

# Teaching School in L'Anse au Diable (Part 1)

**Collector:** Ann O'Brien

**Contributor:** Margaret Buckle

**Ann O'Brien:**

Today is ah... August ...September 3<sup>rd</sup>, I'm at the home of Margaret Buckle and my name is Ann O'Brien, and it's 2009 and Margaret is going to share a story with me, ah when she was teaching school in L'Anse au Diable. Alright Margaret...

**Margaret Buckle:**

Yes, ah... Ann in the summer or ah... I'd say in mid August, 1958. Father Deloria called and wanted me to ah... go to Blanc Sablon to teach school. So I was working in West St. Modeste at the time with my sister-in-law, babysitting, housekeeping and whatever, so ah... I went to ah.. church one evening and I was talking to our parish priest there, Father Tessard. I mentioned to him that Father Deloria called me to go to Blanc Sablon teaching.

He said "No, no need of you going to Blanc Sablon teaching" he said. He said, "we got schools that we don't have teachers for come September, so," he said, "I'd like for you to teach for us." That was a decision, I had to make between going to Blanc Sablon and teaching home. So anyway, the next day after that he called me back and talked to me about it and he said "he had a school in L'Anse au Diable that they didn't have a teacher for" and he wanted to know would I go there.

So anyway, I decided I would go to L'Anse au Diable instead of going to Blanc Sablon. So I went to L'Anse au Diable to teach school. A little, one room school, thirteen children to attend school and ah... the school at that time, you know, didn't have electricity or anything, it was all wood heated. No special person to ah... to light the fire in the morning. Every week there was somebody ... somebody different to ah... take on the responsibility of ah... lighting the fire for school but when you went there in the morning at 9:30 the fire was already lite and the place heated up, except for in the winter time.

Ah... that winter I stayed with Ruby and Pat Cabot and I ah... I use to pay \$20.00 a month for board and lodging and I was getting \$91.42. That was the amount of money that I got.

But I enjoyed the part of teaching, I really...really enjoyed teaching because it wasn't only teaching somebody else. At the time you were teaching them, you were also learning things yourself. Just working out problems....I was out of school then for two or three years and ah... it was kind of a refresher for me. I put a lot of time into it, I must

say, because when school was out at four o'clock for me it wasn't out. Because there was problems, probably that some of the students didn't get worked out when it was time for ah... arithmetic in the morning, so after school then, I'd keep them back and try to work out some of the problems for them.

And I wasn't very popular with some of the students because when school was out they wanted to get home too but anyway, I'd work out the problems with them and made sure that they knew how to solve it all and then I felt like ...that day, I accomplished something that day. For homework and even on Fridays, we use to have a special afternoon every Friday for Junior Red Cross. Now it was a time for the students ... they didn't have to do any special work, they .... it was kind of a play thing and activity that they all enjoyed.

I think they all... I think it was a time that everybody looked forward to, to be kind of free.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So when ah... you start school in the morning now, ah... because religion played a big part in school in those years.

**Margaret Buckle:**

Yeah.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Did you have to start with a prayer?

**Margaret Buckle:**

Yes. First thing. First thing we started with, was a morning prayer and then after the morning prayer, the first subject was religion. So we had a half an hour of religion. You know, everybody had the catechism ..use to have catechisms then. Every night they were assigned a number of questions to ..to study and answers to the questions and in the mornings then, you know, you'd go over those... those questions and discuss things and sometimes you'd read. We use to have bible history and you know you'd read things from the bible history or somebody would tell ah...tell a story they knew of or whatever but, those questions had to be learned and had to be discussed every morning. And of course then at the end of the week, they were given a test to see how much they knew on the chapters they covered throughout the week.

But religion was ... was the main thing in the morning, after the prayers and then after the religion we'd ah... you'd have arithmetic and then came English. You'd have English between recess time and dinner time. And then after dinner you'd have history, geography, and science. You'd cover them three in the afternoon, that's for the higher grades. I taught from kindergarten to grade nine that year. Only thirteen students but ah.. it was still a lot of work because you only... some grades you'd only had one student and some more grades you'd have two students. You know, so ah... it was still a lot of work.

