

**July 25, 2008**

**Interviewee: Lena Davis Landry**

**Interviewer: Cecelia La Pointe-Gorman**

**University of Washington-Tacoma**

**Oral History and Memory Project**

**First Track:**

C: (Talking about my father Robert La Pointe, who was a good friend to Lena's deceased husband Alex who was better known as "Kootch"): He liked chocolate pudding.

L: Yeah, your dad and my husband were best friends....goofiest friends.

C: Had a good time huh?

L: Yeah.

C: When were you married, how old were you when you got married?

L: Oh I was... lets see....I was married twice, first time I was younger and then four years later...after he past away. I was four years after that then I married Alex, Kootch (nickname). (laughs). I was the only one calling him Alex. Nobody knew who I was talking about...they called him Kootch.

C: Is that the friend my Dad...Kootch and my dad were friends...I remember my Dad saying his name a lot.

L: Yeah, nobody knew his real name, not even where he worked...they called him Kootch.

C: What was his last name?

L: Alex Landry

C: Okay...it's still your name...dumb question... (Lena and I laugh). You're married to him for a long time?

L: Yeah, he died in ninety-four (1994), or was that before your dad, or after?

C: That was before my dad. Dad past away in 2002...no, that was 2001. I graduated in 2002.

L: O yeah, he came to see Alex when he was sick, when I was taking care of him. And Bob (Robert La Pointe) he was older now, didn't joke as much, Alex was still joking... even when he was sick.

C: How long were you guys married...you and Alex?

L: Oh, I didn't even count the years.

C: Long time huh?

L: Yeah it...time just went by, we went one time...went to get a loan and the guy asked us how old we were and I was a two or three years old then him. And we said a...forty-something, and then when after the guy left we sit there thinking..."Forty? We're fifty!" (Lena and I both laugh). Time just goes by, you don't even think.

C: Goes by fast, huh?

L: Yeah, we didn't even realize that we were fifty-something.

C: You must have had a good marriage.

L: Oh, he was nuttier than a fruit cake, but he was gone half a year. He worked in Shelton (WA.) on a tree farm for half a year, and every time I'd get sick, they'd call him, and he'd come home and he'd take of me and go back to work. And I worked, I worked out at Puyallup. I used to catch a bus when he was gone. I worked all the time that is why I am working now.

C: Keeps you healthy I think.

5:16

L: Yeah, gives me a reason to get up. And I, where we were both “notch babies”, have you ever heard of that?

C: Na-uh.

L: They called us “notch babies”, “not”, “nothing”. Somehow Social Security didn’t count us from 1919 to 19...I forgot when it started, but we were within that time that they did not count us for Social Security. So we were going to get half, and then since it was only half of what other people get...you know, for working all that time. We don’t get as much, so it wouldn’t do me any good to retire.

C: Because you would only get half? Is that what you are saying?

L: Um hum

C: Yeah...Really?

L: Yeah, an ordinary person would get twice as much as I would get on Social Security. And they’ve been trying to change that, so that we could catch up and get...but, I guess that they figure we won’t be working very long, or living very long, so they don’t do anything about it. They call us “notch babies...not.”

C: It was like they didn’t count...they didn’t count you.

L: Yeah.

C: 1919 to something...

7:45

L: 1919 to 1923 I think. And we fell into that point. And since, I got more than him. Course he was a...Forman on the tree farm, and I was on the council (Puyallup Tribal Council), and I got more money than him when he passed away that I...they wouldn’t give me half of his like any other. They just...just kicking me around (laughs) all over.

C: Wow...wow I didn't know that. Real void there huh?

L: Yeah, but a... I imagine there are other people with the same...oh. But a, probably ah...like ordinarily the man makes more than the woman, even though he was a foreman, I made more than him as a council person... when he past away.

C: Hum. You've seen a lot of history happen with the tribe, huh?

L: Yeah,

C: You're pretty fortunate.

