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INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: BATOCHÉ,
SASKATCHEWAN
INTERVIEW LOCATION: BATOCHÉ,
SASKATCHEWAN
TRIBE/NATION: FRENCH/INDIAN
LANGUAGE: ENGLISH
DATE OF INTERVIEW: 04/05/84
INTERVIEWER: VICTORIA RACETTE
INTERPRETER:
TRANSCRIBER: HEATHER YAWORSKI
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Victoria: Did you have running water?

Mary: No running water.

Victoria: What did you heat your house with?

Mary: Wood.

Victoria: Was it made out, it was a log house was it?

Mary: Yes.

Victoria: Did you have a floor in your house?

Mary: Oh yes, we had a floor but we had some cracks.

Victoria: Was it a board floor?

Mary: Board floor, yes, and we had to wash it on our knees.

Victoria: What kind of furniture did you have?

Mary: Oh it wasn't too much, we didn't have big chesterfield like we got today.

Victoria: Was it homemade or did you have some bought from the store?

Mary: No I don't think so. Well, we had a little rocking chair -- I still have two of them downstairs -- and we had homemade cupboards to put our clothes in -- I still got that.

Victoria: And did you own your own home? Did your parents own their own place?

Mary: Well (inaudible), and then after...

Victoria: Was their house from land scrip or from homestead?

Mary: From homestead.

Victoria: They homesteaded, eh?

Mary: Yeah. Mom had the (inaudible) scrip, like, for a sewing machine. I still have it downstairs.

Victoria: You do, eh?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: And how big was your yard?

Mary: Oh we had a big yard.

Victoria: You were right in a Metis settlement, or was it different farms?

Mary: It was a river lot, we had a river lot.

Victoria: Were your neighbours close around?

Mary: Yes, well, we had close neighbours. Every river lot there was people.

Victoria: So it was just like a little settlement with so many...

Mary: Yeah, well, I don't know how many. I guess about 10 chains wide and two miles long like.

Victoria: Oh, they measured them by chains?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: Oh! So that's how they measured them in the old days. Were they any white people that lived close around?

Mary: Yeah. We had neighbours (inaudible).

Victoria: Did your family and the rest of the people in the community, did they get along good with them?

Mary: Oh yeah, we had good neighbours.

Victoria: Did you ever hear of the term road allowance people? Do you know what they called road allowance people? That's the people that used to squat on the road allowances so they didn't have to pay taxes or anything like that.

Mary: Oh there was a few, I guess. They were building on lines like.

Victoria: Did you have chores to do around the house while you were growing up?

Mary: Oh well, yes, we had to milk cows. We had to go and pick berries, and... there was lots of raspberries at the time, like, when we were growing and we had to go and pick them, and we had cows to milk.

Victoria: Did you have to do housework and all that?

Mary: Housework, oh yes, we had to work.

Victoria: You owned... your parents owned cows and horses, they had livestock?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: Was there a lot?

Mary: Not too much, but we used to milk four or five cows, sometimes more. And I keep the house for two months one winter there mom's mother had broke her leg and she had to go and stay two months with her, so I was alone, like, at home and I had the little girl -- we had adopted a little girl, like, was one of my uncle's little girl, like. His wife passed away so we took her when she was two months and we keep her, like, and I had to keep her, that and clean the house, and milk the cows besides.

Victoria: How old were you at that time?

Mary: I was 13. And at night we used to run for dances.
(laughs)

Victoria: Did you ever go, you know, camping, and hunting, and berry picking all together, like the whole family go?

Mary: Oh yes, we used to go for picking berries like blue-berries and we used to go for -- what you call it? -- roots?

Victoria: Seneca roots?

Mary: ...camping for that. We used to leave for two or three weeks sometimes with mother and the family.

Victoria: Where did you pick those roots at?

Mary: Oh we used to go the other side of Blaine Lake.

Victoria: Was there lots there?

Mary: Oh yes.

Victoria: Was it prairie or was it bushy country where they grew?

Mary: No, it was kind of prairie and bushy all over, like, where we used to walk, like.

Victoria: What did they use them for?

Mary: They used to sell them. They were not very high priced but they used to sell them.

Victoria: But what did they make out of them?

Mary: I don't know. We used to sell them like...

Victoria: Was it good money?

Mary: Well it was kind of good money for them that time because the money was so scarce, you know.

Victoria: Did you ever know anyone that did any storytelling, like they told stories about the old days?

Mary: My mom used to...

Victoria: Do you remember any of the stories?

