



## **General Information**

**Private or Public Statement?** Private

**Statement Provider:** Anonymous

**Date:** July 17, 2014

**Location:** Augusta, Maine

**Previous Statement?** No

**Statement Gatherer:** Rachel George

**Support Person:** N/A

**Additional Individuals Present:** Gail Werrbach

**Recording Format:** Audio

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### **Transcriber's Note:**

This is an anonymous statement. Any redactions in the transcript, or alternations to the audio have been done at the request of the statement provider in an effort to protect his or her identity.

## **Recording**

**RG:** All right, so, it is July 17, 2014, we are here in Augusta, Maine. My name is Rachel George, and I'm here today with, would you mind stating your name, please?

**A:** *[NAME REDACTED]*

**RG:** Fantastic.

**GW:** And Gail Werrbach.

**RG:** Fantastic. And the file number is ME-201407-00068. *[NAME REDACTED]*, have you been informed, understood and signed the consent form?

**A:** Yes.

**RG:** Fantastic. And I have to let you know that if at any point during your interview, you indicate that there is a child or an elder currently in need of protection, or that there is imminent risk of serious bodily harm or death to an identifiable person or group including yourself, that that information may not be protected as confidential. Do you understand?

**GW:** Yes, I think so.

**A:** *(laughs)* I'm not reporting anyone.

**RG:** Okay. Is there anything that you wanted to mention starting off, or would you like me to just go through the questions with you?

**A:** This is being recorded?

**RG:** Yep.

**A:** Um, hmm. I, um, loved being a caseworker. When off in supervision, I, now I get out and work with people. That's what keeps me going. Um, and I, in relation to the Indian population of Aroostook, I felt a certain affinity, or whatever, *(chuckling)* because, um, I had grown up poor. Very poor. I knew what struggle was. Um, and always knew that I was loved. Which is a difference when you take to moving children around.

Um, I was impressed by that responsibility, working in Houlton was my first time working with, um, with children in that capacity. And, I remember I didn't sleep too well for a while, because my first task that was assigned me was to move two boys. The reason they were being moved, and I pray God this would never happen again, was that the caseworker had promised a higher board rate. And the supervisor said, 'No,' after being aware of it. And they wouldn't keep the boys for less.

So I'm sitting in the car with them and thinking, I'm changing their home. They're going to go, and as had happened, the way it occurred there were no visits, it was cold. Off we went. And I had young children myself at the time, and all I could think of was, um, how would they manage? How would they manage? In something like this. Whether you're Indian, white or whatever. Um, it's a major, major thing. Yep. *(laughs)*

And uh, in recent years, one of the nicest things that one of my former clients ever said to me, she was not Indian. But we had returned her to her mom and, um, things weren't going well. And I wouldn't have wanted to live with her mom. *(chuckling)* But anyway, um, one day she said I've got to get out of here. And, I could see I had to make the decision then and there without supervision. I just had to make the decision. So I decided I had to move her. But it always bothered me. I thought maybe I'd rushed into it too fast. I thought maybe she was just engaging in hyperbole.

Um, in recent years, she hunted me down through computer work, and I told her about it. I said, you know, I didn't do very well. We were going on vacation the next day and it bothered

me almost the whole vacation. And, uh, when I told her how I felt, she said, ‘You saved my life.’ Sometimes, and there had been other decisions — phew. *(laughs)* Yeah. [00:05:04.22]

So, where are we?

**RG:** Can you tell me about your past employment with State Child Welfare?

**A:** Yep. Um.

**RG:** What types of positions did you do?

**A:** Simply caseworker. Um, and approximately 25 years in three different offices. Um.

**RG:** Which offices did you work in?

**A:** Houlton, uh, Bath, while it existed, and Augusta. And I worked in Augusta from living all around. It was my certain home.

**RG:** Mm, hmm. How long were you at each of those offices? Do you recall?

**A:** How long were — ?

**RG:** How long were you at each of those offices?

**A:** Oh, um... four years in Houlton, approximately.

**RG:** Mm, hmm.

**A:** A few months less. Um, Bath I think it was something like a year and a half. And the rest of the time in Augusta.

**GW:** And were you a caseworker during that time, or were you also a supervisor?

**A:** No, I remained a caseworker.

**GW:** Remained a caseworker.

**A:** Yep. I can remember times when it would have been nice to do something else for a day or two. *(laughs)*

**GW:** But you enjoyed being a caseworker.

**A:** I did. People are vastly interesting.

**GW:** Mm, hmm. They are.

**A:** Yeah. And I managed to always keep a little variety. Um, specialization is absolutely the thing nowadays. I felt if I couldn't absolutely work on something one day, I'd be able to do something else.

