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Victoria: 27th day of April 1984, I'm interviewing Josephine
Tarr at Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Josephine, could you tell me
where you were born?

Josephine: I was born in Katepwa, the closest municipality was Indian Head. I was born at home in a log house.

Victoria: Did you have running water or electricity, or anything like that?

Josephine: There was no such thing that time. Oh yeah, the only running water we had was the river and we used to haul our water from the river.

Victoria: How many rooms did your house have?

Josephine: Two, one big flat room upstairs where we all slept, and one big flat room downstairs which was a log house where Mom and Dad, they used to sleep downstairs. Our kitchen was... and their bedroom and our frontroom was all in the same room.

Victoria: What did you use to heat your home with?

Josephine: Wood, just wood, green wood and dry wood. We used to haul it from the bush.

Victoria: What was your furniture? What did you have for furniture?

Josephine: I remember our furniture was benches that my dad made.

Victoria: How about tables?

Josephine: Our tables was home made tables that my dad had built apparently years... I don't remember how soon...

Victoria: So, but it was mostly home made furniture?

Josephine: It was home made furniture, yeah. And our bed was a big mattress filled with grass, that was our mattress.

Victoria: Did you live in a settlement or was it a farm, or a homestead, or something?

Josephine: It was just ordinary little settlements for the Metis.

Victoria: And where was that at?

Josephine: At 12 miles east of Lebret.

Victoria: But you had a name for your settlement. What was it called?

Josephine: It was Katepwa.

Victoria: And were your neighbors close by?

Josephine: Oh we had quite a few neighbors that there was about 12 or 13 homes there. We had a lot of neighbors.

Victoria: Did you rent your house, or did you own your own place?

Josephine: My dad built it, like. It was our own. That time that the people used to build their houses along the, what you call them, along the Hudson Bay line so that was their land.

Victoria: Was it sort of like what they call river lots?

Josephine: Yes.

Victoria: I had run into that, you know, on different occasions.

Josephine: Like the people just lived along the river, some across the river, some that's on the south side of the river, some of the north side of the river, and we lived on the south side of the river.

Victoria: So the houses would have been fairly close together at that time?

Josephine: Quite close, maybe half a mile or quarter of a mile.

Victoria: So you had a fair good-sized backyard then to play in?

Josephine: Oh yes, we had all kinds of backyard to play in, when we had a chance to play.

Victoria: Did you ever hear of what they call road allowance people?

Josephine: Yes. Yeah, there was quite a few that lived along the road allowance.

Victoria: So you were aware of what that was, eh? Josephine:
Yeah. I went and visit the homeland two years ago.
That's all wired now for community pastures. There's no more homes there except an Amyotte home.

Victoria: Oh would that be related to one of the Amyottes, or Joe Amyotte? Did you...

Josephine: Joe Amyotte's father's home.

Victoria: What type of chores did you have to do when you were growing up? Like, you know, usually everybody had their own jobs to do and what did you have to do, and your brothers and sisters?

Josephine: Well I was one of the four oldest young girls, four oldest girls I was the oldest one of the family of 22. And I was the chore man. I used to go, I used to take my little brother, Albert -- he was much younger than I am -- and we used to go and cut wood at the Hudson Bay land, and then when we had enough we'd haul it home, and then sell it for \$2 a load in

order to get a bag of flour or something like that. That time flour was something like \$2.95 or something like that.

Victoria: Did you have any livestock at all?

Josephine: We had four horses and I think we had three cows or something like that. We were the only ones, besides my grandparents, we were the only ones that had any milk, or butter or something like that. My mom used to put the cream in a jar and shake it together to make butter.

Victoria: Did you... You said you were the only ones that had cows, did you at any time sell milk or...?

Josephine: No, we give it away. We give it to the neighbors because they were much poorer, we were poor but they were much poorer than we were.

Victoria: What did you brothers and sisters have to do? What was their responsibilities?

Josephine: Well they were much younger than me so they just sort of play around and stuff like that until they were old enough and they had their chores too like fixing fence for the cattle. We only milked one cow at a time and then haul wood, or haul water from the river. Mom had to wash every day and she washed on a scrub board, so there was always something to do.

Victoria: Did your family ever do special things together like camping, or hunting, berry picking?

Josephine: Berry picking mostly, but yeah, like trapping for rats and stuff like that, we used to do that, like us kids, and my dad taught us how to do it so we done it while he was working.

Victoria: What about storytelling, did you... was there anybody that you knew of that used to do any storytelling?

Josephine: Oh yes, there was lots. It was quite common that time.

Victoria: Do you remember what any of the stories were?

Josephine: Not really, no. It never stuck into me.

Victoria: Did your relatives live close around you, like aunts, or uncles, or cousins, grandparents?

Josephine: Yes, mostly all relatives that lived close by. Like the Amyottes, like their grandmother was a Klyne so that they were related through my grandmother. And the Racettes, well, my mother was a Racette so we were related to them, and Desjarlais, Mrs. Desjarlais was a first cousin to my mom, so most of them were relatives. And the Klynes, well, my grandmother was a Klyne so we were related to them too. The Grandpa Klein, him and my grandmother were brother and sister.

Victoria: So you're all closely related in your settlement then eh?

Josephine: Closely related yeah.

Victoria: How do you remember your mother and your father?

Josephine: I remember my father as a hard-working man. He worked for very little money. I remember him working with two teams of horses brushing the road, you know, for, which are highways now. But I remember him as making \$1.75 a day and his man was John Desjarlais' father, which, it was Del Desjarlais. And we seen him very little in the summertime, and in the wintertime he used to go on the railroads, so again we seen him very little. And my mother, well, she was always kept busy with either pregnancy or with a new baby. (laughs) So she was busy on that.

Victoria: But there would be, you would see them as hard-working people eh?