Mary: Yeah, well, the time of the war, like, my mom used to tell me, like, they had run away, like, you know, from their places, like here (inaudible) that place there, in front of the museum there, that belongs to the museum now, my mom... they left like... My grandfather was in the war and Mom and with her mom they left and they went toward the river there. They run away, like. And Grandma had those slip, you know those big petticoats, slip, like she put one after the other on, I don't know how many she had, and they went down by the river, down by Uncle William Parent used to stay, like Ma after, like, but they went down there, like, not far from Batoche River anyway. And they hide themselves there. At night, like, she used to put that on the ground and they used to sleep on there.

Victoria: So she put them on so that she would be warm?

Mary: Yeah, and to put that on the ground for them to sleep on at night, that was their blanket. And then, well they decide they were not to a good place to stay there so they

moved. They moved to Bellevue. They went to a Gareau's place, and old man Gareau was working in the field like nothing was happening there, like there was no war. So they stayed there and here, one day, just after they were there, there was those soldiers, they arrived there. They were looking -- Gabriel Dumont, I guess, or Riel, I don't know which one they were looking for, anyway they went there, and Grandma went out and she grabbed a little horse, there was the nicest little horse, and she grabbed the little horse and she said to that man to get down, she wanted her horse and that man said, "No." He said, "Well, go back and I'll leave it over there," but they never left it.

Victoria: So she never got her horse back eh?

Mary: No. But when they came back after the war the house was burnt down, there was one, they peeked in, cow or calf they were (inaudible) like.

Victoria: The cows stragglng in, kind of...

Mary: Yeah, so and they were lucky they had hide some flour in an old house not very far from here, about a mile from here. It was one of my uncles' place, like. They had hide it in the basement so the flour was still there, at least they had that, like.

Victoria: They had something to make food with, eh.

Mary: So they had to rebuild their house. That's the house that's standing there now.

Victoria: Did she ever talk about, you know, what they did for eating and that while the Rebellion was on?

Mary: Well, I guess they had their... they had to run away with their food, like, as much as they could, like, you know. They didn't have all what they wanted -- they had to.

Victoria: Was it taken away from them if they didn't hide it?

Mary: Well, they burn everything.

Victoria: Oh, they burnt all the houses, eh?

Mary: And Dad was 17 years old and yet, after the war there, they send Dad, like, to get tobacco in Duck Lake, and then he had to go with the horse. Lucky there was not so much water the way it looked that he crossed it horseback. He went and got the tobacco. He was 17 years old then.

Victoria: Did the rest of your relations live close around there?

Mary: Yes. I have quite a few.

Victoria: How about your grandparents? Were they living close

to you then in those days?

Mary: Yes. Well, they pass away like (inaudible).

Victoria: Were they fighting in the Rebellion though, too?

Mary: Well my grandfather was.

Victoria: What did he do? Do you remember them talking about it? But what was his job during the Rebellion?

Mary: Oh I don't remember, I never heard nothing.

Victoria: They never talked about that much.

Mary: I guess they got him in jail for awhile like after the war.

Victoria: After it was over and that they put him in jail, eh?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: Is there anyone of your, you know, like your elder people in your family that you liked, who you thought a lot of, was there one special one?

Mary: No, it seems to me we all get along good. Like my brothers and sisters?

Victoria: No, like maybe your aunts or your uncles, or just somebody you knew that was more special than all the rest.

Mary: Well, I had a special one, Uncle George. He was my special one.

Victoria: Why was he more special than the others?

Mary: I don't know. I took him like for my dad. I guess I keep him for 15 years and he was like my dad.

Victoria: Oh so that's he'd be...

Mary: He died here in our house.

Victoria: He'd be close to you then?

Mary: Yeah. I guess (inaudible) I was young when I left home, I suppose, and then I staying with an old man like that, like staying with us he was more like my dad like, you know.

Victoria: Was your family a real close family when they were growing up?

Mary: Yes.

Victoria: Like sort of stuck up for one another?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: Did you find that...

Mary: And still yet, you know.

Victoria: Uh-huh. ...that Metis families are closer than other people are?

Mary: Yes I don't have no trouble. Like, we get along with my brothers and my sisters, and my daughters and my kids, like, they all get along good. (telephone rings)

Victoria: What did your father do for a living?

Mary: Well, he was working out, farming a little bit. He used to farm a little bit and then he was working out, and then when he moved to Wakaw, well, he didn't get too much of pension. He had to go into the cup in Hoey and he had \$1.89. (laughs) Shake up \$1.89, then he had to go into (inaudible). At that time there was lots of money for what we get.

Victoria: Did he have many different jobs, you know, during his life, or did he just have one special trade?

Mary: Well, I don't know exactly but they used to travel quite a bit. They used to go (inaudible), you know, they used to travel. They went up to Pincher Creek, they called it.

