

Edmund J. Danziger, Jr.
Bowling Green State University

Dear E. J. Danziger, Jr.

I just received a copy of "In Care of Strangers" from a cousin on Walpole Island. For personal reasons I cancelled my subscription of the Walpole Island Newsletter "Jibkenjan" a few years ago. I was not aware of your project on residential schools. Otherwise I would have written sooner. I hope what I have written will be of interest to you. I did send a copy to a cousin on Walpole Island asking her to try and get it put in the Newsletter. I have not heard any news, so I guess it didn't happen. Maybe through you it can happen.

Page 9. Some of the reasons for being sent to Shingwauk, wanting to be with friends or we weren't bad enough. I don't believe it was sent there for being bad, I believe it was for economic reasons. We also stole bread off the bread truck anytime we could, when we did get caught, they never promised us more food, the only promise we got was a whipping. They weren't light taps. That didn't stop us from stealing. I believe more food came after 1950, I left in 1944. My brother went to Shingwauk after I left. He always talked about getting plenty to eat, going to school all day and no more farming. Also being allowed to go home and pay for it themselves. That was unheard of in my day. The only time anyone went home was if a relative came and got you. I'm the one J.R. Miller writes about in his book. I saved my money and bought a train ticket to Sudbury, only to be picked up by the police when I got there.

I spent 11 years at Shingwauk. I never went back to Walpole Island to live. I went to live with an aunt in Detroit, Michigan. The reason I spent 11 years there (1933-1944): the first year there I didn't speak English, I failed two grades (5th and 8th) and had to take them over. 5th through the 8th grade we only went to school half-day, the other half-day we did the farm work which is hard work for a young boy. School was always hard for me. I was a dummy in school, I used to mix letters up. My second son also mixes his letters. They put a name to it "Dyslexia." I'm glad to know I wasn't such a dummy after all. I was just a little mixed up. I didn't want to continue my education. I just wanted to get the hell out of there. In my time, you were punished if you spoke your Indian language after you learned English. I only remember about ten words.

Page 20. "Quote" The longer people remained at Shingwauk, the more likely they were to feel positive about the school. Not me, the longer I stayed there the more unpositive I got. From reading your report, I get the feeling the positive reports come from people who were there after 1950 when things were changing for the better. I am now 70 years old, I have no trouble calling my daughters "daughter" to their face. I still cannot look my sons in the eye and call them "son" to their face. I have to call them by their names. I blame that on how I was treated at Shingwauk. I will have no one tell me otherwise. I did strap my children hard on their hands. But, I didn't beat them all over like I was.

I attended a healing workshop at the Garden River Reserve near Soo, Canada in April of 1993. The Anglican Church representative was John Bird. The workshop didn't really help alot. I was never much of a churchgoer. It did make me realize after all these years how bad those church people treated me. As the result of this I quit going to church. My wife understands my feelings about my church problems. She does wish it was different.

Page 21. I don't quite agree 100% with the statement from the older female person, "Life is what you make it wherever you are." I really believe that only applies to your life away from Shingwauk or any other institution where you have no control over your life, especially when you are young. I do agree when you are on your own, whatever problems or adversity you get your life into, you should be accountable for your own actions. This is where I feel life is what you make of it. Before I was sent to Shingwauk, we slept on straw. I have never felt that was so terribly bad. I also promised myself I would never send any of my children to any Indian boarding school as they were, hell has to freeze over before I would. The one woman's comment that she can't believe those terrible stories being told, I only hope what I have written gets back to Walpole Island so that this woman and the other people can read my views. As I told Bernice Logan in my writings, I will not put any one down for there positive views, unless they absolutely refuse to listen to our views. It's really great that at least some of the people were treated well. Instead of saying "I don't believe," in my honest opinion if they would say "I don't know" then these people who walk away would listen to them.

These were my dreams when I was at Shingwauk. I used to "DREAM" big. I used to sit by myself near the main road waiting for American cars to go by because I knew they were traveling around the country. My dreams were always the same, I wanted to travel, too. I never told anyone my dreams, I kept them to myself. I have realized a lot of my dreams, it still excites me knowing I'm going somewhere. Sometimes I plan things ahead but for the most part it's spontaneous. I tell my wife, "Let's go." She's always telling me can't you give me a hint so I can get ready. Here's some of the places my dreams have taken me and my wife: we've been back and forth across the USA and Canada about six times; down to "Rio," Peru twice, the first time we took in Lima, Cuzco, Machu Pichu, the second time the Amazon Jungle and the river, it was awesome; Mexico City; Acapulco; and Hong Kong. I am planning another cross country trip around June 1998, including a visit to Shingwauk. This will make about my 20th trip there since I left. My writings have been registered. I am giving you permission if you wish to enter my writings as a second and separate entity to your "In Care of Strangers" if it is not too late to be included. I really believe it would make a stronger case against the Canadian policy-makers in the future. It makes me mad about the Canadian government's attitude and policy about the church's handling of the Indian schools. I really believe they only gave the churches a slap on the hand for what the church people did at the Indian schools. To me the government acted like this was not their responsibility. By their statement "let's forget the past and go on with the future," like maybe it will go away. Too bad the government wasn't filled with the likes of Georges Erasmus, you can read about him in John Birds' article which I will include along with some other responses I received. J.R. Miller and I have quite a dialogue going on Bernice Logan, she just doesn't want to give up on her attitude on her missionaries. She sent me a 29 page reply on what I had written to her. If there is ever a lawsuit, my writings will be my defense. I enjoyed reading your "In Care of Strangers." With no malice on my part, I felt I had to comment on some of the comments, they sounded too much like Bernice to me.

Page 19. Personal Assessments. These are my feelings. I "hated" Shingwauk ever since I left there in 1944. Yet I keep going back. I started a fundraiser at our 1981 Shingwauk Reunion. To build a memorial just for the Indian students who had passed away while at Shingwauk. They had no markers like the White Staff members buried there. Prof. Don Jackson turned the money over to the church people to finish the project which they did. Without my knowledge they saw fit to add the word staff. I attended the 1988 dedication of

the memorial in which only a few students were told about the dedication. It was then Prof. Don Jackson told me they had added the word staff on the memorial. I was livid. Not only that, I was mad, too. I believe I hated Shingwauk more at that moment than any time in my life. I told the Professor I was going to disrupt the service - that is how angry I was. He calmly told me "Don, cool down," it wasn't the school that did this to you, it was the people running the school who did. I told the Professor you are right. It was at that moment 44 years after I left I finally made my peace with Shingwauk. I was then angry at the church people. If you wish Ed, keep a copy of what I have sent you. I would also like what I have written to you to be included with my letter "*As Your God Is My Witness*." There is pertinent information here that I don't have in my letter, which would enhance what I have written: I do not pretend to speak for anyone but myself. But I do hope what I have written will indeed help others.

I hope you will keep me posted on any progress of your report and mine. I would appreciate a response on what I have written. Until I hear from you,

Meegwetch

Don Sands