Josephine: They were very hard-working people, yeah. Victoria:
Is there any special person that you remember while growing up, you know, whether it was a neighbor or just a family member, somebody that you thought a lot of or looked up to?

Josephine: My grandfather. My grandfather, he was the one that led me into good work, because I was getting sick and tired of working as the best man at home. And, like, when we didn't have too much to do we had... we went and snared gophers and we got the meat as meat, and we sold the tails one cent apiece, or the crow's feet for 5 cents a pair. There was always a little bit of money-making somewhere and we always pass it on to Mom. And when she went with the horse and buggy to town, well, she brought us something, or we'd get 5 cents worth of peanuts -- that time it was a lot of peanuts. (laughs) But my grandfather was the one that took me to Fort Qu'Appelle and he said, "If you promise me something," he said, "if you're going to stick," he said, "I'll give you a chance." So he took me with the horse and buggy to Fort Qu'Appelle and they interviewed me there -- and the war was on then -- and I started to work there as a candy striper. I was only 14 but I was accepted so... on trial, and I stayed there 7 years. Then I went to Regina and then from there on I went to Russell but that's the only experience I had really to start with.

Victoria: So actually he was the one that first started you off on your working skills eh?

Josephine: Yeah. I never could thank him enough for that.

Victoria: So it's with respect and that that you do view your parents, eh?

Josephine: Yeah.

Victoria: And your grandfather. Were your family a very loyal family? Did they really stick up for one another and stick together?

Josephine: Oh yes. Yeah, very well together until we lost father two years ago. Since then we kind of spread. It seems like home is not home anymore, like, as far as I'm concerned I got nothing to go home for.

Victoria: Is your mother still alive?

Josephine: No, I lost my mother in '74, while I was at Kelsey.

Victoria: Well, they lived to a good ripe old age then, eh?

Josephine: The only golden anniversary I've seen was theirs, and there was 18 of us at their golden anniversary.

Victoria: Good heavens, that's a good lot.

Josephine: The friends and the family was so huge we couldn't make it in the hall so we had to have it in the skating rink in Abernethy.

Victoria: For heavens sake. What did your father do for a living?

Josephine: When I first remember, he was working on the railroad. I don't remember for how much a day or something like that, or an hour, but I remember him working for ten hours a day. Not this eight-hours-a-day business, it was for ten hours a day. And then next I remember, but this I remember well, when he working on, as a bush cutter on the highway department.

Victoria: Would his job then on the railroad, would that have been seasonal?

Josephine: Yes.

Victoria: That was summertime employment?

Josephine: No that was his winter time employment.

Victoria: Winter time.

Josephine: Yeah. Summer he went on the road doing brush work, and in the wintertime he went on the railroad for the C.P.

Victoria: Was there other jobs that he did to supplement the income?

Josephine: In between if he didn't have, you know, he never run out of work. If he was out of a job he worked for the farmer on top of the hill.

Victoria: So he done farm work besides that, eh?

Josephine: For Mr. Jack Banks. I remember the farmer very well too.

Victoria: Did you have a very big garden?

Josephine: Yes. Yes, that was our living.

Victoria: What all type of things did you grow? Josephine:
Potatoes, tomatoes, and corn. I remember my mom
used to can a lot of corn. She was a good gardener and she
was... oh, she can't name the things she canned. Even rabbit
she used to can.

Victoria: Most of it was... then you had to preserve it
through canning?

Josephine: Through canning, yeah.

Victoria: How about drying meat?

Josephine: She used to dry meat too. She showed us how to do
it but I don't remember really how because it was too long ago.
But I remember that she used to have poles and other poles
cross ways, and then they used to smoke it and dried it and
stuff like that.

Victoria: Did your dad do hunting, like for wild game and
that, and fishing for family use?

Josephine: We used to do the spring fishing ourselves and, you
know, we'd catch carp and stuff like that and my mom would
slice it and smoke it, and stuff like that. And she'd can a
lot; I have her recipe yet. And but my dad never used to do
any fishing except, but he used to do, like, coyote hunting,
and deer hunting, and muskrats, and beavers, and minks, and
weasels.

Victoria: Did you ever watch him when he, you know, did the
pelts for the fur?

Josephine: Oh yes, I used to watch his traps after when he was
gone to work. He showed us how to... that he set them, and I
used to go and... I'll never forget this one time I went and
checked, on horseback, his wolf snares and here a deer got
caught. (laughs) So I took the deer off and put it on the
horse and took it home and my mom skinned it.

Victoria: Did you have to help skinning the animals?

Josephine: A lot of times, yes. My mom was the skinner.

Victoria: Oh yeah, I've seen that a lot too, you know. The
women was the skinner.

Josephine: My mom was the skinner.

Victoria: I know that they used to do the beavers and the

muskrats and that. Josephine: And my dad loved to hunt but he didn't do it too much, very little of skinning he used to do. My mom done most of the skinning.

Victoria: Did you have any chickens, or pigs, or that type of thing?

Josephine: Yes, we even had turkeys. My mom used to get them to sit on eggs and stuff like that. At the start, I remember, just a few chickens but later on, after that, we used to have... my dad would get a couple little piggies and then we'd raise them ourselves and then he'd kill them in the fall. But... and then he had this big 45 gallon barrel and then he'd cure the pork in there himself, so that was our way of preserving those days.

Victoria: Can you ever remember a time when your father was unemployed?

Josephine: No, never. He always had some type of work.

Victoria: What did other people in the community do? Like, you say you were pretty closely related, what all did they do to make a living?

