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BELOW.

Brenda: April 11, 1984. I'm doing an interview with Archie  
Nicolas. Archie, I'd like to know where you went to school and  
what it was like for you to go to school.

Archie: Well, the first school I went to was in Magnolia. I  
was quite young then; I had run away from home and went to  
school there where my brothers and sisters were. From then on,  
well, I went to school for the rest of the summer.

Brenda: Magnolia school?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: Is that... that's here in Duck Lake, eh?

Archie: It's northeast of Duck Lake. It's now closed, they

had to close over here. Then we moved to a different district and I didn't go to school for a couple of years. And at that time, hard times were here.

Brenda: Yeah, let's see...

Archie: And they only opened the school during the summer, in the wintertime they were closed. That was at Horse Lake school. Actually that school was know and, you know, which actually is Horse Lake. That one's also closed now.

Brenda: That would be around 1925, 19--...

Archie: No, no, no. It was in 1930, '32. Around there.

Brenda: And there was no school during the winter because it was...

Archie: Well the hard times were on, eh. The roads were bad. But after awhile they opened... they started opening early in the spring and we had two weeks holidays. You take... it wasn't too bad where I went to school. It was mostly, well, they were French half-breeds and low Germans at Horse Lake school at the time.

Brenda: You went to school there in 1930 and then you went until you were 14 years old in grade seven?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: And after that you went to work?

Archie: Yeah, I worked on a farm. I was... well, I worked for 50 cents a day. A lot of people wouldn't believe that today but actually we had to put ten hours. That was 5 cents an hour, eh.

Brenda: So that totalled to about what? About \$5 to \$10 a month, total.

Archie: Well, in the... like, 50 cents a day and if you worked for 20 days, well, you have \$10, eh.

Brenda: Oh, okay. So that's... \$10 a month was your wage then. And that would be in the '30s?

Archie: But most of the time I didn't work out. Most of the time we cut cordwood for a living. Haul lots of wood here in town, you know, pole wood for firewood. We made carloads of wood and shipped them from Roddick; lot of them went to Rosthern and some went to Regina. Like fire-killed wood or... this was fire-killed or dry wood.

Brenda: Oh, that was sent all over.

Archie: Yeah. We used to load the carload at Roddick. That was our siding.

Brenda: Was there a lot of wood around in these days then?

Archie: Oh yes, there was, yeah, yeah. There was a lot of bush.

Brenda: Oh, I always thought it was kind of sparce, like, in the '30s. There was a lot of wood around then, eh?

Archie: Oh yes there was a lot of wood. I mean, mostly everybody was... Well, especially during the winter months, eh. Things were pretty rough sometimes. But thank God we always had a few head of cattle and pigs. Managed to scrape a living.

Brenda: When you were going to school and... were there all Metis children going to school?

Archie: No, it's pretty well mixed. There's some English-speaking. But I came to school here in Duck Lake to go to catechism for a couple of months. That's where I found it different. Duck Lake was always... the separate school here was always a bad school for discriminating against...

Brenda: Metis people?

Archie: Yeah. Even the Metis people more than the Indian kids. The Indian kids had their separate school, you know... at (?) mission.

Brenda: They went to the boarding school over here.

Archie: Yeah, at the boarding school, at the mission there. But you take Stobart here, that was...

Brenda: Stobart was where all the Metis, all the children from Duck Lake went to school.

Archie: Yeah. And we had to go there to learn catechism and that's where I found it so hard.

Brenda: What did you find hard about it?

Archie: Well, they were always picking on you because you were Metis, eh.

Brenda: Who? The church or, or...?

Archie: The other kids mostly, eh, and even the grown-up people.

Brenda: So there was some discrimination then?

Archie: Oh, very much so.

Brenda: What did they do to you? Would they say things, or would they...

Archie: Call you names and half-breed and (?), and one thing and another. And naturally we weren't as... dressed as well as a lot of other people and make remarks about our clothes, how we were dressed, eh.

Brenda: So your overall experience at the school was not very agreeable. You didn't...

Archie: No. Especially here in Duck Lake. In Horse Lake it wasn't too bad, but you take in Duck Lake here, it was pretty rough. I was certainly glad when...

Brenda: You said Horse Lake... Horse Lake?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: Where is Horse Lake?

Archie: Horse Lake is almost straight north of here.