L: Yeah it's a...been a long struggle...when I was sixty-two (62) my friend and I were forward to being...no, which was before I was sixty-two. We could hardly wait until we got to be sixty-two, but she past away before, and I went onto the Council, and I been working ever since for the tribe.

C: You graduated when you were sixty?

L: I went to school in my sixties. I don't know how old I was, I know I was over sixty. And I learned to drive when I was in my sixties, can you imagine that?

C: Laughs...What an inspiration, you can't say "I m too old for that", you make a liar out of anybody that says that.

L: (laughs) Yeah, I used, before I could drive, I always depended on my son or my husband and they're both gone, so I had to do something without walking. I used to walk down to Safeway or down to the other end to Piggy Wiggly or whatever was down there. And from Mc Kinely to Portland Ave. From Mc Kinley on "T" street all the way down to where Safeway is.

C: Um hum

L: Carrying my groceries or running to catch the bus. I got exercise.

C: Maybe that's the magic...huh...Lots of exercise.

L: Yeah, I got work to do....

C: O yes. Thank you.

**July 28, 2008**

**Second Track:**

L: (Speaking about Alex Landry) And he was half Indian and half French.

C: Oooh...Just like my dad, huh?

L: Yeah, they were good friends.

C: That's probably were they connect...ah Frenchmen o yeah.

L: Chippewa's.

C: Yeah...Chippewa's...I am too.

L: He was a...He worked on a tree farm and he was the foreman and he tried to hire all Indians (laughs).

C: That's cool.

L: There wasn't anything special, he was just a character and we got along good.

C: That wonderful...that counts for everything.

**About Lena's Children:**

L: Well the children, I have three boys and one daughter that is living and a foster daughter I raised since she was a baby. She still calls me mom.

C: What's their names, boys?

L: The boys? George... oh Margaret is the oldest; she's my first husbands daughter. Then there's George, Gab, Gregory...um Gregory was killed in a car accident, and

ah... Warren.

C: What was your last one? Gregory was killed in a car accident and?

L: Warren.

C: Warren? That's George, Gabriel, Gregory, and Warren?

L: Yeah.

C: That's four boys?

L: And I lost one at birth, his name was Alex. And they were all born here in Tacoma.

C: One daughter that was the foster daughter was her name Margaret?

L: No, Margaret my daughter... first daughter.

C: Okay Margaret is named after your mother?

L: After my mother yeah.

C: And the foster daughter's name?"

L: Andrea Daniels.

C: She's still living?

L: Yeah she lives out in Lakewood, she's a Muckleshoot.

C: Is Margaret still living?

L: Yeah, she has ah...lets see....three boys, yeah, Robert, Dwayne and Joe. And uh, let's see, Robert has two girls and twin boys. And Joe has a daughter and a son. Robert has two grandchildren.

C: Wow

L: So that makes four generations.

C: Yeah it sure does.

L: And Joe's kids are young yet. And Gab has two kids, a son and a daughter and she has the little boy. (She points at a photo on the shelf in the office).

**Lena is asked about her friends in life:**

L: (laughs) I had so many friends I couldn't begin to tell you.

C: (laughs) we could do that one later.

L: Yeah....I could tell you more about my enemies (we laugh)...nah I just kidding.

C: That's funny, that funny Lena.

L: Ah most of my friends past away...all the ones my age (pause)...Well you read the article about me, it pretty much covers everything?

C: Anything you see that we already...I was trying to remember everything that we went through. I just wanted to just try to fill in pieces...so I can send this one...

L: (Talks about camping). Yeah we went camping because my husband's uncle owed a place down in Toklen, Washington and Merdle lived down there and she owned a lot of property, her and her adopted son, and she always had a place for us to stay, he ran a bingo hall, his name was Fred Landry.

**8:05**

L: Yeah the kids were little we moved a lot, we didn't buy a place until...I forgot when it was...after the hard times. I worked all the time but ah...we had a house on 6<sup>th</sup> Ave when I worked Bremerton Navy Yard. Then we lost that place and moved over to Portland Ave. I forget the year. I had the place all paid for by the time my husband past away in ninety-four (1994). So it most has been twenty years.