Josephine: They didn't do very much, most of them were quite lazy. (laughs) I remember, like the Desjarlais, we used to haul porridge to them and we used to take flour to them. Of course, my dad had him, whenever he had like an extra job on the side he'd get Mr. Desjarlais to help him. And we used to even take porridge to them and milk and that's about it, bannock. (laughs) And Amyottes, well they didn't do a heck... you know really that much because the kids were small. And Mr. Amyotte, like Rene, he was quite a drunk. His wife was a good worker but... she used to pick berries and stuff like that to try and make a living. I remember even she got her first milk cow from berries. She'd pick berries and sell them and she'd just stash away and finally she got a milk cow, her first milk cow she got from... And she used to make rugs and go and sell them like peddle them. She was pretty good; she tried her best but he was useless. And [the] Poitras, oh, they were very, very poor and he was no good for nothing. One time they were really stuck and then my dad gave them a white horse that we used to have. That horse was slow as molasses going to town anyway, you couldn't get him to run. (laughs) So my dad turn around and give him that horse and then in a later time, I don't know how long after, I don't remember for sure how long after that, he give him a sleigh and another horse to go with it so he could haul his own wood. But the boys were so poor. I don't remember the girls so much. They had one girl older than me, but the boys they were so poor that they were wrapping gunny sacks around them that... They never went to school, they never had no education. They wrapped around with, you know, gunny sack they had no pants at all.

Victoria: Good heavens.

Josephine: And I remember, saw Alfred and George run under the table, they were squatting there, you could see everything from under the table. They didn't even have underpants on. (laughs)

Victoria: What was your first paying job?

Josephine: My first paying job was \$24 a month.

Victoria: And what were you doing.

Josephine: I was a candy striper in Fort Qu'Appelle.

Victoria: That was good wages.

Josephine: Yeah, I had my board and room and, like, I was getting educated downstairs and I was working on the level four and I was getting \$24 a month plus my room and board and getting some schooling.

Victoria: Was it a Catholic...?

Josephine: Yes, it was the Grey Nuns were running it. It was a hospital, eh.

Victoria: What were your duties, what did you have to do?

Josephine: I brought water to the people and see that their rooms were clean.

Victoria: Patients like?

Josephine: Yes. And I got to like it. I got... I really liked that because it was my first job and the first time I was loose, eh, first time I was on my own. I really enjoyed it and so I stuck onto it.

Victoria: So you were quite happy to be doing what you wanted to.

Josephine: Yeah, away from the bush... wood cutting, and hauling snow by the bagfull and...

Victoria: So you had quite a bit of responsibilities when you were growing up. Josephine: Yeah. I wouldn't mind to go through that experience over again, but I think I would be doing it a little differently. (laughs)

Victoria: You said you worked there for 7 years and after that, what was... did you have temporary work or part time?

Josephine: No it was full time. I went to Regina from there. I had to go, like, with my grandparents order, I had to go to Regina to get higher education, but I didn't. I went full-time work at the General Hospital instead. And... but I didn't like Regina that well so I moved to Russell, Manitoba, where I was getting higher wages. Like, in town was \$57 a month and out of

town was higher wages, and I was getting \$73 a month in Russell, Manitoba. I worked there in '46, '47 up to '50.

Victoria: What were you doing there?

Josephine: I was doing nurses' aid jobs for the veterans.

Victoria: What were other Metis people, both men and women, what were they doing? Like, during the time that you were employed there, what did they have for jobs?

Josephine: At the sanitorium you mean?

Victoria: Well not necessarily, like, just Metis people in general. Were they working, or were there a lot of them unemployed, or... ?

Josephine: Well, like you mean at work, where I was working?

Victoria: Well in the community where you were.

Josephine: Oh, in the community. Once I left I lost contact with them because there was horse-and-buggy days. I never went home.

Victoria: What about Russell, Manitoba, though, was there very many native people there...?

Josephine: There was quite a few native people, yeah, and most of them were working for farmers. I used to, you know, I got to know quite a few, went to basket socials, and dances, and stuff like that.

Victoria: What language was spoken in the home when you were growing up?

Josephine: It was all French. There was no nothing, nothing else, there was no Cree at the time. I picked up my Cree from the Blondeaus, first cousins of my mother's, when I was working along with Mrs. Blondeau and I picked up from there. And I got to like it because the French people they didn't, you know, really understand it, and so away from my brothers and sisters, oh, I was smart, I could speak Cree. (laughs)

Victoria: Were you always aware of being Metis?

Josephine: Yes. And I'm proud of it.

Victoria: Did your parents think of themselves as being Metis?

Josephine: Yeah. They were honest.

Victoria: And other people in the community too were they...

Josephine: I couldn't really tell you in that department but as poor as they are, I'm afraid, you know, I think they were aware of it but they never said. Except, like one family -- all they

want to say now is 'pardon' -- like, they think themselves as white people, are the Poitras. Those were the poorest ones in the community. (laughs)

Victoria: Now they're trying to be white.

Josephine: Now they think different.

Victoria: Do you know of anyone, like your parents or your grandparents, uncles or aunts, or anyone in your family or friends, that talked about Metis history?

Josephine: My uncle. He's the only one living in the family, like in the whole Fayant family. Yeah, it's Uncle Frank and he's got heart trouble, but he tells me quite a bit of, he told me quite a bit of the history and the family tree and stuff like that. I start writing a family tree and I couldn't remember, you know, my grandmother's maiden name and..., like on both sides, and Uncle Frank told me.

Victoria: Did he ever tell stories about things that happened, like in Metis history or anything like that?

Josephine: Not very much, no.

Victoria: Did the Metis people in the communities get together for any social events?

Josephine: Yes, mostly dances. And horseshoe. On the summertime on Sundays, like the men would play horseshoe and us kids would play ball, and then the women would make open fire outside, like where we used to fry meat, or fish, or something like that and bannock. That was our way of having a supper out.

Victoria: How about weddings, were they celebrated very big in the old days?

Josephine: It depends, like it depend on the person, like how much money they had, I guess, or something like that. It was... the families were big enough like, and the relatives were all close by. Everybody seemed to have good size of family so if one wedding was there, there was about 40 to 70 people.