Brenda: And that's where you went to school?

Archie: Yeah, that's where we farmed and that's where I went to school mostly.

Brenda: And there was no discrimination there?

Archie: Not too much, no.

Brenda: Not too much. Not as much as here in Duck Lake.

Archie: No, here in Duck Lake was a bad spot.

Brenda: And growing up, how did you like growing up around Duck Lake?

Archie: I got along fairly well, you know. We pretty well had our own crowd. We knew where to go, eh. But we got along fairly well amongst our own group. Certain outside people treated us good.

Brenda: Your family, did they go to church together and did...

Archie: Oh yes.

Brenda: ...they go berry hunting... hunting... berry picking. Like during the '30s and '40s when times was really tough, did your family do things together in order to survive better?

Archie: Yeah, we had to. Like going to church, going to church was always a big thing especially when they had the church going at St. Laurent, that log church, you know. It was fairly new then and everybody used to go to school in... to church there. It was mostly Metis people, eh. So I mean... actually it was nice to go to church on Sunday and visit

afterwards, eh. Meet a lot of people there at church.

Brenda: It was a time for, for getting together with friends and relatives.

Archie: Yes. And you sort of plan your activities for the afternoon mostly. Well, play softball and football, eh. Football used to be great amongst our people.

Brenda: The men? The men?

Archie: Oh yeah. Well, you take us boys, we used to play softball. Softball was our great... We used to hold a ball game almost every Sunday, when it was suitable.

Brenda: What else happened on Sundays? Were there, was it also a time to plan ahead for future dances and...

Archie: Lots of times, you know, we had, we had dances, house dances. At that time -- it seems funny now -- everybody used to have a violin. I know we had one at home and somebody else had a guitar and everybody seemed to be able to play. Getting music was no problem, you know, to get up a bit of a dance, and we'd gather, 15 or 20 in a house, and we'd have a whale of a time.

Brenda: And at these dances everybody would get right involved?

Archie: Oh yes.

Brenda: Children?

Archie: Yeah, even the young ones, even the old. Well, our old people were a little bit strict on account of our dancing, eh. I mean, if we dance we had to do the proper dance. You know, we had to dance properly; we couldn't fool around.

Brenda: Do it right or not at all, eh.

Archie: But it certainly helped out. You see the difference, you know. You take the old-time waltz and even the square dances compared to the young people is certainly quite different, eh.

Brenda: Because the discipline isn't there that would...

Archie: Yeah. No the discipline isn't there anymore.

Brenda: Your dad, where did he own land, or did he own land? Did he have his own land?

Archie: Yeah, yeah. He had a homestead and then he bought some other land.

Brenda: Oh, he homesteaded. He didn't get a scrip from the government?

Archie: No, no. He homesteaded.

Brenda: Does he still have his land?

Archie: I have it.

Brenda: You have it now. Is the land where you're...

Archie: Where my dad homesteaded, I farm that today.

Brenda: Oh you're farming that land yet?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: And how much land is it? Is it a quarter section?

Archie: Yeah, yeah, a quarter section.

Brenda: When you were growing up, did you ever hear the word, the term 'road allowance'?

Archie: Oh yes.

Brenda: And what did the term mean to you?

Archie: The road allowance was a place where... Well, people couldn't be kicked off. Because I know of some people that used to live on that dead-end road allowance, eh. Supposing the road allowance was running into a lake, eh. Well, naturally the lake wouldn't, the road couldn't go any further, so these people used to build right on these road allowances. I don't know if you heard that before. Because I could show you a few spots right... you know, not too far from here where people used to live on these dead-end road allowances.

Brenda: And are these people still living on, on that road allowance?

Archie: No.

Brenda: Were they told to leave and get off of it or...?

Archie: I guess after awhile, I mean, they were told to get off there because you don't see that anymore. I haven't seen it for quite a while. But I've seen it because I went visiting there, because we used to be neighbours with some of those people that they used to live on these road allowances.

Brenda: You... your family, were they ever forced onto the road allowance?

Archie: No.

Brenda: How did that happen? How did that come to be, the road allowance?

Archie: I don't know why, but these people had no other place to build on, eh. They had no place. So they used to build on these dead-end road allowances. Supposing this was a lake... the road was running... they'd build right there, because nobody was using it anyways, eh.

