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SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- General account of her life.  
- Discusses her attitude to being Metis.  
Judy: Today is February 17, 1984, and I'm speaking with  
Mrs. Irene Dimick and this in regards to Metis history. When  
you think about yourself, how do you see yourself as a  
person?  
Irene: Oh, I don't see myself any different than anybody  
else, really.  
Judy: What kind of person do you think you are? Like how  
would you describe yourself?  
Irene: Well, I really don't know but as far as, to me, when  
I describe myself...  
Judy: Are you hard working, energetic, just a homebody?  
Irene: I have always been a hard working person and I

carried on all the way through right on till today. And I don't think as yet I'm going to give up till I just can't make it through.

Judy:       What kind of person do you try to be?

Irene:       Just an ordinary... the ordinary person would be. Nobody special, nothing, just to be an ordinary person.

Judy:       When you look back at your life and everything that's happened in it, what kind of life do you think you had?

Irene:       Well, at times I would have to say it was good, but then again, there, I didn't -- just for the education part, I didn't go for that. Other than that we lived through but it was not a bad life. But then again it had to be at that time. Our life, it was the same as that all the way through and it was the same with everybody around us. We'd go out in the summer and pick stones all summer. We'd come back in the fall and start threshing, and then in the winter time they would haul fence pickets into town, hay, whatever they could make a dollar in; but then we always had food.

Judy:       How is your life different from your mother's life?

Irene:       I don't think my life was any different than my mother's life, really. I couldn't see where my life would be any different. My mother was a very hard working woman, she was a very kind woman, she was really in there, she had lots to do, and she was alone with us -- she did very well, she did a good job with us. Oh, I'm pretty sure there's nothing different about my mother and me.

Judy:       How about from your grandmother's life?

Irene:       My grandmother, she was a very nice woman too. I knew my grandmother, I can remember her very well. I was about the age of nine when my grandmother passed away, you know. My grandfather got buried first, you know, I was about eight years old. But I do remember them and they were very nice.

Judy:       Do you think, though, that they ran a household the same way that you had to, or the same way that your parents did when you were growing up? Do you think they lived the same conditions like the same types of houses?

Irene:       Oh yes, they lived in a log house as well as we did. They lived in the same kind of place and they did the same kind of work as what my father did and my mother -- they did the same kind of work. And they would kind of rest for the winter then, there was only two. They could buy all their stuff for the winter and rest up for the winter, where my father couldn't because there was more of us in the home.

Judy:       What are the things that you think mattered most in your life?

Irene: Education.

Judy: That matters most in your life?

Irene: Yes it does, really. And there were so many good jobs that I could have had and then I couldn't take the jobs because of my education. This is why I had to go out and do all this other kind of work, this day work and all this work that I had to do.

Judy: What about religion, did that matter in your life?

Irene: Oh yes, religion was very -- that's one thing that our religion was always been taken care of, well taken care of because we always had the Father come up to our, to Round Prairie once a month and make sure that all the little kids were in church. They'd hold it in a house, a big house. Where they had a big house the Father would go there and all the parents would take the kids down there to see the Father. Because we didn't see too much at that time, but as we got older of course we got along, and religion was very important to me.

Judy: How about financial security?

Irene: What did you want?

Judy: Well, was financial, did financial security matter in your life at that time?

Irene: Not really, no, not that much because we were so used to having, you know, nothing and we carried on that way until we got a little bit older; but at that time I didn't care about anything like that. I thought that was the way that we had to live all the way through, but to change, as years come it changed a little bit for us.

Judy: What are your most important problems?

Irene: I really haven't got that many problems, I didn't have any problems at that time and I don't think I have really the problems now, really.

Judy: How about needs?

Irene: Well, need, there's a lot of things that I need when I was at home but then I just couldn't get it because we didn't have the money. But we got by and I don't know, it seemed like to me we were always happy. We had a happy home until my mother and father broke up when I was eleven years old.

Judy: What kind of things did you feel that you needed when you were growing up?