Victoria: How about Christmas, how was it celebrated?

Josephine: We never celebrated Christmas. I don't remember every celebrating Christmas until after I got married. It was always New Year's. And five o'clock in the morning you can hear the bells coming, oh, there's a sleighfull of people and everybody was singing. It was all French. (laughs) And the table was set up, like there was wedding cakes, one brown cake, and one white cake was three stories high. I remember my mom's wedding... it was a Christmas cake... oh, a New Year's cake. They were all decorated up. And every house was like that. You go to one house and you have some (?), bannock, everything was all ready, you eat there. And then you go someplace else

and right away you eat, soon as the people come in they eat right away. And it seems like that's the way it went all through the New Year's week and there was a dance every night, either at one place or the next place or the next place, it went on and on up to the 7th of January. That dance was at Grandpa's. So that was the end of the New Year's celebration. But there was a couple of scotch tops on the horses and spread rings, and (laughs)...

Victoria: Did your parents know how to jig?

Josephine: Very well, and I do too.

Victoria: I was just going to ask you if you jigged. Was jigging a big part of the local dances?

Josephine: It was the biggest part, yeah. Between that and the Red River jig and there was another dance that used to be, like the man on the one side and the ladies on the other...

Victoria: Drops of Brandy?

Josephine: Yeah, Drops of Brandy. That was... I danced that when I was about 10 years old with my grandfather. Because my grandmother, she was called to go and deliver a baby. She was a midwife and she was the valley's midwife, so she had to go and deliver a baby so I danced in her place with Grandpa.

Victoria: Were there any fiddle players in your family?

Josephine: Yes my dad was a fiddler, and Rene Amyotte was a fiddler, and there was another Amyotte -- I forget his name -- was a fiddler. There was quite a few fiddlers. All we needed was the violin that time and you got the whole orchestra. (laughs) Square dance callers.

Victoria: Did they ever play and sing Metis songs that you can remember?

Josephine: Ah, there was quite a few times, yeah.

Victoria: French songs too?

Josephine: Oh yeah, there was French.

Victoria: Do you remember any of them at all?

Josephine: I do but not offhand. (laughs)

Victoria: Do you remember what any of them were about, like some of the words in the songs or anything like that?

Josephine: (words to a song -- singing) that was a wedding song.

Victoria: What does it mean?

Josephine: There was a little girl that she wants to get

married, that she's getting married, that's what it is. That's the only one I can remember. Probably after I get home I'll remember lots. (laughs)

Victoria: Did your father ever wear a Metis sash or traditional Metis clothing?

Josephine: No.

Victoria: No. How about your mom, what was her dress like?

Josephine: My mom's dresses were always long dresses, her apron was just as long as her dress, like, and until the later years. But I've never seen my mother in a slacks, it was always in a dress.

Victoria: Were they bright colored dresses or darker?

Josephine: No, in the darker color like navy blue or, like whatever she made because she done all her sewing by hand, whatever she made it was either navy blue or dark green, or purple. She sewed all her clothes, it was always by hand. She sewed all our clothes, was Robin Hood this, and Robin Hood that. Our slips were from flour bags, the boys' shirts were from flour bags, our sheets were from flour bags.

Victoria: Did you have those ones, the flour bag that had the flowers on them at that time?

Josephine: Yeah, it was...

Victoria: Printed material we used to get.

Josephine: No, we used to get Robin Hood this or Robin Hood that, or if my dad took some grain to Esterhazy and changed it for flour and those were like a green deal on the side, I forget now, Esterhazy Flour Mill or something like that was on it. So my mom had to boil them in lye or something like that to take the colors, because there's no such a thing as bleach that time.

Victoria: We did too, we had that. But one year they came out with a printed flour bag and we got to have a colored dress for jiggling. (laughs)

Josephine: I must have been working by that time. I don't remember. (laughs)

Victoria: Did your mom do any beadwork?

Josephine: No.

Victoria: How about tanning hides?

Josephine: The hides she done, but the beadwork she never done because she never had time. Between the family and between looking after... between childbirth and being (inaudible) she done enough. (laughs)

Victoria: Yeah, I guess.

Josephine: And she done an awful lot of sewing, but it was all by hand.

Victoria: Did you ever watch her tan hides?

done Josephine: I did, but I couldn't tell you for sure how she
it because it was too long ago.

Victoria: Did any of the relations in your settlement there, did they ever marry into white families?

Josephine: Not until the later years.

Victoria: So they more or less was all Metis then where you lived, eh?

Josephine: Yeah.

Victoria: Do you know of anyone of the elders in your family, or in the community that practised Indian medicine?

Josephine: My grandmother, my mother's mother, she practised medicine. And she was the only doctor in the community. She... we had the whooping cough this one time and she give us coal oil with, what was it, coal oil and something else. That was our whooping cough medicine.

Victoria: Sugar?

Josephine: Yeah, coal oil and sugar.

Victoria: We had that quite a few times myself.

Josephine: And then we had a high fever this one time. There was another flu that went through and we had... it was something like a rheumatic fever. I had it. And she put us under the robe, you know, from the tanning hide, she put us underneath there and she had some skunk oil and she steamed us underneath that robe with the skunk oil. I'm telling you our eyes were watering, our nose were running. (laughs) But she cured us, and then she always... I used to go with her quite a few times, dig roots for this and dig roots for that. Like, she was really good for heart patients and she was really good, like for stopping, if anybody hemorrhages, like for stopping blood, if she got there on time because most of the time she had to walk to her patients.

Victoria: Was there anybody that, you know, like in the old days there was quite a few of them that used to have T.B. Do you know if she had treated anybody with T.B.?

Josephine: I don't remember, I don't remember if she ever treated anybody, but there was quite a few that, like in the community, that had T.B. but I don't remember if she ever...