Brenda: Were these people, these people that lived on the road allowance, would you know if they were more from the southern Metis or, or were they...?

Archie: No. Some of them were right from here. I mean, they were born right around Duck Lake here. Some were born at St. Laurent, some were born right north of Duck Lake. I seen them, because I went visiting. They had kids. We used to visit back and forth.

Brenda: Do you know if the government in any way forced these things on Metis people? Would you know what was happening in politics at the time, why Metis people, like...

Archie: No, I don't know why these people lived on these road allowance. I often wondered myself. At one time they had homestead. They either lost them for taxes, or through a small mortgage of next to nothing, couldn't pay it, and the people took their land and they had no place to go so they moved onto these road allowance.

Brenda: You don't think the government, in any way at all, more or less kind of forced these people into that situation, into losing their lands so that they were forced onto the road? Do you think maybe that this may have happened?

Archie: Had there been a law like the homestead law at that time, like they have in Saskatchewan today after the old CCF government, these people wouldn't have lost their homesteads or quarter of land, whatever they had, and move on the road allowance, eh. Like today, well, they can't take you... they can't take your... your homestead away from you, eh, where you're living -- until after you die, but at that time, well...

Brenda: There was no homestead act and that...

Archie: No, and that little bit of a mortgage, or a couple of years back on your taxes, and your land would be sold for taxes and these people had no place to go. That's where a lot of them moved onto these road allowance.

Brenda: Okay, now I understand what happened. Your mother and your sisters and brothers they went... you were saying that you went hunting and berry picking in the early days.

Archie: No. Well, hunting wasn't so much, but we picked an awful lot of, we dug an awful lot of seneca roots and we dug a lot of... and we picked a lot of berries.

Brenda: Was any of this ever used for...?

Archie: We sold a lot. We sold a lot of our berries. We used to go and pick blueberries and mother used to take them to Rosthern, go and sell them in Rosthern.

Brenda: That was all for extra money?

Archie: Yeah. And mother sold ever kind of berry there was to sell I think. Cranberries, and Saskatoons...

Brenda: Did she do any canning?

Archie: Oh yes, Mother was... always done a lot of canning. We always had a garden. Mother always had a big garden, too. But she sold a lot of vegetables, too. Well we had to, eh, to survive.

Brenda: (inaudible, both talking) garden?

Archie: Yeah. But we had to to survive because we were a large family. And where there's a large family, there's always a lot of visitors.

Brenda: So you have fond memories of your family, eh, your brother and sisters, and...

Archie: Oh yes, we always had lots of fun. I mean, we were a large family and we always had lots of visitors, and we usually had a fields day when Mother and Dad went to town. Or sometimes they used to go to Rosthern and Dad'd have to stay overnight over there, so we had a lot of visitors.

Brenda: You went into the war in 1940-41, in that year, somewhere around that time?

Archie: Yeah, January 3, 1941.

Brenda: And how, how were the, when you went into the war, what did you see? How did you see the Indian and Metis people being treated?

Archie: We were treated pretty good. Well, to us it was a novelty and an adventure. Even though we weren't getting too much money we were quite happy with what we were getting. We weren't exactly discriminated against, but none of us had... very few of us ever got an echelon job. Most of us were all front-line soldiers. I was talking to one even yesterday from Regina that, because we were in Italy not in the same regiment but he was..., we were... and we were talking about that, most of us were all front-line soldiers, like the Metis and the Indians. We didn't seem to mind it.

Brenda: Were any of the men that fought on the front line, were they given medals? Were they awarded medals? Were they honoured for being on the front line, for always being there?

Archie: No, not, I don't... Pat Lazure is the only one and he was a... in the First War 'cause he got the MM.

Brenda: The MM is what?

Archie: Military Medal. That was for bravery. He was a great friend of mine. But you take, like... most of us, I mean, we got the medals that we, you know, like everybody else, but then I've never heard of any of them getting the... like the Victoria Cross or the MM, except Pat Lazure.

Brenda: Even though you know for sure that they were on the front line and...

Archie: Oh yes. None of us seemed to mind it. I was talking to some of the Indian boys now and then that were in the army the same time as I was, like John Marie here and a few others.

Brenda: You're on pension now with the army eh?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: Were there... do you know of any other Indian and Metis people got their pension from those days? Because I know for many years a lot of Indian people, they weren't getting -- the people that were in the army, they weren't getting a pension because they weren't told, they weren't informed on how to go about getting their pension. Do you know of many cases like that?