**RG:** Mmm.

**A:** You know, barring emergencies of course. And that, I think that helped keep me going.

**GW:** And when did you retire?

**A:** Uh, in '95. March of '95.

**RG:** How many of the cases that you worked on involved Wabanaki children and families, approximately?

**A:** Yeah. Um, I can't really say. In Houlton, um, a large portion. Maybe a third of my caseload were Indian children.

**RG:** When did you first learn about, um, Maine's policies related to Indian Child Welfare? Or the Indian Child Welfare Act?

**A:** I don't know how to answer that. I have no, I mean we would place in an Indian home. Um, if there was a suitable home available, certainly. That would be preference. I think this was before some of the policies. I don't remember any big push. Um, one of, one of my fellow workers was, um, married to a man who worked much with the Aroostook Indian Association. So we were, we were being, um, they knew what we were doing. I'll put it that way. *(laughing)*

**RG:** Do you recall ever getting any training about the Indian Child Welfare Act?

**A:** I really have no knowledge of the Indian Child Welfare Act.

**RG:** That's okay.

**A:** Now, maybe we were trained, but if so it was after my time with all the Indian children. I don't know the date of that Act.

**GW:** It was after you left Houlton.

**A:** Yeah.

**GW:** Yeah, it was about four years after you left Houlton.

**A:** We may well have had everybody trained, but it doesn't stick in my head.

**RG:** During your time when you were in Houlton, what were the policies around placing Native children?

**A:** [00:09:29.15] Um, well, as I said, if an Indian home was available, we would place there, but many of the placements were in, uh, in white homes. Um, there had been a terrible episode before I arrived there, and I don't know the exact date but, um, around Christmas time one year, a group of Indians who lived out near the Houlton dump, um, decided to celebrate with canned heat, and so we ended up with a bunch of orphans at that time. And, um —

**GW:** What was canned heat?

**A:** Some form of alcohol.

**GW:** Oh, like grain alcohol. Something that was very —

**A:** I really don't know, but I had always been told that's what they drank, and it was fatal.

**GW:** Oh.

**A:** Yeah. Alcoholism was a horrible scourge there, among the Indians.

**GW:** I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you. But the, so people died, at that, that had been drinking whatever the bad alcohol was, so you had a number of children that were Indian children that were orphans then as a result of that.

**A:** Yep. Yeah. Yeah. The two girls that I inherited in group placement were from that event. And I don't, you know a lot of my memories are a bit, it's been years. Years. Yeah. Um, what was, where were we?

**RG:** Um, we were talking about placements of Native children.

**A:** Placement. Well, we looked for the best placement we could find. We had a large family and there again it was an alcoholism issue. And, I think there were at least five children in the family, a range of ages. You can never place that many kids together in a home. You just, it would blow their minds. And so we, um, did the best we could to keep ones together that, where it seemed particularly important. Um, the last child that, one that I remember most vividly in terms of the placement was a little girl, a darling little girl, probably three or so. And, I had recently become acquainted with a young couple who had no children. And were, uh, anxious to do foster care. So I thought they'd be great.

I called them up, and when they discovered I was talking about an Indian child, the response went like this, ‘Do you think we'd have one of them in our home?’ Well, I had thought it. *(laugh)* I did learn that in all the situations after that, you approached the issue of prejudice, racial discrimination. I remember I was horrified once, when we had in Augusta, we had some black children to place, and I was afraid they hadn't told the foster parents. It would be awful if they hadn't. But, it worked out.

**RG:** Can you recall any specific, um, policies that came from supervisors about Native children?

**A:** Policies were pretty much the same for everyone. Really, I mean, sure, I'm sure that there were issues that crept in that we wish hadn't. But, I'm, I don't recall any. With all children we were instructed to, if it was possible to place them in homes of the same religious background. I recall a little Indian boy was on my caseload who, um, died of a congenital heart disease. And it was sad. I'm trying to think, was he in, in, I really can't — What I remember is going shopping for the clothes for him to be buried in. And a dear friend went with me, thank God, 'cause I wasn't ready to handle that right then. Yeah. Yeah. It was sad. But it wasn't neglect.