Victoria: Did they stay home or did they... what did they do when they had it?

Josephine: Well, some of them stayed home as long as they can and then some of them went to Fort Qu'Appelle.

Victoria: There's a San. there eh?

Josephine: Yeah, at the sanitorium.

Victoria: Did you ever try using medicine, Indian medicine, yourself after you grew up?

Josephine: Yes, yes I did. I was supposed to have open-heart surgery about three years ago and I was flown from here to Rochester for my open-heart surgery, and I took an attack -- I don't know, 'twas this side of Regina, by Regina somewhere -- and then a plane landed in Regina and I spent 7 weeks in Regina General, 14 days in intensive care and when I came out I went to Indian medicine and I'm all right today. It wasn't worth... I don't know, my grandmother uses (?) strongly and she cured so many people I believe in it and I got cured that way. There don't seem to be a thing wrong with me today.

Victoria: Have you ever heard of a sweat lodge?

Josephine: No, I don't remember.

Victoria: Never used one or never seen one, eh?

Josephine: Never.

Victoria: When you were young did the kids ever call you names, you know, or even as you were growing up, about being Metis?

Josephine: Yes, lots. Just the other day I got called a name. (laughs) But anyway, I just shut the guys off. There was two... quite big men. And I was playing bingo at the Lucky Horseshoe and I won the first game by myself, it was worth \$15; second game it was half with another one, that was \$12.50 -- like, on the \$25 game we got \$12.50 apiece -- and one of them guys said, "Look at that lady with the red hat, she won... dark lady with the red hat, she won twice already and she'll probably land up at the bar after that because it's next to the (?) Albany," he says. "She'll probably end up in the bar after that because that's where all the Indians go." And I said, "If you want to talk about me," I said, "come here and talk about me." I said, "I can hear, overhear you from here." And I said, "I'm proud of who I am, and," I said, "as big as you are, the bigger they are the harder they fall." And he shut up. (laughs)

Because I very seldom go to the bar. I lived without my husband for 17 years and whatever I made it had to go to my children, my husband never supported us. So he shacked up with another woman; he ran away from us. So I never bothered him and I just showed that I can make a living of my own. So I didn't have time to go to the bar, because being a lone family... like, a lone supporter I wanted to give my children

my respect.

Victoria: When you were growing up did you get along with non-native people? You know, like in your community or where you worked and that type of thing.

Josephine: Yes, quite well, yeah. You know, the ones that want to get along they get along, the ones that didn't want to get along they just got along with their own. As... I don't know, it never was too hard for me to find a friend. (laughs)

Victoria: Were you ever denied a job because you were Metis?

Josephine: No.

Victoria: Did you ever hear or know of a case where, like, a Metis person and a white person were both working at the same job and the Metis person got paid less?

Josephine: Yes, quite often. There was a lot of cases like that and there was one case in Russell that the girl got paid \$17 less than the other girl and they were both doing the same job.

Victoria: They didn't give a reason to her?

Josephine: And then... well, she was quite shy, she couldn't speak for herself, and then she asked me to go with her and speak for her. And anyway, then there was one meeting after the other after that, and then the white girl got fired, and then the girl stayed. But there was a big rumpus over that because I had to speak for the other girl. But I still stayed on my job. (laughs)

Victoria: Do you ever feel uncomfortable when you go into stores, you know like, or even into... Well, now that you're living in Saskatoon it's not so bad, but even when you were young, did you feel uncomfortable when you went into a city or into stores, you know. where you figured they might discriminate against you.

Josephine: No, I was always a daredevil. I was always proud of myself. You know, I am the kind of person that likes to show

the next person that I'm there just as well as they are. Even if I was dressed in a man's coverall and, you know, ragged shirt and my dad's cap I was right there, you know, showing off that I'm there too, you know. My money is just as good as yours. (laughs) But I was always a daredevil, maybe I shouldn't have been (inaudible). That's the kind of person I am. (laughs)

Victoria: In your family were they ever treated unfairly by town people?

Josephine: Sometimes, yes.

Victoria: Do you remember any instances?

Josephine: Well, I remember this one time that my dad was, you know, he had a rupture that he couldn't work for awhile, I don't know if there was such a thing as unemployment at the time but he didn't even get unemployment so we had to go on relief, eh. So... and then it's funny, because we were living on the southern part of the river and we couldn't, my mom couldn't get the relief from Indian Head so she had to get it from Abernethy. So she went with the horse and buggy and she bought a whole load of, like, relief from the -- I guess that's what you call social aid now, at that time was relief from the... what you call it...

Victoria: From the town, eh?

Josephine: Yeah. Anyways she bought a whole bunch of stuff. She brought a bag of flour and she brought us some, oh, goodies for us, and I don't remember all she brought but she brought a whole buggy full of stuff. But she was denied the first two times she went, she made trips for nothing. And then, anyway the municipality had to have a meeting first before we could get, before she could get the groceries.

Victoria: Was it pretty rough during the time when...

Josephine: It was very rough, because it was the time of the war and it was the time of the poor (inaudible). (laughs) So we had to, well, we didn't have to go without with too much. But my mother she used to be pretty good, you know. She used to pick berries and dry them so we had that for the summer, and there was always a loaf of bread and some either milk or cream, or lard, or gophers. (laughs)

Victoria: Did you eat gophers?