Archie: No I don't. There's not too many. Although there's a lot of us, you know, got wounded there, but then most of us seemed to... Well, we weren't used to a great deal, eh, and even a small pension, we were satisfied with a small pension until now. Now that we know the difference... (phone rings)

Brenda: Talking about community life. You said there were dances in the houses, and one person would say, "Okay, let's use my house and we'll..."

Archie: Oh yes. I mean, it wasn't hard to get, you know, to get a room or... We used to... Some of the biggest events used to be the pie socials at the schools, eh.

Brenda: Pie socials, what's that?

Archie: Well, they used to raffle off pies and whose pie you bought, well, you had to have lunch with them, you know, even if it was an old lady or a young girl or something. It was a way of raising money for the Christmas tree party, for Christmas funds. That used to be a big do around Horse Lake there, the Horse Lake pie social and everybody used to take part in it.

Brenda: At these get-togethers, these social events, did the men wear the Metis sash?

Archie: No, but there's one thing. They used to wear an overall overtop their dress pants. And they used to roll up part of their overall pant legs, you know, just to show their

dress pants underneath, which is something we don't see anymore. We were talking about that here not too long ago, that certain people said, "Do you remember where the men used to put their overalls overtop their suit pants, you know, then roll up their overall?"

Brenda: So that they could... so that they would see the dress pants underneath?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: Did your, did your parents and, or grandparents ever talk about the Louis Riel Rebellion to you?

Archie: Well, Mother did. Mother, Mother's grandfather and Gabriel Dumont, they were married to two sisters.

Brenda: Your mother's...

Archie: Grandfather.

Brenda: Grandfather...

Archie: ...and Gabriel Dumont. They're married to two sisters. When Gabriel Dumont came back from the States after his... his... shall we say, his trip with the wild west show, that's where he came and stayed. He came and stayed there at my grandfather's and Mother used to often talk about Gabriel Dumont. And they used to talk about the Rebellion.

Brenda: What would they say about the Rebellion? Did your mom ever tell you?

Archie: It's only lately that, I mean... You know, a few years ago they didn't like to talk about it, eh.

Brenda: Why was that?

Archie: I, you know...

Brenda: They feared that the Metis people... there would be another uprising. Is that it?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: So your mother never really talked about it, not until a few years ago?

Archie: No. Just... I mean, it's only what she was told by the others, eh?

Brenda: But your mother herself didn't see...

Archie: No. She remembers Gabriel Dumont when he came back, eh.

Brenda: Oh, she remembers him?

Archie: Oh yeah. Because he used to come...

Brenda: Oh, she was alive when he was alive.

Archie: Yeah, when he came back. Yeah. Oh yeah. When he came back Mother was already born then. Well, she was a young girl of 7 or 8 there. So she remembers Gabriel Dumont because, she said, "We used to play in the house and he used to give us heck because we were jumping in the house eh."

Brenda: Was that before the Rebellion or after?

Archie: After the Rebellion.

Brenda: Oh, it would be after the Rebellion. So Gabriel Dumont probably didn't want to talk about the Rebellion to anybody.

Archie: Well, Mother never said anything but maybe he spoke to them... to the elders, eh.

Brenda: But she doesn't remember anything?

Archie: No.

Brenda: And she never told you any stories either about things that were happening in the Rebellion? Did your mom dress in Metis dress, Metis style?

Archie: Yeah, yeah.

Brenda: The boots and...

Archie: Yeah, yeah.

Brenda: How about Indian dress, did she...? Well, your mother was Metis. Did she know, did she speak Cree?

Archie: Oh yes, I mean, she speaks Cree very well. Oh yeah, she... she speaks French, English and Cree just like that. I mean, she can switch from one to another just...

Brenda: Does she know the Indian herbs, the Indian medicines...?

Archie: Pretty well, yeah.

Brenda: ...for curing people? Oh, that's interesting. Does she still live by that, or does she...

Archie: Oh yes. Because last summer she wanted me to go, to take her -- well, it's in a community pasture -- to go and dig up some what they call (Cree name). That's a little... it's a plant that they take the root and they boil it for... and then they drink it to kill fever and they called it (Cree name). A little... it's a little stinking weed or something.