**RG:** Mm, hmm. Can you describe a situation where you felt very positive about your work with Wabanaki children and families?

**A:** [00:15:04.19] Um, you know, the things, I felt positive about the work. Uh, but I don't think I can enumerate a lot of results. I remember the difficulties. I remember a young boy who, well, he probably might have been eighth grade, and he had been in an Indian home, and for some reason they asked for him to be moved, I don't remember the reason. And there again, I recently had met a family who, um, wanted a foster child, who claimed not to have any prejudice, and seemed to be intelligent about the whole thing, and warm enough, and. So I placed him there. And it wasn't very long at all before she called up. She said, ‘We're not made to have foster children. We've discovered that. We cannot stand having someone outside the family viewing what's going on.’ You know? So poor guy. He was devastated. From the original move, and then to move again. And he ended up moving out of my area to keep him in an Indian home placement.

**GW:** Wow. So, sometimes you would place some of the children from the Maliseets or Micmacs with the Passamaquoddy or Penobscot?

**A:** I really —

**GW:** I just wondered —

**A:** I think most of people up there were one of those two.

**GW:** So, when you said North you meant up towards Presque Isle and Caribou.

**A:** Right, right.



**GW:** I see. I'm thinking East.

**A:** Oh, yeah.

**GW:** So you found a home for him that was with a Micmac, Micmac family.

**A:** Yeah, that would have been the Caribou office.

**GW:** Yep.

**A:** Yeah. Um, positive outcomes. Well it was very, I was very flattered once. *(laughs)* When this teenage girl who, she was on trial placement with her mom, and I had promised her a certain time I would come and take her shopping. Which was a task we did. Nobody else did. *(laughs)*

**GW:** They had their clothing allowance. Yep.

**A:** Well, it was a dreadful snowstorm. Dreadful, you know. And she and her mom went down off the road somewhere, you know. **[00:18:07]** *(Can't make out what she says here.)* But somehow I made it that day. And her comment was, 'I knew you'd come.' Very sweet. What if I hadn't? *(laughs)*

**GW:** Those things are important, to kids in care. Yeah.

**A:** Yeah, can count on someone. Yep.

**GW:** Yeah.

**A:** Well, and I remember, um, one placement where the alcoholism started up again. And we had been hoping, and we had made a trial placement a couple of the kids. And, I was told I had to go and take them out. And I, today, I would never do anything like that alone. But I did then. *(laughs)* We weren't so tied up with safety issues, now. I managed to, um, get them out with the mom shouting, 'I'll get you, you bitch.' Which, so I had one of the caseworkers from the office, lived not too far from there. I went to her house and cried and shook after I got them placed. *(laughs)*

**RG:** Mm, hmm.

**A:** But there were issues like that sometimes.

**GW:** What was available for services for the Indian families that, I mean, you mentioned the

alcoholism. What was the, were there services when you were working there in the early '70s? I mean what could you do to help families?

**A:** Not a lot. Not a lot. [00:20:00.29] I think the Indian Association was trying to make connections. Um, of course, we had the counseling center. Um. Hmm. You were asking for positive outcomes, and it's outside the Micmac and the Maliseet, but, um, we have, um, interstate compacts, with, so that supervision. We agree to do supervision of children who are coming from another place. And, um, this young Indian father was trying to get back his children who were in custody of Massachusetts. And, they were in custody because of the neglect of the mom, and um, dad, I really liked him. *(laughs)* I sure hope it turned out well. He was just a nice guy. And he was living in Augusta at the time. And I couldn't see any reason for not saying, 'Let the kids come.'

He lived, um, in a building that doesn't exist anymore, on the circle. And, um, later on he moved down, uh, I forget the name of the street but on the way out to the Civic Center, coming from downtown Augusta. Is that Mount Vernon?

**GW:** Yeah. Yep.

**A:** Mount Vernon. He lived in one of those houses upstairs. And, so one day when I went for my usual visitation, he said I want to move back home. And that was, the western part of the State. All I can remember was beyond Sugarloaf, because I took a picture that day of Sugarloaf. Anyway. Um, he said looking out the window here, my kids see fights, and all kinds of things that I don't want them to see. So he moved back, I think he was planning to live with his mother for a while. And I did make a visit or two up there. And I just wanted him to succeed so much, so I hope he did. I hope he did.