Josephine: Oh yes, we used to eat gophers, I remember eating some nice little fat gophers. (laughs) I remember this one time my grandmother, she... Oh, I smell something really good; I stop at her place. I was already working in Fort Qu'Appelle then. I was a teenager. So I went home and I had to stop and visit my godmother and she had something smelled so nice. And I said, "Godmother, what have you got that smells so nice?" She said, "You're going to stay for supper?" I said, "Yeah." You know, something smelled really good and she had a roast in the oven. So when we had supper, and whatever meat it was, you know, it was good, it was really good, I really enjoyed my supper. And after supper I was playing with the baby -- she had her first child then -- I was playing with the baby and she said, "Josephine, you remember... did you like your supper?" I said, "Yeah." And she said, "How did you like your supper?" I said, "Really good." And she said, "You going to come back and eat with us again?" I said, "Sure." She said, "Do you know what you ate?" I said, "No. No, I guess it was chicken." And she said, "It was skunk." I didn't even know. And then after that I burped it. And then I never could say I never ate skunk

because I did. It was good at the time but when I started burping it, it didn't taste very good. (laughs)

Victoria: Did you go to dances or to social events with people, with white people?

Josephine: Not until my later years when I was working in, not until... I was quite shy when I was working in Fort Qu'Appelle. I never went out anywhere, I just made my monies. I never even went downtown because I didn't know anybody. And then when I was in Regina, then I used to go to the odd shows, but I never went to any dances because I didn't know how the white people danced their dances, because I was used to, you know, the home dances. And then when I was in Russell then I started going out to the hall and go to dances and stuff like that. There was quite a few white people there, but they were quite friendly. The stuck-up ones stayed in their own corners, but the friendly ones I got along with them, so that's the only time... I was, I was 22 years old when I went to the first dance in the hall and we had a nice time. They didn't have all the square dances, they had the odd ones but they didn't have all the square dances that we used to have at home.

Victoria: How about, have you ever heard of any time when the communities or the municipalities tried to force Metis people to move?

Josephine: Well, in the later years, like, when Mom and Dad moved to Abernethy -- I think it was in '52 or '53 -- like, the valley people were told to move because that community was going to be fenced off for a community pasture. So then all the Metis people one after the other moved. It was not in '52. Was it '57 when Mom and Dad moved to Abernethy? But when there

was a few that had already moved, and most of them moved in, you know, little towns.

Victoria: So there was no problems, they just moved, eh? They had to leave their homes?

Josephine: They had to leave their homes, yeah.

Victoria: Did they compensate them in any way?

Josephine: I couldn't remember. I went to see, like, the home place to take pictures after Mom and Dad had moved and I asked them where was the big sideboard. And Mom said it was still in the house, so we went down. I was going to take some pictures of the old homestead but it was already flatten down.

Victoria: Oh, my goodness! Do you think that the church played an important role in your parents' life?

Josephine: Yes.

Victoria: How about in yours?

Josephine: Yeah, I'm quite happy with it.

Victoria: What religion were you?

Josephine: Roman Catholic. I was baptized and made my first communion and confirmation into the same old stone church where Mom and Dad got married.

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Victoria: Did the priest ever visit your home?

Josephine: Yes, quite often he used to come. In the summertime he used to come with a horse and buggy -- this was back in years -- and in the wintertime he used to come with the cutter. And he used to bring Mom some blue and white and red flannelette to, like material, and he used to bring us some winter shoes. He used to bring us some clothes all the time. We used to be glad to see him coming when we were kids. He used to bring us peanuts and candies. And I think he used to do that to, you know, the whole community but I'm speaking for our family.

Victoria: Do you remember the things he talked about?

Josephine: I only remember one specific thing because it stayed in me. This one time my dad was making some... he used to make his own home beer and home-brew; he used to make it by the barrellfull. And he never wasted any time to go to... like he never used to go and sit in the bar, he used to make his own. And this one time he was visiting our home and behind the stove there was some bottles of beer, eh, and all of a sudden one of them popped. And Father said -- Father Jeannotte was, and he was a cousin to my dad -- and so Father Jeannotte said to my dad, "Well, you want that baby baptized?" And Dad said -- like he used to go to homes and baptize the babies, eh -- and Dad said, "Yeah, we might as well do it right away," which was, he is my godson that brother of mine. And so that bottle popped and Dad said, "Damn it!" And the priest was there, but they were speaking French, eh. So the priest said to my Dad, "You don't swear like that." And Dad got kind of mad at Father Jeannotte that time just because it was his relative but the priests were very strict, they were much stricter than the are now, at the time. So after that my dad refused to go to church, he was against church after that. Well, he was not against church but he wouldn't go to church because he was...

Victoria: So he sort of, his committment to the church got quite a bit weaker...

Josephine: On account of his beer. (laughs)

Victoria: Do you think that the church had more influence, you know, over the people than it does today?

Josephine: I think so. But I'll never forget the first time I went to church with my little bib overalls. I went and helped a farmer threshing and he give me \$5. I was helping him threshing. I was a field pitcher for a whole week and he give me \$5, eh, and with my \$5 -- that was before I went to the sanitorium -- with my \$5 I thought, "Oh boy, I'm a big girl now. I can go to church without... I can go to Indian Head, like to town with my uncle." So he had his first car, it was a model T, so I went with him. And I bought myself a straw hat and the bib overalls with the buttons at the back, I got myself a blue one, a pair of socks and a pair of runners and I was short of, I think it was 2 cents to get a pack of gum. They are only 5 cents a pack that time, so uncle give to me, give me the 2 cents. And then that was Saturday so we stop at his place. Sunday I'm going to church with him, eh. I got to the door and I was turned back because I had pants on. Like girls are not allowed to go to church without a hat or with lipstick, or with slacks those days. Even sockies, if you had sockies you couldn't go to church you had to have long stockings.

Victoria: Do you think that the church has helped Metis people with difficulties though?