Brenda: Stinkweed?

Archie: No, it's not a stinkweed. But oh, I know what they look like.

Brenda: How do they look?

Archie: I mean, you dig up this sort of a broad leaf and they got a little white flower and they grow in bogs. It's in community pasture now. I tried to go in it... well, I can't walk very good anymore, and the gate was closed, so I didn't get any. But I've drank some of that myself.

Brenda: And it...

Archie: Oh yes. It's actually, I mean, they live by it, eh. That it's a... you boil the root of that plant and drink the water and it kills the fever.

Brenda: I'm going to have to try it. I wonder how long you boil it.

Archie: Well, just, you know, just long enough to make it, about as long as you boil, like for a cup of tea.

Brenda: Did your parents know how to play fiddle? Did they teach you how to play fiddle or was there fiddling music?

Archie: Well, oh, we always had a fiddle. Dad never did... well, he played very little but Mother used to play the accordion a lot. And so did my grandfather. Both of them play the accordion.

Brenda: Did they pass on their musical talents to you or somebody else in the family?

Archie: Some of the others. You take, like my grandchildren now, they're...

Brenda: They're musically inclined?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: So you don't play a fiddle but your grandchildren do, eh?

Archie: No. Yeah.

Brenda: When you were working for farmers, when you were a farm labourer, were you shown discrimination by the farmers, or by whoever you went to work for? Did they ever say, "Well, you can't work here because you're Metis"?

Archie: Oh no. There's only one thing I didn't like when I worked out. They wouldn't let us sleep in the house, eh, and we had to sleep in the granary or in the hayloft -- that's the part I didn't like. Especially the English-speaking people,

they wouldn't... even when it was cold when we were out threshing, eh, we couldn't sleep in the house. That's the part I didn't like.

Brenda: Tell me what it's like during threshing time.

Archie: Well, it's long hours and hard, hard work. And you, you come in at night and you're tired and you got to go and bunk in the barn. That's the part I didn't like.

Brenda: Threshing, that would... when is threshing season, in the fall?

Archie: Yeah. That's when you gather up the crop, eh.

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Brenda: You've lived in Duck Lake how long now? You moved in Duck Lake...

Archie: Well I was born around Duck Lake here and I lived in Duck Lake all my life with the exception of those years that I was overseas.

Brenda: In the war. And then you came and stayed here, eh?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: How did people treat you here in Duck Lake when you came back from the war? Were you shown discrimination or.. or... The town officials... Was it easy for you to buy a house right away, get work and get settled into your life?

Archie: No it wasn't. In the meantime my dad had died, eh, while I was...

Brenda: What year did your dad pass away?

Archie: In '45.

Brenda: That was while you were away?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: And you came back and...

Archie: Well, all the good jobs were taken. See, I was behind a couple of years because I was in the hospital for two years. Afterwards... I was wounded twice in the war.

Brenda: How were you wounded and where were you...? You were wounded... your legs or...?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: And that caused you to slow down. You couldn't...

Archie: Well, I was in the hospital for two years after that.

Brenda: You had to learn to walk all over again?

Archie: Yeah. I... it was our last battle in Italy. I was with the Edmonton regiment, the Lord Edmonton regiment. It was our last battle. It was in the afternoon and I was... we were putting in an attack on these buildings and I was leading a section on the right flank and I didn't see these Germans. And they were in a trench with machine guns. They came out and they shot at us, and that's where I was wounded in the hip.

Brenda: That's one time. Then you said you were wounded again...

Archie: Oh, much before that. In August of that year before, I was wounded in the same leg again. This was at night, taking out prisoners.

Brenda: You were taking prisoners out?

Archie: Yeah, we were taking prisoners out, and we were shot at and I was wounded in the same leg again.

Brenda: Was that in Italy, too, or...

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: Both in the same town. And...

Archie: Not the same town, you know.

Brenda: In the same country?

Archie: Yeah, same region.

Brenda: How do you feel about the war now? Do you feel that you've done the right thing by going over to go and fight in the War?

Archie: I don't know. Sometimes I have mixed feelings, eh.

Brenda: Mixed feelings because of what's happening to you today?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: And what you fought, the reasons you fought for Canada then are different from what's happening to you today?