We lived in Old Town also, that is why that plague is there. O yeah my husband encouraged me to run for council, even went out and campaigned for me. And I traveled all around the states to meetings and then I went to Canada, and I almost never got out of

there. Course I...we didn't have birth certificates and I went over there...that was before you had to have passports. I didn't have a passport. It was lucky I had a voting card in my purse. Because I took everything out of my purse and showed it to that attendant at the gate to get back on the plane.

C: A voting card... voting...okay voting, good thing... huh?

L: Voting. And that was the only thing that he would accept. And he said. I told him, I didn't have any trouble getting into Canada. And he said, "Oh well they let anything into Canada." And I said I don't appreciate being called anything. And he said, "Well I didn't mean it that way." And he finally accepted my voting card; I don't know why it didn't have a picture on it. And I got back from Canada, and I haven't been back there since. I went there for a meeting on Gaming.

(End of conversation).

**Track three:**

**About after when Alex past away:**

Lena: And after he died, I went back to work. I was volunteering....volunteering for the gaming. And Rolene came; she brought me a desk, or found a desk for me and said "go to work". So I went to work, I didn't get paid, but I thought it something to do. And then I said, but I don't have a chair. (Laughs) so then she went and got me a chair, a nice big chair. And then after a while they hired me and I've been working with gaming ever since.

C: That was in 1994, starting in 1994?

L: Yeah, well I started getting paid, I was volunteering before that...since 1986. And I told you how they hired me?



C: Yeah, because you know how to play poker. Because you were taught, your brother had taught you how to play poker.

L: Yeah when I was a little girl.

C: Yeah, that's a good story, that a really good story.

**Track four:**

**About making Indian Baskets old style:**

L: Those big trees their roots come way out and they pull out their roots?

C: Oh okay, okay.

L: My mother used to use Alder to dye any of her baskets; it was kind of an orange color. We used to go out and help her peel that alder right off of that tree. She then she'd boil it.

C: It would turn the water yellow and then she'd put it in the...

L: Orange.

C: Nice orange?

L: I got one of each kind that she made; she made each of us a basket to go picking huckleberries. Then the big-big one is for cooking. They put their rocks in the fire, then they take them out when their red hot, and then put the baskets on them, and boils, boils whatever they cook. They got potatoes, and that's what they call potatoes they look like potatoes from the wild.

C: Oh okay.

L: And all kinds of different ha...roots, and ah tree, tree limbs and leaves. But I wouldn't dare go out and try getting some because you have to know what's right or you might get the poison stuff. My mother got real sick, her sister gave her some medicine and she became very ill because she got the wrong kind.

C: The wrong medicine.

L: The wrong, what she got wasn't medicine.

C: Yah.

L: So I won't dream of trying to do...do that.

C: Right.

L....We went out and helped her, but I was a little girl. (Pauses and says jokingly) little dumb Indian. (Laughs).

C: No you were not (laughs) no you were not...your so silly.

**2:55**

L: Yeah, our... my parents had a... her father, my mothers father John Meeker owned all that property down there where the port in now (Port of Tacoma). And, then ummm he divided it with his children and his wives, he had three wives. So my mother had, her mother died when she was a little girl. And she went to live with an older Indian that didn't speak English or, so she learned how to speak Indian real well. And she never went to school, and she learned to read and write from her children and to talk English. And the teachers used to send notes home for her to not to talk Indian around us. Of course we might get that dialect but we, she that's was the only way she could talk, so we learned it, thank goodness, nobody speaks it now.

C: But you learned it when you were a little girl. Do you remember it?

L: A... I haven't had any chance to speak it anybody because nobody knows it anymore. So I know a few words like dog and cat, and things like that. That's a cat is Spish-spish, and dog is Sp'el.

C: Sp'el....Spish spish.

L: Qua-da-chi is thank you.

C: Qua-da-chi.

L: Qua-da-chi...I don't hear that very often.