Victoria: Pincher Creek?

Mary: There where one of my sisters be born.

Victoria: That was in Alberta?

Mary: Yeah. And he used to travel. They said they took a whole month just travelling, the places they wanted to go.

Victoria: Did your mom go with him at that time too?

Mary: Oh yeah, there where she had her baby down there.

Victoria: Did he ever sell firewood to supplement the income?

Mary: Yes, that what he done. And it was on the farm here that what he helped. Wood in Rosthern.

Victoria: Cordwood or firewood?

Mary: Firewood. My brothers used to sell that.

Victoria: Did he do his own hunting for meat and that?

Mary: Yeah, quite a bit.

Victoria: How about fishing?

Mary: Yeah, he was a good fisherman.

Victoria: Was he able to sell some of the fish to other people around or just for his own use?

Mary: Well I guess when he was working at the pier, he was working at the pier and...

Victoria: Oh what did he do, run the ferry?

Mary: Ferry, yeah.

Victoria: Would that be down here?

Mary: Batoche.

Victoria: Batoche. Did your parents grow a garden?

Mary: Oh yes.

Victoria: Was it a big one or a small one?

Mary: We used to make as much as we could.

Victoria: What kind of things did you grow?

Mary: All the vegetables you could grow -- potatoes and...

Victoria: Do you ever remember a time, like, when your father didn't have any work at all and no money coming into the house?

Mary: I guess some days was like that.

Victoria: You don't remember any times? Mary: Not exactly, I don't know how, but we were living anyways but not too... We had milk, and we had butter, you know, our own butter...

Victoria: Yeah, you'd have your own cows and that.

Mary: Cows and milk.

Victoria: Did you sell chickens, too?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: Do you remember...

Mary: And we used to raise our chickens, like, ourselves, like, not buy like they do today.

Victoria: No, you'd wait and set your hens, your chickens so that they'd have more, eh?

Mary: More, yeah.

Victoria: Did your uncles or other Metis people where you were living, what did they do for work? What did they have to make

for their living?

Mary: I guess they didn't have too much. I don't know if they had to hunt or do something.

Victoria: Did they just go and do odd jobs wherever they could get them?

Mary: Some, they had to walk long far, you know, like walk back, like where they were having (inaudible). They used to walk from, they used to.. and work up to St. Benidict, and they used to walk back like, when they finished work. Oh, they used to thresh, they were threshing, the work, you know, they used to thresh.

Victoria: How about trapping? Did they do much trapping?

Mary: Yeah, they did lots of trapping.

Victoria: Was there good money then in trapping?

Mary: Well it was not too good, I guess, but it was better than nothing because the money they had was worthwhile.

Victoria: Where would they have sold the furs here?

Mary: They had to go to P.A.

Victoria: To Prince Albert?

Mary: Yes.

Victoria: What was the first job you ever had?

Mary: Me?

Victoria: The first job you worked out and got paid.

Mary: Well I work in (inaudible).

Victoria: And what were you doing there?

Mary: I was working for people that they had a pair of twins, and I had... When they hire me it wasn't to help them but when I got there well I had to make all the work. I had to cook, bake bread, and wash by hand, and clean the house, everything. So I stayed there for a month and a half, you know. When Mom saw that I was working too hard, well...

Victoria: You were only supposed to go and help with the little ones?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: How much did you get paid?

Mary: Five dollars a month. It was good. I dressed myself

up; I got a pair of shoes and a dress and a hat and that in Prince Albert.

Victoria: When you were young who made your... did you make your clothes or did you buy them?

Mary: No, I used to buy stuff. I had a Mrs. Marten, that was the lady that she used to sew for us like.

Victoria: So in your community then there was one person that did sewing for everybody?

Mary: Yes there was quite a few people that could sew. The first dress I had, it was a satin dress. That was my auntie, Mr. Albert Corne's wife, Marjorie her name was. And she had made that dress for herself in satin and it was too big so she give it to me, and that was my best dress to go to dances. It was a real dress for me. But we didn't have too much, you know, like...

Victoria: It was pretty hard to buy clothing, I suppose, with everything else.

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: What are some of the other work that you did while you were growing up?

Mary: Well I went and work all over and then we work in the bush with my brother. Then I work cooking, like, in houses for threshing time for \$2 a day.

Victoria: How many did you have to cook for at one time?

Mary: When we're threshing, like?

Victoria: Yeah.

Mary: Oh, we had about ten men, eight to ten men.

Victoria: And what other places did you work?

Mary: And then, well, we work on the roads with Dad, at the fishery, Mrs. Dubreuil and...

Victoria: That was her construction outfit?