Archie: A lot of us were disappointed when we came back. I mean, all the things we were promised when we were in the army, eh. We used to have these little sessions whenever we could, whenever, you know, things were slack or something, and we were promised a lot of things. When we come back, I mean, it was

certainly different. It was hard to get jobs even, you know, especially for myself because all the jobs were taken. The boys had all come home ahead of me and all the good jobs were taken. I even worked for \$2 a day after I come back here from the war.

Brenda: What, what kind of things were promised to you before you went into the war? Like, I know...

Archie: Okay, we were supposed to be given priorities over certain things, eh. Like, I know one time I went in for a hay permit. In the forest reserve and...

Brenda: This was when you came back from the war?

Archie: Yeah, after I came back. These people had permitted this piece of hay and they never cut it and I was going to cut it, eh. So I went to P.A. to the office and I said, "Well, they haven't cut it. Can I have it?" And I said, "I'll pay permit on it." And they said, "No this other guy..." "Well," I said, "the time has passed and I'm short of feed. Well," I said, "we were promised a lot of things. I should have priority anyways over that." They told me, "There's no return soldier that has priority here."

Brenda: Were there other things, too, that they had said that you would have priority?

Archie: Well, we were promised loans, you know.

Brenda: You never got loans?

Archie: I never got loans, especially me. They... when I made the application and I went for an interview they told me that I had too much disability to go on a farm.

Brenda: So you were refused a loan?

Archie: Yeah. So I never got no loan.

Brenda: Was there any way... Did the army ever compensate you for the years, you know, after...? You probably didn't get pension until... Archie: Well, I was...

Brenda: ...until you had been back for quite a while.

Archie: No.

Brenda: Oh, you got pension right away?

Archie: Yeah. They paid me \$52 a month. On crutches. They kicked me out of the hospital. Well, I would come out of the hospital on crutches and my pension was \$52 a month.

Brenda: And you were suppose to feed your family on that?

Archie: Yeah. Well, I had a wife and kid, eh. That's why I

say I had to work for \$2 a day in order to...

Brenda: If you don't mind me asking, what are you getting now? I'd like to have it down on paper.

Archie: I get 68 percent.

Brenda: Sixty-eight percent of the present wage of...?

Archie: No, disability, which gives me \$869 a month. That's me and my wife and two kids.

Brenda: Is that reasonable to you? Is that fair? Is that enough money?

Archie: No, it's not. That's why, I mean...

Brenda: You go and fight, you go and fight for Canada and you come back and you can't even survive.

Archie: I'll tell you what they told us when I joined up. If you get killed we bury you, if you get hurt we'll look after you. And I don't think I was looked after properly, not for a pension of \$52 a month, and even now with the cost of things, eh.

Brenda: Was \$869 and your rent is \$400.... (phone rings) Were you ever involved in Metis politics? Did you become a member of the Metis locals?

Archie: Oh, when I come back, when I come back from, from the army they were asking me, you know, what to do about the immigrants, if we should... if we should... allow immigrants in here. And I told them, "How about looking after our own people first," you know. They said, "They are looked after."

I said, "No they're not. I can take you to Horse Lake," I said, "and, and show you a lot of our people that have never seen the inside of a school. Even some of those are my nephews, you know, nieces and nephews." So they said, "We'll look into it."

Brenda: And who were you talking to?

Archie: These are government people, eh. They were asking us whether we should...

Brenda: There was a meeting here and then they asked the government if they...?

Archie: No, these were meeting while we were still in the army. And they want to know if... what we thought of whether we should let the immigrants first. I'm one of them that said, "Look after our people before you bring in immigrants, eh." I said, "Some of them have never seen inside a school," -- which

is true. So that's when they built Dorval School, Dorval Government Agent School. That was close to Horse Lake. It's seven miles straight north of here. That was the first -- that was a Metis school -- that was the first government agent school in this area.

Brenda: What year was that?

Archie: That was in '49 that they built it. That's where my kids went to school. And I was chairman there for 12 years, I guess. I was the first chairman of the Metis Government Agent School, and Pete Orbach was my... well, he was the superintendent of the school thing so that was my boss before... But I was chairman of the school board, Dorval School, the first Government Agent School and that's...

Brenda: Dorval?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: How far is Dorval from here?

Archie: Seven miles straight north.

Brenda: And that's where your children when to school?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: And, and after you were... you were involved with the school board what did... what did you do? Were you...?