**GW:** Yeah.

**A:** So much for men taking care of children. I'm kidding. *(laughs)*

**GW:** Yeah, it didn't happen a lot in those years, did it?

**A:** No. No. Nope. Yeah, I believe the mother was white. I heard it said once, if you're white and you marry an Indian, then you're an Indian. Did you ever hear that? No.

**GW:** No.

**A:** Technically, part of the tribe?

**GW:** Oh, you mean, if the, for the children?

**A:** Well, the children would be of course. But no, the person —

**GW:** It was a way, it was, it sounds like a not nice way of making a statement about a white person who marries somebody who is Indian.

**A:** Well, this was made by an Indian, this statement.

**GW:** Oh.

**RG:** Were they from the United States, or from Canada?

**A:** A lot of the, um, oh, this person was from the United States.

**RG:** That was a law in Canada. If you were a woman, a white woman that married a Native man you could get status under the Indian Act. But if you were a Native woman who married a white man you lost your status.

**A:** Oh. Huh.

**GW:** Is that still how it operates?

**RG:** No, nope. But it was that way for a long time.

**GW:** Wow.

**A:** Yeah, a great many of the families did originate in Canada.

**GW:** Yeah, Yeah. Huh, no I didn't know that.

**RG:** Mm, hmm. Um, what was your working relationship with the Tribe during the time you were in Houlton?

**A:** I didn't have any.

**RG:** That's okay. Um, could you describe a situation where you felt less positive about your work with Wabanaki children and families?

**A:** Well, certainly when we tried to return them home and it didn't work. You can't feel very positive about that. *(pause)* I remember one night, and I had to, in the evening, I had to go pick up a child. *(sigh)* Because, um, the mother's boyfriend had just gotten drunk and plunked her in the nose and broke it. So, um, didn't feel very positive. It could be very discouraging.

**GW:** Yeah, it's hard work.

**A:** But that time, that night I was able to put her with an Indian family, I remember.

**GW:** [00:25:23.26] So when the kids were placed with an Indian family, those were considered, were those, help me understand how foster care worked then. Was that considered a, a kinship placement, or was that an Indian family that. um, the State said, 'You're okay to be a licensed foster home'?

**A:** I don't think it would be considered kinship.

**GW:** Yep.

**A:** Unless it was —

**GW:** Relatives.

**A:** Yeah.

**GW:** Yeah.

**A:** Yeah, otherwise, we did place kids when we had to in non-licensed homes. And often we were so needy for some new homes, that we couldn't wait for the fire inspection, and the, you know, all that.

**GW:** Right. Yeah. So were some of those Indian, um, foster, when some of those homes, Indian homes, were they also people, were they then some of them also considered licensed or state foster homes?

**A:** I'm sure some of them were.

**GW:** So, they had gone through the licensing —

**A:** Um.

**GW:** — process. I don't know how complicated licensing was in the early '70s. It probably wasn't as complicated — *(simultaneously)*

**A:** *(simultaneously)* Well, it wasn't as complicated as it is today. No.

**GW:** Yeah, that's what I thought.

**A:** And it would, would be treated a little more casually. If you've got to have a home, you've got to have a home. *(laughs)* Um, if a license could be pending, which was the case in, um, especially one of the homes I mentioned already. Um, because you got to have a place. And for a child, little, can't be an island.

**GW:** Mm, hmm.

**RG:** Mm, hmm. Um, so there's a number of different experiences related to the Indian Child

Welfare Act that I'd like to ask you about. Um, so I can hear about your experiences working within those contexts. If you don't have any experience working with it, or if you don't —

**A:** I won't make one up.

**RG:** Okay. Just let me know. Um, what were your experiences in initial identification of a child as being Native American? What was that process like? Or was there one?

**A:** They just were. I mean, people knew. *(laughs)* Houlton was not a very big place, you know? Um, names? You know? Um, common knowledge. There was no research. 'Are you really Indian? No.' No. And as I say, I'd hear the tribal names mentioned. But, um, I can't recall that placement decisions were affected by the Tribes.

**RG:** What about in child custody hearings?

**A:** Excuse me?

**RG:** In child, in doing child custody hearings, your experience in —

**A:** Um, that was the one thing that we didn't do as caseworkers with foster children, was go to court. Um, unless they were already in custody and it was a hearing to return or, or not to return. We did not have the, uh, review system, court review system, that was later set up. Yep. So it would be either, I suppose, a parent petitioning or we were petitioning for return of custody.