Mary: Construction. We work for them. Forty-six men there.

Victoria: Forty-six that time.

Mary: Yeah. And we had to punch bread quite a bit, and we had \$2 a day there, too, like. We thought we had big wages.

Victoria: How old were you then?

Mary: Oh, I was about 16.

Victoria: That was good money.

Mary: Yeah, that time.

Victoria: Do you know what some of the other Metis women did, you know, your age at that time? What did they do when they were working? What kind of jobs did they have?

Mary: Well there was quite a few ladies (inaudible) that they came in and hired. Like, when I was working (inaudible) like, they came in and hired, like Mrs. Lafontaine (inaudible) the farmers. She used to come and get the girls to (inaudible). Didn't have much big wages but at least we had work.

Victoria: What language did your parents speak when you were growing up?

Mary: French. Dad used to talk quite a bit of French.

Victoria: What did you... when you grew up, what language did you talk first?

Mary: French. I knew how to talk Cree but it was only the bad words. (laughs) I could talk Ukranian but it was a bad word. (laughs)

Victoria: Did your parents thing of themselves as Metis people?

Mary: Oh yes, I guess. They didn't mind what they were.

Victoria: So you always knew you were Metis then, eh?

Mary: Oh yeah.

Victoria: What about the other Metis families in the community, was there anyone that you knew of that well that tried to pretend that they weren't Metis? Did you know of anybody who was like that?

Mary: No, they didn't talk too much about that that time, you know.

Victoria: Just everybody knew what they were, didn't matter to them, eh?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: Was there anybody like your parents or grandparents, or your aunts or uncles or anybody that you knew, did they ever talk about Metis history? Like, history would be something that happened even before, you know, when they were young that was, you know, really outstanding.

Mary: Oh I guess not too much. They used to travel, like. Well, they used to bring stuff, like -- how they call that? --

freight, you know. They used to go with horses and that.

Victoria: But where would they go for the freight?

Mary: Oh, they used to go far toward Winnipeg, and they used to bring it up to Duck Lake.

Victoria: That must have been the only way they had of sending things.

Mary: Back and forth.

Victoria: How about social events like weddings and parties, did you...?

Mary: We had lots of parties. Sometimes we went seven days and seven nights in a room.

Victoria: Is that right?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: What did they do?

Mary: And we sure enjoy ourselves.

Victoria: But what all did they do during these times when you have these parties?

Mary: Well, we used to go to dances house to house, like, and they play violin. We had lots of violin players that time; now we don't have no more.

Victoria: They're getting away from their tradition eh?

Mary: Yeah. And we got a nice bunch and everybody was happy. They were poor but they were happy.

Victoria: Christmas and New Year's, how was it?

Mary: (inaudible).

Victoria: Did you celebrate Christmas, though, much when you were young?

Mary: No not too much, because, well, they make out to believe that there was a Santa Claus but sometimes I used to open my eyes and there was no Santa Claus, little package of candy and (laughs).

Victoria: So you didn't get big gifts or anything back in those days, eh?

Mary: No.

Victoria: Just a little bit of chewing gum and...

Mary: My godfather... once I had a little, I still have, a little tea pot. I thought I had (inaudible)

Victoria: How old were you then?

Mary: Oh I was about 10. (inaudible)

Victoria: New Year's was a big celebration was it, eh?

Mary: Oh yeah, New Year's was a big celebration. Christmas we didn't celebrate so much, but New Year's we had the table on all day long. Then we go one house to the other and they eat, and the way they eat there! They go to the neighbour, they eat again.

Victoria: You were a woman, you'd be more aware of... What type of things did they serve? Like, what kind of things did they eat?

Mary: Oh we had meatballs, and roulettes, and baignes, they had that, I think chicken -- like, we had a whole big chicken -- and sometimes they had hot biscuit, they call that now like a galette.

Victoria: Sounds like the old half-breed New Year's we used to have.

Mary: Meat pie they used to make, quite a few meat pie.

Victoria: And potato home-brew?

Mary: We had home-brew, sure we had lots of home-brew. I used to have a carriage -- even after I was married I had that carriage -- and I had a box on top there, and a box under there full of bottles of home-brew. (laughs) And my baby was sleeping on top. And now we want to do... Sometimes they had ... but we couldn't get sugar the way we had, we had that stamp, coupon. So I used to buy coupons from my sister-in-law, the one that had a big family, and we used to make home-brew.

Victoria: Did you ever sell it?

Mary: No, we never sold it.

Victoria: Just for your own use, eh?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: What did you do, push your baby down the street and stop and...? (laughs)

Mary: I never took it out; like, in the house.

Victoria: What would they have done if they would have caught you with it? Was it against the law to have it?