Archie: Well, there was a meeting. They'd been after me for a while (inaudible) at the Metis meeting. So I come to Duck Lake here. The first meeting I attended here in Duck Lake they formed a local and I was the first president of the local.

Brenda: What year would that be?

Archie: Oh, that was in '66, I guess, you know, when.... And in '67 we... that was the first, I tell you, the first convention in Regina, the first meeting, and Joe Amyotte was president of the Metis Society at the time.

Brenda: Of the Saskatchewan Metis Society?

Archie: Yeah. Joe Amyotte. Jim Sinclair and I went on the board of directors together at that time.

Brenda: In '66?

Archie: Yeah... in '67, in June of '67. And old Archie McDonald from P.A., he was chairman of the...

Brenda: Saskatchewan Metis Society.

Archie: Yeah, of the board of directors.

Brenda: For the Saskatchewan Metis Society. I see.

Archie: That's when I first met Jim Sinclair was at the convention in Regina. We both went on the board of directors at that time. He went on to greater things, but I'm still involved with them.

Brenda: How long were you president of the Metis local of Duck Lake?

Archie: Gee whiz, I was president twice probably, maybe about four years, two year terms, two different two year terms.

Brenda: That would be in '66. You were president then, and then later on.

Archie: Yeah. Then I quit for a while and then I went back on again. When somebody else quit, I took over. I'm still vice-president of the local here.

Brenda: You're vice-president and Leonard Pambrun...

Archie: Yeah, Leonard Pambrun is the president, I'm the vice-president of the local.

these  
Brenda: And you've been active with the Metis local all years?

Archie: At that convention in Regina, people might have laughed at that time, and I mentioned at the convention that school was very important to me and I asked them, "Is it possible to get night school?" What I meant by night school, some of it for adults that never had a chance to go to school or didn't get too much schooling, was it possible to have...? And we got night classes for a while at Dorval school but then it was on that, my recommendation or by asking, that they started getting these extra classes, you know, these upgrading classes like they have here and there now and then. And at that convention I asked if it was possible to have a, an old folks' home. That raised quite a ruckus, you know. They was a little bit mad because on Sunday we met with the government people and this was brought up, of what I wanted an old folks' home for the Metis people, eh?

Brenda: Here in Duck Lake?

Archie: Yeah. That's where we got that...

Brenda: Oh, so you, you...

Archie: I was involved in... I was the first one that asked for that...

Brenda: And you got it.

Archie: Yeah. The Pioneer Pensioner Home, eh. And I based

my argument was that, I said, "One of our old people that used to be a respected Duck Lake..., he was even town cop for a while," I said, "not too long ago," I said, "he died like an old dog, in the ditch," which it true. They found him dead in a ditch here in the town of Duck Lake. I said, "You mean to tell me that we don't need an old folks' home if these old people die in the ditch like old dogs?" And that was true, too. But I mean, for those things like upgrading, I got that, and Pensioners' Home. That's the first one of it's kind. There never was a Metis Pensioner Home built, you know, there was never an old folks' home built for Metis people before. Duck Lake was the first one, here.

Brenda: And you brought that into Duck Lake?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: Were there other programs that you brought in that are still operating? I see some things down by the museum there. Were you involved in bringing in...?

Archie: Oh yeah, I was involved in a lot of things here even though I never did... I never was one to try to take the lime-light, eh. I felt that I could do a lot more by, you know, contacting other people.

Brenda: You were involved with Leonard then while Leonard was bringing in all these programs? You were there and you could talk together.

Archie: Yeah. We always worked together.

Brenda: How was the church involved with Metis politics? Did the church play an important role in Metis politics back in the '30s or '40s?

Archie: The church used to seem to be able to hold the people together somehow or other. And things have changed since then. I mean, our old people used to be quite strict about us, you know. Go to church and not to go to dances during Lent and one thing or another, and to... and to respect somebody's death, you know, for a certain length of time. That was all brought in together with the church, eh. Today, well, there seems to be so much spread between the old people and the younger generation. Maybe it's because they have more education they seem to understand religion better or...

Brenda: Or they understand in a different way?

Archie: Yeah. And you take even during my young days, we were more afraid of the laws of the church than of the laws of the country. Of course, our people always scared us with...

Brenda: With church.

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: So the church did play an important role in your life?