You had to spend just as much time with one student as you would if you had ten. So it was worth it.

But I enjoyed it, a whole lot. I think the (laughs)... I think they got something out of it, too.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Yeah.

**Margaret Buckle:**

Yeah.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Now did.... was the students ah... from L'Anse au Diable or some from Capstan Island to?

**Margaret Buckle:**

No all from L'Anse au Diable. Yeah the whole lot of them. Some of the students I taught.. I can give you.... I can give you the names I think of everyone of them.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Okay.

**Margaret Buckle:**

Okay. We had Jim Marshall, Agnes Cabot, Genevieve Cabot, Francis Glenn, Bill Hammond, ah... Hilda Glynn, Irene Cabot, Fred Marshall, Ethel Cabot, Johnny Cabot, Leonard Glynn, Pat Glynn and some days I use to have Emile Cabot. He was only a little fellow, he wasn't in kindergarten but he use to .... use to come to school with me sometimes, 'cause I use to stay to their place. I think that's all the students, that I had.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So Margaret, who provided the books and pencils and things for the students?

**Margaret Buckle:**

Oh, well. The Department of Education use to send books. They use to make a order for the books for the different grades every year. So the Department of Education use to send in the books but the parents had to pay for them. And ah... they use to buy... the parents use to buy their own exercises, scribbler books, or ah... pencils, pens or whatever.

But now it wasn't like it is today. Because if you had an exercise book, you were fortunate, you didn't have one for every subject. You had one book and that book served for all the subjects and ah... a lot of the children had scribbler books instead of exercise books, because the scribblers were a lot cheaper, then the exercise books were.

Pencils and pens, were provided by the parents.

**Ann O'Brien:**

What kind of school bags, now, did the children... students have?

**Margaret Buckle:**

Most of the school bags were made out of blue denim. Ah... I don't know of anybody who had a bought school bag at that time. I think everybody had their own school bag, made out of blue denim or perhaps somebody might have some made out of piece of cotton or something like that and a lot of them came to school with no school bags. Just their books under their arms, but what ah... never had the school bags they had a bit of blue denim or a bit of cotton.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So it's a big difference in ah...in the school of 1958 and '59 ah... and the school today. One thing there's no religion in the schools today, that's a non-denominational school.

**Margaret Buckle:**

So that's a sad thing....that's a sad thing, I think. I think, I'm on... I think it played a big part in the kind of education the children are getting. Because I believe if children are learning of their faith and learning about God that they have ah... they have more of a secure feeling, a more, I think, there's a connection there something...somewhere that they feel that there's ah .... there's something important that their working towards.

I think that when their studying that they feel that there's somebody there ... somebody helping them in their time of need, and ah.... now nobody got any value. They don't have a value for education and I.... and I think the religious education part, whatever religion people came from, added to peoples value because there was more respect. Respect for the teachers, there was respect for the students and with God out of the picture, I think that was the big down fall in our education system.

Now, I know students go to school, they don't have any respect for their teachers. They don't have any respect for their fellow students and respect for nobody. So ah... I think the education with the religion involved helped to keep things together. Where there's respect, there's prosperity and if there's no respect, it affects everything.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Now ah... you ah.. for math, ah... like ah...the children had to learn their tables, there was no calculators or anything of that kind.

**Margaret Buckle:**

Well that was a part of their homework. Ah.... every night or every week you'd take ah... some time tables, if it 'twas the once, twice or third, whatever, you'd give 'em the tables to learn until they accomplish that. And that would be a test to, on Friday you'd test and see if they knew their tables. So if they knew that tables they could go on to the next one and some were pretty good at it, some would catch on pretty fast and some weeks they'd accomplish a couple of times tables – the third or the fourth or whatever -

and when they got up to .... to the tenths, you know, they were, and the twelfth, they really felt like they made a big accomplishment. They were on their way because I tell ya, the tables really made a big difference to being able to deal with the mathematical questions that they had to deal with.

(Background conversation)

**Ann O'Brien:**

Okay Margaret....

(Background conversation)

Thank you Margaret for sharing that story with me.