Mary: Oh yeah.

Victoria: Did you ever know of anybody that got caught with it?

Mary: Not exactly, not too much, I guess, around our place. Once we had the cop come in but we were fast enough. They just said the cop was at home, like. It was New Year's time and we were celebrating, like, but we had time to hide it in my carriage. He walk in. He was coming for something else like, you know, I think were some people, you know. We got cold feet a little bit, you know.

Victoria: Did your father own a Metis sash?

Mary: I think he had one, yes, but I don't know what happened to it, but I remember seeing it.

Victoria: What other kind of Metis clothing did he wear?

Mary: Well he had a shirt like they dress, like, a long time ago.

Victoria: He dressed the traditional Metis way?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: How about moccasins? The leggings, did he wear them too?

Mary: Yeah, he had them.

Victoria: And your mom, how did she dress?

Mary: Mom she had... they used to wear long dress. Like Grandma, my grandma, she was never seen without a long dress, and her sisters, they were just the same. They had to have a long dress. And Mom, her, she had a long dress all the time, but at the end I think she had short dress, eh? But for a long, long time she had long dress, you know, down to there and she had a big long apron.

Victoria: How about shoes were they store-bought shoes?

Mary: No, well, sometimes they had those buttons...

Victoria: Those buttons up the side?

Mary: Yeah, those were Sunday shoes they called them.

Victoria: Most of the time moccasins?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: Could your mom do beadwork, or your grandmother?

Mary: Oh my grandmother used to make our moccasins and she was proud when she was making them.

Victoria: She done nice beadwork? Did she ever use them quills with them to make the...?

Mary: No, I don't think so.

Victoria: No, no quills? A lot of them used to use the porcupine quills and that with them. How about tanning hides, did she tan her own hides?

Mary: Yeah. And Mom, I remember, she used to scrape the hides. I don't know where that moose thing went after Mom died. When we left from here we moved to Wakaw and I don't know what happened to all those things we had. And they used to make their own soap too. We could never... soap, you know, to wash clothes out, yeah, that they call...

Victoria: Not lye soap?

Mary: Yeah, lye. But that, we used to... big that and big that and we had a big... you made some yourself?

Victoria: Yeah, that was the job I hated worse than anything.

Mary: You doggone glad when you were finished with that. But we used to make quite a bit and then we were okay for quite a while, you know.

Victoria: Yeah, we used to make it from one year to the other and we had enough to last for a year then. And washing... using it on the washboard.

Mary: Washboard, and we wash, and we wash.

Victoria: Was there anybody in your family that played the fiddle?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: How many?

Mary: I still got a sister today.

Victoria: Oh the girls played in your family!

Mary: Yeah. I had two sisters that played, but one, she, oh she doesn't play, I guess, now. But the one in Saskatoon she still plays.

Victoria: Was she good?

Mary: Yes.

Victoria: She played with the men?

Mary: Oh yeah, she used to play at dances all over. And I had a brother that passed away at Lake Leblond there. He was a fine player too.

Victoria: How about your dad, did he play the fiddle?

Mary: No.

Victoria: Grandpa?

Mary: No.

Victoria: How about jigging did they do a lot of jigging?

Mary: Jigging, my mom used to jig. My mom used to jig. That's why... sometimes she said I should have learned (inaudible), she would like to learn how to jig.

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Victoria: Was there anyone that sang Metis songs or French songs?

Mary: Oh yeah, we used to like to sing in French, to sing in French.

Victoria: You sang some in French, eh?

Mary: Yeah, I sure would like, you know, I forget now but all the time I sing, I'll take my books and I sing. We used to go to weddings; it was in French songs we used to sing, like, you know, all over.

Victoria: Did some of the French songs that you sang, do you remember what they were about? Like, did they tell a kind of a story?

Mary: Yeah, well like one we had, I had one of my cousins like, you know, he had went in the harvest and when he came back well we used to sing that song like, you know, and we used to sing "A Happy Mouse" and we used to cry. And we used to have a drink and we used to cry.

Victoria: What was the song about? What did it say in the song?

Husband: That he had lost his friend like.

Mary: Like he had lost his friend.

Husband: And he gets killed in the end.

Victoria: He got killed in the war.

Mary: I still got all the songs that I think all the time I'll go back to it, you know, because I kind of forgetting

because we don't sing no more. But it was nice long time ago, you know. We used to make parties or Sunday afternoon they used to come here and we used to have a drink and we used to sing. You know, maybe you know Freddy Collins, the one that he used to like to sing, and we used to like to cry, too, like.

Victoria: They sang and they cried too. Was there any white people that lived in your community? Was there lots of white people that lived in the community?