Irene: Well, I needed some clothes, and I needed some things for the house -- I like to have some things. I used to go over

to my girlfriend's house there and I've seen what they had in their house and I often wished that I had, we had some of them at home but we didn't have them things at home. So it made it kind of hard for us, but then we didn't get upset about it, we kind of accepted that. We were not upset about these things, like the way the younger people today they get upset very easy and depressed, but I know I didn't take it that way. I was taking it kind of cool.

Judy: What is it like for you as a woman to work with men?

Irene: It wasn't that good but then I had to work with men when I worked at the Mountain Press, I had to work with, I took a man's job there because I didn't have no... Well, that was way of making money so I worked there. I didn't care where I worked as long as I worked, but it wasn't that nice. I didn't really enjoy working with the men, you know. I really enjoyed working with the women, you know, the girls in there.

Judy: Why was it so hard to work with the men?

Irene: Well, the men worked, I felt I was unable to do the men's job and to me it wasn't fair for them to do the work and then I had to get the same pay, and that's where I didn't feel that good about it. I didn't feel good about it because I know I had to, I couldn't roll the big paper that came in, they had to put it up on the roll for me but I did everything else. I took the paper out and even keep up with the men with all that.

Judy: What it is like for you, as a woman again, to be the centre of a family?

Irene: Well, I really enjoy that, I really enjoy that. I enjoy having been, like having my grandchildren and living the way I am now. I really enjoy my life, this is the first time I really have to say that I have joy in my life now. But getting too old now to really enjoy everything. (laughs)

Judy: Did you find, though, that the dependence that they had on you was sometimes hard?

Irene: Yes it was. My mother was sick all... she was a sickly woman, my mother, and there again this is where doing my education didn't come through, because I had to look after my brothers and sisters. I had four of them going to school and I had to put them to school. So this where I did the laundry and I had to do it with the board; I had to wash clothes with the board and wash all their clothes, get them cleaned up. Sometimes I went to school two days in the week and that wasn't too good.

Judy: And when you had your own family what was it like for you as a woman to have a family?

Irene: Well, when I had my own family I really... I tried hard with everything about with my own family to try and give them what I didn't get, like, you know. It was quite hard for

me to do everything, this is why I had to work. Because at that time my husband was not making that much money so I went out and I helped him make the money to give our kids, to make them quite happy. And then, you know, at that time then, things were a little different than when my time was, with my family. But I managed to get my kids off to school and that was the most important thing there was for me.

Judy: What was it like for you as a woman to go to church?

Irene: I really enjoyed going to church. And I enjoyed going with my kids going to church, I really enjoyed going to church.

Judy: What was it like for you to be involved in Metis politics?

Irene: Well, I enjoyed that too, I really did, I enjoyed that. I worked for the native women there, I worked for them. I worked for them for a year. I went out on trips and after I went out and I had a tape with me and I enjoyed that. I went out to all these different places and organize the Metis women. And we had a pretty good, everything turned out pretty good for us.

Judy: What was it like for you as a woman to have to deal with the government?

Irene: Well, that part, it wouldn't be that hard, I imagine, to deal with the government. To me it's not that hard, that's what I could say today. They're understanding and you can ask them for a grant, they understand. That's about as much as I know about the government, really, because I didn't do that myself. But if I had to work with anything like that I would really enjoy it.

Judy: How would you say city life is different from life in a small town?

Irene: Oh, there is a big difference in the city life and the small town. When I lived out in the small town it was so much different than it is here in the city, because our neighbors, even here in the city, you have neighbors you don't even know. You have your neighbors next door -- I have a neighbor here, my neighbors on both side of me -- I don't even know their names. I'll say hello to them when I'm outside, but in a small town you know them all. But you enjoy that too, you enjoy the small town because you get to know everybody and then you go out on picnics and things like that, you really enjoy all that kind of, and there are more than you do in the city.

Judy: Do you think it would be different for you if you were white?

Irene: No. No, I'd rather be what I am. I like what I am.

Judy: How about if you were Treaty?

Irene: Well, if I was Treaty I would accept that as well.

Judy: But you don't think that your life would be much different than what it is?