Archie: Oh yes.

Brenda: Did your parents go to church regularly?

Archie: Oh yes, my parents went to church.

Brenda: Every Sunday?

Archie: Well, I wouldn't say every Sunday, but if it was possible we went every Sunday. See, we had church in Dorval school there for a number of years after we built that new school in Dorval. The priest used to come.

Brenda: And he'd hold services in the school?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: Did the church... I mean, did the priest ever go to your home to go and visit?

Archie: Oh yes.

Brenda: Was he there to help you? Was he there ever, you know, to offer food or financial assistance?

Archie: Well, the first time that he came to our place, he wanted us to pay a certain amount of money, eh.

Brenda: To help him out?

Archie: Yeah.

Brenda: (laughs) To help the church out!

Archie: Yeah, we didn't have very much ourselves, so we probably gave him a couple of dollars.

Brenda: Your commitment to the church, are you a... are you committed to the church?

Archie: Oh yes I am. I'm... I've been on church council for a number of years. I just... 'twas only last year that I got off the church council.

Brenda: Do you find the church more influential today with people than it... than long ago, or was the church stronger then than it is today?

Archie: The church seemed to have a better hold on people years ago than it does today. There's a lot of difference between church it used to be and what it is today.

Brenda: You think the church structure is crumbling now...

Archie: It's not as strict so therefore, I mean, they seem to be lacking an awful lot of, should we say, of respect, eh, even amongst the clergy. We never used to see the priest out at parties and dances and one thing like you do today.

Brenda: Oh, you see that now. What party or... did you vote for, your family? Was there a party that the family voted for?

Archie: As far as I can remember my parents always were Liberals.

Brenda: They were strong Liberals.

Archie: Yeah. I...

Brenda: Did they find that the Liberal Party, did they help the Metis people? When they voted or, the way you see things now, was that Party of a big help to Metis people?

Archie: They helped them just before the election; after the election, it was all forgotten.

Brenda: So the politicians fooled... the Liberal politicians come around here and they come and fooled everybody, made all kinds of promises and...

Archie: They used to promise jobs and those jobs never... we never seen them.

Brenda: They had all kinds of construction and things that were going on here that they promised.

Archie: Or else we'd get the jobs that nobody else would get, you know, that nobody else wanted -- poor jobs, eh -- not the good jobs, that's for sure.

Brenda: How did the Metis people, in your parents' day, how did they view politics? I could imagine that would be the time of Louis Riel...

Archie: They were pretty easily led. They didn't understand. Most of them couldn't read or write. Little bit of jobs here, like road jobs or these ferry jobs, you know, they used to be great. Take the things. They used to promise the ferry jobs to everybody. They were easily led in politics from what I could see.

Brenda: Did politicians ever go and visit your home? Did any politicians ever go and...

Archie: No, I've never seen any.

Brenda: How about the community...

Archie: But they used to come. There used to be a lot of meetings here because my parents used to come to all these political meetings around Duck Lake. They used to hold politi-

cal meetings in these country schools also, eh.

Brenda: And your parents went to them. Did you ever go?

Archie: Oh yeah. Oh yes, I've gone to them myself.

Brenda: And these political meetings, was it usually an N.D.P or Liberal, or P.C. or was it all Metis politics?

Archie: No. This was pretty well general, but there was no, no N.D.P. or CCF then. It was all Liberals. It was either Liberals or Conservatives, eh.

Brenda: Oh, I see. Okay.

Archie: When I come back from the War, T.C. Douglas had formed the government here in Saskatchewan. It was all CCF then.

Brenda: Were your friends active in politics, too. When they came back from the War, did they become active?

Archie: A lot of them did, yeah.

Brenda: They had learned a lot from what was happening overseas and...

Archie: They'd seen a lot and they seemed to have realized a lot, you know, even thought their education wasn't too high. They'd learned a lot. They had matured a lot, also, from their experience overseas, eh.

Brenda: And that was the experience you were talking about.

Archie: In comparison to what we had before we went overseas and then... Well, medicare had to... you know, hospitalization was a big thing here when we came back. We'd never seen that before. Then medicare come in. And, naturally you think, for anybody that more or less on the poor side, well...

Brenda: That's a great benefit.

Archie: ... hospitalization and medicare was a great benefit.

(END OF SIDE B)

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