Mary: Well there was not too much I guess.

Victoria: Mostly Metis and French?

Mary: Yeah French.

Victoria: Was there any of the elders in your family, like the older people, that practised Indian medicine or believed in Indian medicine?

Mary: No. Me, I believe in Indian medicine.

Victoria: Do you?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: Have you ever used it?

Mary: Earlier when Mom used to make, you know, (inaudible). When we had our kids she used to give us to drink that.

Victoria: Your mother-in-law like?

Mary: Yeah. And then after well I had a satchel, like, I used to keep for my, like, you know, the ones I pull (inaudible) medicine. And when we moved to Big River, when I came back I lost it, and I lost everything, like, you know.

Victoria: Oh, you lived in Big River too.

Mary: Yeah, we went to Big River for one winter, one winter we moved there, like, but we didn't stay all the whole winter because (inaudible) that I keep there, her wife pass away and we had to come back.

Victoria: So you have used the Indian medicine too, eh?

Mary: I still do a little bit for (inaudible).

Victoria: Do you make it yourself?

Mary: (inaudible).

Victoria: You make it by yourself, eh?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: Do you remember any real serious sicknesses that they used to have, you know, back in the old days? Did they ever talk about some real serious illnesses that they had.

Mary: Quite often they had that big flu, eh, for I don't know how many days, (inaudible) sometimes more; the sleeping flu they had.

Victoria: How about tuberculosis was it very common?

Mary: Oh yeah, that was common. I got two cousins that went like that.

Victoria: Where did they go to?

Mary: They used to go to P.A.

Victoria: They had a sanitorium there, eh?

Mary: Yeah. Or Fort Qu'Appelle, I think.

Victoria: Did you ever know of them using the Indian medicine to try to cure it?

Mary: No. My mother-in-law used to make medicine, like, for our own, like, some days when you were sick, you know.

Victoria: When you were small did you go to school with white kids around?

Mary: No I guess they were all Metis people, you know.

Victoria: (inaudible) that many white kids, eh?

Mary: No.

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

Mary: No.

Victoria: So there was no discrimination there at all, eh?

Mary: No. They were so glad to have a girl that didn't care what as long it was clean and...

Victoria: So you feel, you don't feel uncomfortable or anything when you're around, you know, white people or in the stores?

Mary: No. Nothing bothers me at all.

Victoria: Did the...

Mary: What I am -- I am and that's all.

Victoria: Was your family ever discriminated against from the towns or the communities that they lived in? If there was town counsellors and that, were they ever treated badly by them?

Mary: Oh no.

Victoria: You've never had any bad dealings with government agencies or welfare, police or anything like that?

Mary: No.

Victoria: You never heard of the town people or the people in the community trying to make Metis families move away or anything like that?

Mary: No.

Victoria: How far did you live from church when you were growing up?

Mary: Oh, it was about a mile and a half, mile about.

Victoria: Did your parents attend church regularly?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: And you still go quite regularly, eh?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: Did the priest visit the homes, you know?

Mary: That time, yeah.

Victoria: Do you remember what he used to talk about at all?

Mary: Sometimes they didn't like the dances and everything, you know. Two of my sisters they were stopped, like, going to dances from one priest.

Victoria: What? He told them they had to quit? What if they didn't? What did he say if they didn't?

Mary: I don't know, but they should quit, bad luck. Some they listen, but my sisters didn't.

Victoria: Like, he was kind of threatening them?

Mary: Yeah, threatening them. Or sometimes there was some priest that they wanted my sister to walk on with the boy they wanted for them to go with, like.

Victoria: Oh, they were trying to promote... Why would they do that? Would they have more money or something?

Mary: No, just the idea, I guess.

Victoria: They tried to boss people around.

Mary: ...people around, matchmake, yeah.

Victoria: Did you ever quit going to church for any period of time?

Mary: No, I never quit.

Victoria: You still going same as you did when you were young, eh. Do you think that the church had more influence over people, you know, in the old days than it does now?

Mary: Well, in one way we had more... Well, now they say they won't come back to it, but I don't say it's good, this year they said. Like long time ago, when we couldn't eat no meat Wednesday, and Friday, and by Lent, you know, and we couldn't dance in Lent time.

Victoria: So they were quite strict back then, eh?

Mary: Yeah, they were quite strict, but now we forgot about that today.

Victoria: You mean now in the church you can meat and that on...

Mary: Yeah, they used to, we could eat meat; well some, they can't. The priests sometimes, they were not suppose to eat meat and they caught the priest what had the big sausage in his mouth. (laughs) And some priests, you know, they didn't want to drink they didn't want the food. First thing you know we caught them. They had the bottle in their mouth.

