns apologized for the delay, telling her that Eleanor had been playing in puddles outside. She got in the car, and her brothers and sisters just looked at her in awe. But by the time they had reached the end of the road, John and Annie realized that Eleanor did not know what the word "stop" meant nor could she read it. She could not read anything. Her head was full of lice and she couldn't speak Mi'kmaq too well. She had been forbidden to use the only language she knew and beaten when she tried to speak. No letters or gifts were ever given to her, and in all those years she felt abandoned, desperate and unloved. The nuns punished her persistently for resisting in learning English or being out of line, in their view. So she lived with daily beatings, festering her anger, fear, and resentment.

1D THE IRON-TO-DOMINION BANK Your Bank. Your Way Corner of Charlotte & Pitt Streets P. O. Box 117 Sydney, NS B1P6G9 567-3610 or 539-6637 25th ANNIVERSARY! Visit an Underground Coal Mine Glace Bay, One of the Foremost Museums in Nova Scotia! Bring your family to enjoy the once-in-a-lifetime experience of touring an actual Coal Mine with a retired miner as your guide. After touring Museum and Mine, visit the well-stocked Gift Shop and the Miners' Village Restaurant on the same 15-acre site located just one mile from downtown Glace Bay. The Miners' Museum is Open Year Round and Welcomes Group Tours During August, Inquire about Tuesday Night concerts with the "Men of the Deeps" Phone (902) 849-4522 It wasn't long, however, in the family that spoke only Mi'kmaq, that Eleanor began to speak Mi'kmaq again. She was 10 years old. But the problem of reading required that she be put in the first grade with her younger brother Tom. Their first school was at Longfellow School, an experience that was not pleasant for the children. The white children abused Tom and Eleanor for being "Indian" and taunted them. They were frequently in fights, so Annie put them in the Catholic school. St. Mary's School, where they were assured that no one would be allowed to call the children names. Eleanor, who had been in First Grade, was promoted to Grade Two because she was too big for Grade One. From the beginning at St. Mary's, Eleanor hated the school and the nuns. She recalled her days at Shubie and never let her guard down. She had been beaten by the nuns almost every day for minor infractions as a young child who knew no love during those three years. Eleanor had a difficult time throughout the years at this school in Houlton (Maine) because it was (run) by nuns. Finally, after much turmoil and troubled years she completed grade eight at the age of 16. The nuns tried to be understanding, but they had their rules, which for Eleanor were meant to be broken or to be defiantly ignored. When Annie and John left Eskasoni (for) Linneus, Maine, they had taken very little except bare essentials, clothing, and some cooking goods. They knew they would be camping out so the bare minimum would be required. Their first house was a camp belonging to Irving Henderson. John fixed up the camp and put an addition on it to fit the growing family. John



worked in the potato house for \$5 a day. The salary was so little, it hardly provided for the growing family. So John went looking for another job. Caution is critical... Scotia is the Department of '??' Transportation and Communications >C