**GW:** Were you also the person doing the investigations for abuse?

**A:** No. No. That's what I'm —

**GW:** Okay, that's what I —

**A:** I was the one —

**GW:** So, you were working with the children at the point that —

**A:** With the children, with the foster families.

**GW:** — they came into care.

**A:** Um, with adoptions.

**GW:** Yep. Okay. [00:30:00.22] Did you have any adoptions that were related to Indian children that you remember?

**A:** No, I don't remember any.

**GW:** Okay.

**RG:** *(pause)* Do you want me to go, there's a bunch of questions that I'm not sure, um, because you said you don't have any knowledge of the way the Act worked, do you want me to go through and ask you those questions anyways, and you can just let me know if you don't know how to answer them?

**A:** You know, I don't remember anything about the Child Welfare Act. *(laughs)*

**RG:** That's okay.

**A:** I'm sure we knew at the time, but. *(coughs)*

**RG:** What do you consider active efforts to prevent the break-up of American Indian families? As opposed to the active remedial and rehabilitative efforts? Or, sorry, the reasonable efforts?

**A:** Thinking back, I guess, um, the deck was stacked against Indian advancement at that time. And obviously hopelessness and uh, need, um, are um, to cause the alcoholism. Lets escape. Let's medicate, medicate ourselves. Um, and that was, that was dreadful. Um, I really don't remember at this point what the alcoholism services were then. I know there were some. But, um, I don't know. *(laughs)*

**RG:** That's okay.

**A:** Of course there was the —

**GW:** [NAME REDACTED] did though, this is off, [NAME REDACTED] did remind me of something though that might be interesting that I totally forgot about, and that's the Maine Indian Association. Um, and I had forgotten. 'Cause I actually had a friend that, when I first moved to Maine 25 years ago, worked in the Bangor office with the Maine Indian Association.

**A:** So was that a spinoff from the Aroostook one?

**GW:** I just, I don't know, but you've given me a memory, that's something that we should probably ask about. Because they were, that was part of what they were trying to do, was to provide services to families, to advocate for families. And I just haven't thought about that in a lot of years. So.

**A:** Yeah, I wouldn't know about Maine, but Aroostook. **(GW: Yeah).** I knew them. The director.

**GW:** Yep.

**A:** Um, I think it was, aimed in a lot of directions, consciousness raising.

**GW:** Yeah. It was advocacy, too.

**A:** Yeah. Yep.

**GW:** Yep.

**A:** Yeah, I thought it was a very positive thing. Very positive. All peoples need to have a decent self-mage. And a goal. Um, not just wandering in the wildnerness.

**GW:** Yep.

**A:** Yep.

**GW:** As usual, Rachel's like, 'Oh, she's going off on another tangent.' *(laughs)*

**RG:** *(laughs)* That's okay. The tangents are always good. Just trying to make sure I'm not asking questions again.

**GW:** *(speaking over)* I know, you keep, you make sure we keep on track. I know.

**RG:** Um, what State Child Welfare policies and practices, uh, or events influenced your work with Wabanaki kids and families? *(loud voices in the background)*

**A:** I can only speak generally, that —

**RG:** That's okay.

**A:** — our policy was to do our absolute best, no matter whether the child was Indian or white. That's all I can say.

**RG:** Do you recall if State Child Welfare policies changed during your time that you were working there, with regard to Indian families?

**A:** I don't think so. You know, it could have, but I don't have any recollection of it.

**RG:** Over the course of your work with State Child Welfare, what did you see as barriers to the successful implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act? Or did you see any barriers?

**A:** [00:34:59.12] See moving out of Indian country, so to speak. Um, it's, I didn't see this.

**RG:** Mm, hmm. That's all right. Um, can you talk about the importance or if you think there is an importance to having caseworkers learning and having a knowledge of the American Indian family structure?

**A:** Sure. I, um, the more we understand about people, the better we can respect them. And, yeah. I'm all for it.

**RG:** Um, and how about having, the importance of having an Indian child who is placed in um, out-of-home care, to be placed within a reasonable proximity to their Tribal community?