Victoria: Do you think that the church, you know, has helped the Metis people when they had problems?

Mary: Well, I guess so.

Victoria: Do you think sometimes it caused some problems too?

Mary: Could be.

Victoria: What are some of the things that you were taught when you went to school? Were you taught like all the things that they learn in the schools today, or was it different? Did they teach you different things?

Mary: Well it was different as to what they got today. Today, my God, they got too many things they got to learn, more than... you know, we had French for one hour only, and then we had catechism for half an hour; but now today, well, I guess it's quite hard.

Victoria: Were the schools that you went to, were they just one big room, or were there lots of rooms?

Mary: No there was only one room out in Batoche. That was only one school I attended, the school in Batoche.

Victoria: Oh that's the only school that you ever attended, eh. And was your teacher a nun or was it just a teacher?

Mary: (inaudible).

Victoria: Were you allowed to talk Cree or French when you went to school?

Mary: Well I guess if you would have talked Cree I don't know, but we talked French.

Victoria: But a lot of them were only allowed during the French hour to talk it, other than that they had to talk English.

Mary: No, not in that school.

Victoria: You could talk it any time you wanted, eh. Did you like going to school?

Mary: Oh yes.

Victoria: You felt comfortable?

Mary: Sometimes, well, wintertime we were not dressed to go to school, so we had to stay home. They used to come and see us why we are not going to school, you know, they used to be some trustees.

Victoria: School trustees.

Mary: I used to tell them, "Buy me a pair of shoes and I'll go." (laughs)

Victoria: Did you feel like you belonged though at school? You weren't uncomfortable going to school?

Mary: No, I liked it.

Victoria: What was the thing that you enjoyed most about school? Was there any special thing that you liked better than the rest.

Mary: It was all the same. I used to like to learn everything like French, but I didn't learn enough. I used to write French but now it would be hard for me because I never did that for a long time -- but maybe I could do it, you know, but to read, well, I read but, you know, it's hard. I'd read more, too, (inaudible)

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

Mary: Oh yeah.

Victoria: But did they want you to get more of an education?

Mary: I guess they would have liked more, but we didn't want to go because we had to go out and work.

Victoria: Do you remember if they taught any Indian or Metis history?

Mary: No. Because we had all the... we never had any (inaudible) teacher, we had all French and...

Victoria: You don't remember if there were any books that taught that though that you read in school that had anything about Metis people or Indian people in it? Nothing, eh?

Mary: Maybe after I left, I don't know.

Victoria: What political party did your folks vote for, your parents?

Mary: My dad was always raised a Liberal.

Victoria: What's your mom?

Mary: Mom too, because they thought, well, Catholic, they were Catholic and they said, "We got to vote for Liberal."

Victoria: Did the church tell them which way to vote?

Mary: No, no, that's what they thought it was their religion like.

Victoria: Uh-huh. Did any politicians come to visit the home when you were young?

Mary: Oh yeah. They used to come and see which way we were going to vote, and this and that, you know.

Victoria: They talked about which way they should vote and that?

Mary: Yeah.

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

Mary: Oh I don't think so. Maybe true.

Victoria: Not that you can remember?

Mary: No.

Victoria: What do you think Metis people back then thought about politics? Was it important to them, do you think?

Mary: Well, I guess it was.

Victoria: Were they involved in campaigning and that, or did they just go and vote? Were they really involved in like going and visiting other people and talking about which way to vote?

Mary: I guess not too much.

Victoria: Do you still vote the way your parents did?

Mary: Well, I guess so. I might as well say, sometimes.

Victoria: I think everybody votes that way sometimes.

Mary: (inaudible) ...they seem to want us because they think he's going to go in.

Victoria: Oh you really believe that there is a political party that does better for Metis people than the others?

Mary: Oh yes.

Victoria: Which one do you think does the best for Metis people?

Mary: Liberal was better, I think. Maybe not too. I don't know. That's a my opinion.

Victoria: But just your opinion. That's what I want, your opinion. Do your friends get active, you know, in the parties, do they campaign a lot?

Mary: No, not too much, just the average.

Victoria: Do you remember of any one of your parents or your grandparents that were -- well, it wouldn't be your grandparents because I don't think they would have been around then -- but you parents or even yourself that remembers the old Saskatchewan Metis Society? It was during the '30s and '40s. They had a Metis Society back then. Do you remember anyone talking about it?

Mary: Well about that time, well we used to have Back to Batoche.

Victoria: In the '30s and '40s?

Mary: Of course, yeah. Yeah, of course that was.

Victoria: So they were even talking about it back then too, eh?

Mary: Oh yeah, (inaudible).