Josephine: Yes, those days. I wouldn't say now; although, I seen a lot at St. Mary's, like, a lot, even drunks that come and they ask for help and they got a dollar or two. But the priest had learned that the money didn't do them any good so he give them food instead, and they say they want a few bucks for food, they give them the food from the house. So this is why I say they still do, they still play a big part in the... And that's now only the Catholic ministers that are helping. The United Church on Spadina Crescent there, that minister has helped the people a lot. Because I had worked for him, you know, I was doing janitor work at the church there and I seen a lot of what he... Even he said to me this one time, he said, "Tell me if there's anybody else waiting outside. Tell me how many people's there." But mostly men, well, there was a few times there was men and women or a small family that came there and asked for help, give them a voucher, or clothes from the basement or food from downstairs, like give them a food hamper or something like that if they need a little help if they say for the weekend or till payday or something like that. It seems to me he's helped a lot, so I imagine he wouldn't be the only minister.

Victoria: What type of a school did you go to when you were growing up?

Josephine: I went to a country school. We could only go to school in the summertime, we couldn't go in the wintertime

because we had to walk three miles. But we didn't go all the time. When we were busy we just couldn't go, so we just stayed home. And so I only went to grade two and that was all I went till I went to work. So I never had any further education until I went to school here when I came to Saskatoon.

Victoria: And what school was that?

Josephine: I went to Kelsey under an R.I.N.

Victoria: What was the school like? Was it just one big room?

Josephine: Just one big room and one pencil, and one scribbler -- we had all what we need. (laughs)

Victoria: Was your teacher just a teacher or...

Josephine: Just one teacher.

Victoria: Was she a nun?

Josephine: No it was just an ordinary woman at the start and then the next time I went to school it was a young man.

Victoria: Were you allowed to talk Cree at school?

Josephine: No. No, because we had to learn English and that's where we learned our English. Yeah, I remember when I first went to school I couldn't speak a word of English, and then, you know, the kids when there was some white people like Germans, and Ukrainians and stuff like that and they ask me something I asked them back in French. (laughs)

Victoria: What kind of things did they teach you at school?

Josephine: It was just the basic like reading, and writing, and math.

Victoria: Did you like school?

Josephine: Not at the time no. Because I never did really put my mind in school then, because I was always thinking, concentrating of what to do next at home.

Victoria: So were you uncomfortable going to school?

Josephine: Very. I think that's why I didn't go to school, because I didn't learn anything to be honest, I didn't learn anything. I was always... it seems like there was shadows on account of these other people and they were all speaking English. And then I was concentrating, more than at school I was concentrating what I was supposed to do at home like cutting wood, or cleaning barn, or, you know, milking cows or something like that.

Victoria: Did your parents want you to go to school?

Josephine: They never really pushed, no. They more or less

pushed what to do at home, like to work and stuff like that.

Victoria: Did you learn anything about Metis or Indian history in school?

Josephine: No, not at the time.

Victoria: You said there was white students that went with you, did they treat you good?

Josephine: Some of them did, some of them didn't. Because some of them they just called us real dummies because we couldn't speak English at the time, it was just Cree and French.

Victoria: So what do you think your experience was at school do you think it was positive or negative?

Josephine: It was negative to me. (laughs)

Victoria: Did your parents vote, back in the old days?

Josephine: Yes, yes they did.

Victoria: Do you remember what party they voted for?

Josephine: I'm very sure my dad voted CCF. He was a strong CCF.

Victoria: You're about the only one that told me that so far. All the rest of them are Liberals.

Josephine: And then I remember very well when I was working in Fort Qu'Appelle, then I came home and it was time to go voting, so I had to go and vote with Mom and Dad. We went with the horse and buggy. "Make sure and vote CCF!" Well, I didn't read very well then, eh, maybe a word or two something like that. (inaudible) this has got to be Conservative. That's who I voted for away from my Dad. And then when we got home he says to me, "Who did you vote for?" I said, "John Diefenbaker." "God damn you," he says. (laughs) And then the next year then like they start moving the grain, eh, because you were able to sell grain then, before that it was moulding in the granaries and stuff like that, the granaries used to split open. And so I said to my Dad, "See, it's a good thing I voted for John Diefenbaker. He's moving the grain now." (laughs)

Victoria: Do you think that they influenced you to vote the way you did?

Josephine: I'm positive they did but they never said anything.

Victoria: Did politicians ever come to your home and visit?

Josephine: Quite often, yes.

Victoria: Do you remember what they talked about?

Josephine: No I don't, because when somebody came to our home, like -- well, I was 14 when I left home, eh -- and, like, until I was 14 if somebody came to our home where my dad just looked at us and we know what it meant. We had to go upstairs and shut up until the person was gone.

Victoria: I think that must have been the unwritten Metis law.

Josephine: (laughs) Just the look, just one look and we knew what it meant.

Victoria: Do you think the church was involved in politics?

Josephine: I would say no, not really, maybe some of my own beliefs, but I don't remember.

Victoria: What did most of the Metis people back, like in your parents' day, do you remember or do you know what they thought of politics? Do you think they really understood it?

Josephine: I don't really know, I couldn't answer that part because I don't really know if they did or not because I was already away from home when I just got caught to go and vote with them when I went. So I went with them just more or less to please them. (laughs) And voted the wrong way.

Victoria: Do you vote the same way as your parents did?

Josephine: No I never did. (laughs)

Victoria: Do you ever take any active part if politicizing or elections?

Josephine: No. No, I hear enough of it. (laughs)

Victoria: Do any of your friends get very active in it?

Josephine: Not that I know of.

Victoria: Do you think Metis people vote for one party that they figure will do better for the Metis people?

Josephine: I would think so, in a way. I'm sure I don't. (laughs)

Victoria: Which party do you think does the best, or looks after the Metis people the best?

Josephine: I think they're all the same. (laughs)

Victoria: You think that they're all the same, just in it for the votes, eh?

Josephine: They're just in there for the money. (laughs)

Victoria: Do you ever remember the old Saskatchewan Metis Society? That would be in the '30s and '40s. Do you remember some of the people that were involved?

Josephine: I remember like the... what was going on, but I don't remember who was involved because...