**A:** That was the general policy. Yeah. Right. Changing schools was always a hassle. We tried to avoid it, but many a time we couldn't —

**GW:** I know those two communities were not um, when you were there, were not recognized by the State or the Federal government, but at that time was there a Tribal structure, with a Chief or Governor? Or, what was —

**A:** Not that I'm aware of, but that's all I can say.

**GW:** Okay, just that there were Indian families living in those communities.

**A:** Yeah, Yeah. There were several.

**GW:** Yep.

**RG:** If you could change anything, or make anything happen at the Tribal, State or Federal level, uh, to improve the lives of children that are touched by the Indian Child Welfare Act, what would you do?

**A:** Well, not being familiar with the Act, it's hard to comment on that. *(laughs)*

**RG:** That's okay. That's all right. Um.

**GW:** Or maybe in general, if you think back to when you were in, when you were, I know it was many years ago, but when you were in Houlton, what, if you, um, if you could have, um, what changes would you have wanted, or what would you have hoped for I guess, for the Native, for the Indian families who were living in Houlton? Or the Micmac community? What would you have wanted different for them, for their community?

**A:** Oh, that's a tough question. Jobs. Close the liquor stores. *(laughs)* Um, certainly, um, services around, very available services around alcoholism. It was such a big factor. And, um, you know, it's a, looking back it made me realize how little I really knew about Indian structure, very little. Um, it was all at immediate family level.

**GW:** And I noticed, I want to ask one more thing about, I was, when you had talked to Barbara you'd also mentioned that you may have placed some kids, maybe at St. Michael's Center or a group home? Besides foster homes, were there other placements that you made for, for Indian Children?

**A:** Yeah, I had at least the two teenage girls at St. Michael's. I believe it still exists, only it's for boys instead of girls —

**GW:** It does.

**A:** — now, maybe?

**GW:** Well, both. It's really not a group home anymore. Yeah, but it was, yeah, at the time you would have placed them.

**A:** Made it possible for some kids to be together. Um, as far as I knew it seemed to be an adequate place. Of course it wasn't close, but um.

**GW:** Was it mostly teenagers, or were there also, and I, and uh.

**A:** [00:39:56.17] I think it was mostly teenagers. I think so. Yeah. I've placed in lots of group homes, but not in that day. I don't know. Was there another group home? Was it in Aroostook? I can't remember one. I mean since then, there had been. Yeah.

**GW:** Well, I mean Aroostook Mental Health Center didn't even get created till 1970. So, or '69. So it was just starting.

**A:** *(talking over)* It was just starting. Yep.

**GW:** When you would have been a caseworker. So, It wouldn't. I mean, they hadn't developed any. They were just at the beginning of developing those services. Yeah.

**A:** I think that was true of a lot of things. Yep. When, um, well, I don't know whether the civil rights years helped the Indians too, you know? The push to not discriminate. Yeah. When I was a child, we lived in Oxbow for four years. Left there when I was five. But, do you know where Oxbow is?

**GW:** I have actually heard the name.

**A:** Yeah, it's in the Ashland area. At the end of a road on the Aroostook river. Yeah. And I always think about, my mom and dad were friendly with an Indian lady there. She was always

called Mrs. Sock. I think her name was Sockalexis, really. But people shortened it. And um, after we moved away, a year or two, she appeared with a little basket that she had made just for me, to take my school lunches in. And I still have the basket.

**GW:** Oh, wow. Wow.

**A:** *(laughs)*

**GW:** That's neat.

**A:** Yeah. I can't say, I don't remember any of the neighbors at that point. But I knew my mom and dad were friendly. But, yep. What else?

**RG:** Is there anything else that you want to share about your experiences that I didn't ask about?

**A:** I think, *(laughs)* right off hand I think that the system of reviews, I'm sure that applies to Indian children as all children. That's probably been a good thing. It was a terrible nuisance to get everything ready for a legal review. But, no one could fall through the cracks that way. Even if you didn't have time for it. You did it. Yep. But that did not exist then. Nope. I don't remember when that started.

**GW:** I was trying to think, too. It's around the same time as the Indian Child Welfare Act. Yeah, 'cause that was the national —

**A:** Standard child welfare —

**GW:** Yeah, it was um, it was the earlier version of the Adoption and Safe Families Act. But I can't, I should know the name, but I can't remember it. Yeah, that came in around the same time in the late '70s. So, were kids, when kids were in care then, were they on average, do you remember how long, I know it's different for each child, but for, do you remember for Indian kids how long they might have been in care?