Victoria: They all sort of came to Batoche eh?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: How long was it since they, you know, like... When do you remember the first local that they had in your town, like in Batoche?

Mary: Quite a few years now. About 17 years ago.

Victoria: Are most of the Metis people involved in it?

Mary: Yes, in one way, yes. Right now well, they're quite a (inaudible) (laughs)

Victoria: Did you ever hear of the names Joe LaRocque, or Joe Ross, Tom Major, Joe McKenzie, or Soloman Pritchard have you ever heard of these names at all?

Mary: I heard Joe Ross.

Victoria: Do you remember where you heard the name, or about what it was? See, these were some of the old members. In the 1930s and the 1940s they used to have the first Metis Society of Saskatchewan. That's what it was called, the Saskatchewan Metis Society and these people used to travel around trying to get people to join and start up locals back then, and I was wondering if you ever heard about them during those days?

Mary: No, just Joe Ross.

Victoria: How would you describe your life while you were growing up? Would you say it was difficult, or interesting, satisfying, was it a hard life?

Mary: Well, it wasn't that bad. We had to milk cows. We had to work to have a living, selling milk, selling cream...

Victoria: It would be a life of work anyway.

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: Do you think your life was better than your mother's or your grandmother's?

Mary: Well, in one way I guess. Maybe not, too. That time they didn't have too much money but everything was so cheap then. Nowadays, well, anyway if you got lots of money a dollar doesn't worth \$50. You got \$50 doesn't worth a dollar.

Victoria: Do you think that you had better things to work with than your, like, your mother or your grandmother? Was the things that you had to work with, did it make the work easier?

Mary: No.

Victoria: What about when you were growing up there wasn't any really modern appliances either was there?

Mary: Nothing, there was nothing. You had to work.

Victoria: Just when you got older.

Mary: Quite older, too, when we had them. (laughs)

Victoria: What are some of the things that have mattered the most in your life? What are some of the really important

things to you in life?

Mary: My family. My husband, my family and everything.
(laughs)

Victoria: How about religion? Was it, is it important to you?

Mary: Yeah, it was important to me. And I try and take all my kids to church as much as I could.

Victoria: And education?

Mary: Education, yeah, I send them as much as I could.

Victoria: Do you wish you would have gotten more education?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: Do you think it would have changed your life if you would have?

Mary: No, but at least I would do more, I think. Like, I got two girls, two that are graduating. One passed her grade eleven, the oldest one, and then grade twelve, she decide to go to Toronto and work and she said, "Mom, I'm going to work instead of taking my grade twelve." She left and she went and she got married that way, and that's her (inaudible).

Victoria: Would you have liked to have lived in the city?

Mary: No. I like to go but I like to come back.

Victoria: You like living...

Mary: I like to vist the people, but I like to come back.

Victoria: Just for shopping.

Mary: But I could stay a few days like, but, you know, I like to come back.

Victoria: Do you think life would have been different for you if you would have been born a white person or maybe a treaty Indian?

Mary: I don't know. God has put me, I'm happy here.

Victoria: So you figure you would have gotten the same life no matter what, eh? If you had a chance to born, you know, all over again and start all over, would you do things differently? Would you do anything different?

Mary: I guess not. (inaudible)

Victoria: You wouldn't like to have been a man?

Mary: Well I don't know. I don't think so. Maybe so, I

don't know. At least I wouldn't have kids. I wouldn't have been sick with my kids. (laughs)

Victoria: Do you think a woman's life's harder or is a man's life harder?

Mary: Well to tell the truth sometimes I guess a lady's is harder than men's. Because men, well after they're finished their work, they're finished, but ladies they got to (inaudible). Men finish work outside, well, comes in the house and sits, while she got to get going.

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

Mary: Maybe in one way and the other way, well, I don't know what's just going on every day now.

Victoria: Do you think there might be a war?

Mary: You couldn't tell.

Victoria: So you would think then maybe if there is a war it would probably be worse for them?

Mary: For them, maybe it could be sooner than we think.

Victoria: Do you think that native people are going to be better off in the future, you know, in the country or do you think they should move away up north, or will they be better off in the cities?

Mary: I guess anyplace they should... if they want to make their living. they'll be living all over.

Victoria: Where do you think would be the best opportunities though?

Mary: Oh well, on the farm, seems to me.

Victoria: Then you figure they would be better off...

Mary: (inaudible), but nowadays everybody is moving to the city instead. But some, they're coming out now. They have no (inaudible) Now they like to go out.

Victoria: So it would be cheaper for them to live in the country. Okay I want to thank you very much for the interview.

Mary: Your welcome.

(END OF SIDE B)

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