Victoria: Did they have a local in your community?

Josephine: Not that I remember.

Victoria: What do you recall about the organization?

Josephine: I don't recall too much of it because, like I said, I left at 14 and I just stayed away. I didn't want to get caught cutting wood anymore. (laughs)

Victoria: Do you remember the name of Joe LaRocque?

Josephine: Yes. He used to come to our place quite a bit. He was, he used to look after the river. And like, Joe LaRocque and my dad, they're second cousins, and Joe LaRocque wouldn't let too many people set traps in our area. My dad had the biggest family and he had the rights to trap and set a trap line, so... And if Joe found, my dad used to have his initials on his traps, eh, and if Joe found any traps that didn't belong to my dad in that line he took them. He picked them up.

Victoria: Oh, so he was sort of a game warden then?

Josephine: Yeah, he was a game warden.

Victoria: Did he ever talk about politics or the Metis Society when he came?

Josephine: He used to but, like I said, we were swished. We couldn't sit there and stand around and listen. But he was a great talker.

Victoria: How about Joe Ross, do you remember him?

Josephine: No I don't.

Victoria: Tom Major?

Josephine: Tom Major I do, yeah.

Victoria: Where was he from?

Josephine: He was from Fort Qu'Appelle.

Victoria: So he was quite active in the old Metis Society?

Josephine: Yes he was quite active, yeah. It seems to me he joined the army but I'm not too sure.

Victoria: They did later on. They had formed the old Metis Society, what they called the Saskatchewan Metis Society then, and in the late '30s and early '40s when the War broke out I believe they all went in the army. So they sort of... the Metis Society was sort of discontinued until later on years. Do you remember Joe McKenzie?

Josephine: Not really, no. The name sounds familiar but to remember any...

Victoria: Solomon Pritchard?

Josephine: Yes. Yeah, Joe Solomon, yeah. I remember him quite well too.

Victoria: So they were just all old members of the Metis Society.

Josephine: Yeah, and he used like Solomon Pritchard he used to travel with the wagon like through the valley and visit Dad and the Metis and stuff like that, and ask them questions. Quite often he used to... we had a little small patch where we used to keep the milk cow overnight so it wouldn't go away. He used to put his team of horses in there and then camp for the night quite often at our place. But like, if he was there in the summer they'd be sitting outside. We used to have where... we used to make our fires to... open fires and stuff like that, we had stones around. They'd be sitting out there lighting their pipes once in a while and they're talking away and we don't know what they're talking about because we were in the house. But lots of times he used to stop. He used to go through with the wagon.

Victoria: How would you describe your life?

Josephine: I describe my life as a long, hard experience.

Victoria: Was it interesting though?

Josephine: At the time, in my earlier days, no, because I was too busy and I was always looking for something new, new people to meet. I'm a person that the more people I meet the better I like. I'm always looking for something new to do, something new to, something different. When I was young I, like I said, we had to haul snow by the bagful and cut wood by the armful and stuff like that. And then, as I went on, I worked on my own but I didn't -- I was shy -- I didn't go for boys and stuff like that. My first boyfriend was my cousin and I didn't know, so that shied me off. And then when I was working in Russell, I was 22 years old when I first met Lionel. He was my first boyfriend to go out with. I'm back with him 35 years later. (laughs) And then in '52, June of '52, I got married to my husband, but he didn't stay with us very long. The day of our wedding day we got married at four o'clock in the afternoon, the supper was at 5:30. It was sort of, I don't know. we got married in their Presbyterian Church and he didn't stay for the wedding that night. He took off and he come back Sunday afternoon. I don't know if that was their tradition or what. But anyway, he never did stay with me, he was an on-going guy. When my first child was born I thought he'd be tickled pink and come home, and the baby was three months old when he come home. And then in '66 he finally took off for good with another girl -- it was supposed to have been his original girlfriend -- and they have seven kids. And his seventh child, he brought it

home -- no, I'm telling a lie -- his first child, he brought it home for me to look after the baby and I was mad. I said, "It's the last of you I want to see." So in '67 we had a legal separation and I raised my children by myself, he never...

Victoria: So you consider, you know, a life of hard work then?

Josephine: Yeah. Well it was hard all the way through but a big experience to me I'd like it, I'd like to go through it all over again, but I'm sure going to make it different.

Victoria: You'd change it if you had a chance eh?

Josephine: Yeah, there'd be quite a few changes.

Victoria: Were you satisfied with your life though?

Josephine: Oh very satisfied right up till now. I had one bad boy in the family, but there's always a bad apple in the box. His dad was, so what do you expect. (laughs)

Victoria: What is one of the things that mattered the most in your life? What is the most important thing?

Josephine: The most important thing is, I still say the most important thing was working and out, out for finding a new friend like or something new, something different, new experiment. (laughs)

Victoria: Would you have liked to have been a white person or a Treaty Indian?

Josephine: No, I'm proud as I am. (laughs)

Victoria: And if you could be born all over again would you like to be a man instead of a woman?

Josephine: No, I'm quite happy the way I am.

Victoria: Do you think the future is going to be better for your children, or your grandchildren?

Josephine: I hope so.

Victoria: And do you think native people will be better off in the country, or up in the far north, or maybe just in the cities here?

Josephine: I strongly think that the Metis are happy wherever they are. Like if they're happy in the north and if, you know, they can make a living, that's where they should stay. I'm sure the city, I shouldn't say this, but I'm sure the city is not that much good. I'm ready to, you know, whenever I get my old-age pension I'm not going to be here. I'm going back to Russell.

Victoria: So you'll be moving out of the city, eh?

Josephine: Yeah, when I'm 65 I won't be here. (laughs)

Victoria: Okay, thank you very much for the interview.

Josephine: Oh you're more than welcome.

(END OF SIDE B)

(END OF TAPE)