C: Qua-da-chi that sounds nice.

L: yeah, they had me name some of the buildings over there and the roads, the count: (In Lena counts in Salish). One, two, three, four.

**5:32**

L: Oh... I have to hear the words. We just named the wolves ...at Point Defiance.

C: Oh did you? Wow.

L: Um hmm.

C: That, that was just recently wasn't it?

L: Yeah, just last month I think a month or so, their always calling me to name something.

C: May you can give me an Indian name?

L: Oh no no, I don't get into that. That's the Ka esks duty.

C: Oh what's the Ka esks.

L: The Ka esks is your grandma.

C: Oh my grandma, Betty. She did give me her name.

L: Huh?

C: She, my grandma gave me her name.

L: Well see...

C: Cecelia.

L: Yeah.

C: So I m named after her. She told me sometimes she can't believe...sometimes so goes, "Sometimes I can't believe you're named after me." When I was being just a brat or something when I was growing up (Laughs).

L: That's what my mother said, I was too irony to die.

C: I guess it's a good thing though, you know.

L: Yeah.

C: Cause you live a long time.

L: Yeah (laughs). Yeah my father was only sixty-one when he died. And my mother was seventy-three...I forgot...but she was young too. I guess it didn't seem young to her because...

C: But now you think about it, and it's young huh?

L: Yeah...like I told that one guy that wrote the story, I couldn't realize that I was almost ninety. (laughs). I just didn't envision myself at that age. And all my friends have past away. You know all my ---- friends; we were always going out together, going on picnics and going camping and things like that...their all gone.

C: It must be hard; it must be hard to lose your friends.

L: Yeah, course I make new friends, but their all much younger than me and don't have the same....

C: Experiences?

L: Yeah. We used to have so much fun. Hazel, did you know Hazel? I know your mother would know her.

C: I remember the name.

L: Hazel...her maiden name was Hazel Charlie, and then she married...she has one boy left I think. Oh yeah, she has a daughter. She works for the government. I can't remember her name. Char....a I think of all the other Hazels, I can't think of...oh it will come to me in... She was a character. I...she was my friend at Chemawa (Indian Boarding School, Oregon) when I went to Chemawa. My father didn't want me to go to Chemawa and after he past away, my mother couldn't afford to send me to school so I just signed up and went.

C: Your grandfather's name was John Meeker, did I get your dads name?

L: William, William Joseph Davis.

C: See all those details I want to make sure I have them. Just details I don't want to miss any details.

L: My mother's mother died when she was a little girl, so we never knew her. And then he (William) married a lady from Skokomish. And they never had any kids, but he had kids before he married her. But my mother inherited a piece of land from over there and then he married another lady from that area too. And she got most of the property, my mother got a piece of property out there, but then that was depression time, and she...nobody could find a job. My dad found a job enough to feed us, and we lost the house to taxes. Course they didn't know about taxes...

Course my mother never went to school and my dad went to Chemawa, and he left there when he was in the eighth grade. Him and his brother just walked away, and it took them...I don't know how many nights and days to walk from Salem, Oregon up to Tacoma, (WA.) just walking. And they would hide out in the day time because they were

afraid they'd get caught. So they at night they would keep walking, and then they'd get tired, go to sleep along the road. And one night they were, they found a place that had a platform up high, and it had a tent over it, and they slept there, and work up in the morning and discovered they were sleeping in the grave. (laughing)

C: Oh no...

L: I would be so scared, and my dad had experiences like that. He used to tell these stories. My mother learned to make baskets from this old lady that she lived with, which was very good, and she learned how to cook and she was a very good cook.

C: So she didn't stay with her step mom, she went to stay with this other...

L: Yeah, her step mom...you know, you've heard about 'wicked step mothers?'

C: Yeah.

L: Yeah they had their own children, and they were neglectful of my mother, she was just a little girl, so she went to go live with this old lady in Sqaxin Island. She learned how to cook and sew and everything. She was a good seamstress. Oh I got to get back to work.

End of session.