**A:** Um, for a lot, it was until they were grown up, I'm sure.

**GW:** Until they were grown up.

**A:** Sure. I don't know what happened finally to my big family. *(laughs)* I —

**GW:** But some of those kids, you may have been their caseworker for almost all the time you were in Houlton?

**A:** Oh, Yeah. Yep. True. Um, hmm. Yeah, I always liked following kids. They started the new unit and wanted to transfer, I'd say, 'Where are my kids?' *(laughs)* And I knew for some of them it's really paid off. Yeah, I had a visit recently from one of the children who's from the Augusta years. She's not a child anymore. She's going to be thirty something. And she lives out



of State, and um, came up this way to visit relatives. And she looked me up. She said, 'I had to see you again.' 'Cause I knew her from the time she was, over a period of ten years. And I was the most consistent figure in her life for that time. I mean others were coming and going, but I was there. And one time, she tried to get rid of me, 'cause she thought, I'm sure it was because she knew I knew too much about her. *(laughs)* But it was so special to see her again.  
*[00:45:41.12]*

**GW:** It's too bad more kids don't have that. There's so much turnover in the Department now.

**A:** Yeah.

**GW:** They don't, they don't have that kind of —

**A:** Yeah, I retired when this girl was 17. She was mad. *(laughs)*

**GW:** Yeah, I bet she was.

**A:** Yeah, she still remembers how angry she was. *(laughs)*

**GW:** Shows how much you meant to her.

**A:** Yeah, we worked hard. We did a lot of placements. *(laughs)* But, so I asked her the other day, what was your favorite foster home? And I was kind of surprised by her answer, in a way. It was, um, a home with, I think the dad died, and the mom didn't feel up to keeping her. That happens occasionally.

**GW:** Yeah, or a divorce sometimes now, too.

**A:** Yep. Or some people just aren't who you thought they were. I had some major disappointments sometimes.

**GW:** Well, thank you so much for coming in.

**RG:** Yes, thank you.

**GW:** I really enjoyed talking to you, and I really enjoyed hearing about your work.

**RG:** Mm, hmm.

**A:** It changed over the years, of course.

**GW:** Yeah, I bet.

**A:** Yeah, it did. But as I said, I always kept my variety. 'Cause when I was, she was speaking about finding placements, and I did that about half time at the end of my years in Augusta. But I kept kids. I had several kids that I was fond of. And it was, it was difficult finding placements. I expect it still is. But I don't keep up.

**GW:** Probably even harder. Yep.

**A:** You know, uh, somebody said that Martha Proulx suggested my name? Do you know Martha?

**GW:** Yes. Yeah, Martha was one of my students.

**A:** She was?

**GW:** Yeah, she finished her MSW, uh, when did Martha graduate? Uh, oh, four years ago, maybe? She came back to finish her MSW in our weekend program.

**A:** Now where do you work?

**GW:** At the University of Maine. Up in Orono.

**A:** In Orono?

**GW:** Yep.

**A:** My brother graduated there. Yep. Many long years ago.

**GW:** Yeah, but I think she, so she's the, she's the program, I think she's the head boss for the Augusta office now. Yep.

**A:** I think she is. Yeah, she came in while I was in Augusta. Just a young sprout. But I always liked Martha.

**GW:** Yeah, yeah.

**A:** She works real hard. But I always liked Martha. In fact, Martha and another former worker and I got together for lunch a year or so, and the other worker said, 'We should do this every month.' I'm thinking, 'Oh my God, what planet are you on?' but — *(laughs)*

**GW:** The other person who was my student, who I think worked for the Department for a long time was Ellen Beerits.

**A:** Who?

**GW:** Ellen Beerits?

**A:** Oh, Ellen. Of course I knew Ellen.

**GW:** Yeah, she was one of our first students, um, many years ago. Her, her youngest, I think, was just a toddler when she, when she first came. But she stayed with the Department for a long time, too.

**A:** Oh, yeah. Yep. Just a year or so ago she retired.

**GW:** Yeah, that's what I heard.

**A:** When she and Chris got together, that was nice.

**GW:** Yes! He's retired, is he? Has he retired? I can't remember if —

**A:** I think he might be.

**GW:** I think he retired, too.

**A:** Like I said, I kind of lost track. But I always love seeing someone from — *(laughs)*

**GW:** Well, thank you so much.

**RG:** Yes, thank you.

**A:** You're welcome.

**[END OF RECORDING]**