

75 Cents Per Hour - Pearl Kennedy-Colombe - OSEU #2

In 1952, they let the liquor law loose. They turned the Indians loose to go ahead and drink. And my life started going downhill. My parents started drinking. And so in 1959, they died in a car accident...both of them...together. My mother died on her 50th birthday, and my dad died the next day. But he prepared me. We used to go fishing...and he'd talk to me...and he told me "These older kids...they don't think...they don't worry about you guys. If anything happens to me, you look out for the younger ones."

So when they died in 1959, I...since I was fourteen years old...I was working in Chamberlain at the Derby Cafe every summer...and there was a lady in Chamberlain, Mrs. Leiferman...would give us rooms to rent for five dollars a week. Minimum wage was like 75 cents.

So I paid my rent every week and I stayed all summer long. Me and my sisters and my cousins...she took in all the Indians, you know. She was really good to us. She treated us like we were her grandchildren. She would always talk to us. And I went there until I graduated from high school. And then a year after high school, I stayed at her place. After my folks died and I graduated from high school, my aunt had my brothers and my younger sister.

I worked until I was twenty-five. I got me a little house and moved in my brothers and sisters. So we were a family again. I took care of them, but it wasn't a job, ya know. It wasn't a job. They were my family. That's how we got along. I finished raising them...sent them to school and everything. Howard graduated from high school...and I just continued all my life looking out for them...welcome them in the home.

When I got married, my husband...one of my girls got jealous of my brothers..."How come they come here?" And they said, "She's the only mother they know." So, they didn't ask any questions. They were always welcome...and my sister Tina.