Irene: No, it wouldn't be any different either. I wouldn't be any different than that. I have some good friends with Treaties, I really have good friends with Treaties and there's no difference with them to me, there's no difference.

Judy: If you had a chance to be born again what would you do different?

Irene: Well now, know what I know now, today maybe there would be a little bit different. But would I ever have that chance now, maybe I wouldn't.

Judy: What would you want to do?

Irene: Oh, I don't know. I would really like to have a nice big place with, you know, for little kids and bring them up as a convent like, you know. I always liked that. When I went to Ile a la Crosse and when I seen that convent that came to my mind. That's what I wanted then. That's where I should have been put, in one of those places. But my mother never put us in one of them when they went out working or anything like that. I thought that was nice when I seen all those kids going in there. They were going when they went out picking beets, and here they had their kids in there, convent in Ile a la Crosse, and I thought that was really nice, and the sisters was there helping the people out like that, you know. I thought that was really nice.

Judy: So you thought the children in convents, the ones that were raised in convents, had a good life compared to what you had?

Irene: Well, for the education part, yes. And then they had a chance to come back when their father and mother came back from picking the sugar beets, and they were able to get back home with their mother and father. But they had a place to go to go to school and that was the most important thing.

Judy: Would you choose to be a man?

Irene: No, not really.

Judy: Why?

Irene: Well, I don't know. I like what I am I wouldn't want to choose to be a man. I have my brothers and they're all men and I love all my brothers. So they're all men and...

Judy: But you would rather be a woman?

Irene: Right.

Judy: How do you see your future?

Irene: How do I see my future? Well, so far, everything is good that I can see. I don't know how long it's going to carry on.

Judy: How about your community's future? Which direction do you think that's going in?

Irene: I think that's coming right up here, all your communities are all coming right up now.

Judy: In what ways, do you think?

Irene: Well, before it seemed like there was no... like our communities didn't seem to stick together. It seems like they're really sticking together now and it's very important that they do.

Judy: Where do you think native people will have a better future in the county, in the north, or in the cities?

Irene: In the country, because as native people we were brought up in the country, we were not brought up in the city. And to me the native people out in the country they enjoy the country.

Judy: You don't think that they would get better education and higher standards of living in the city?

Irene: They would get the education also out in the country, because which I know they would get it. But then again, like I said, us Metis people we like the country. As far as I know, I like the country, really. I would do anything to go and live out in the country.

Judy: What do you think the future of your children will be like?

Irene: That is hard to say, really, I don't know. So far everything is good, but at the time later on I don't know, but right now everything is really good. I think everything's going to be good.

Judy: What do you think the future of your grandchildren will be like?

Irene: I really think my grandchildren they're going to just follow after the Metis. I think everything would turn, be so different for them. A lot of these people, a lot of our Metis people, they're turning to be... they don't want to be Metis people. But all my grandchildren, so far, they're not ashamed

of being Metis people and are very proud of it, they're not being ashamed.

Judy: So you think that if they continue with their Metis culture that they will have a good future in front of them?

Irene: Yes they have, they can really look forward to it.

Judy: During the times in your life when you were having problems and difficulties, how did you remain strong through that period?

Irene: Well, at that time we were, I don't know, like I just said a while ago, the Metis people, they were stronger people. And I don't know, since we come into the city we were just poor people. I didn't even see doctors, I didn't see a doctor when I was out of town for, all in all... Well, I couldn't remember when I seen a doctor when I was young. And today we have to take the kids to the doctor for this thing and this thing, and that. I don't know, it just keeps you guessing right along. And when you think back when I lived in Round Prairie our nearest doctor was about fourteen miles from us, and he was out there by himself. Well, we didn't have anybody to run to doctors and things like the way we have to today and this is why I figured that we were very strong people.

Judy: So did you think, though, at any times when you were having problems did you ever go to the church, or go to another member of the family for advice and strength?

Irene: Not really, you almost have to, well, you had to go church. Yes, you went to church for that. You always asked your High Power, as we call God, to give you the strength to work things out -- and it always worked.

Judy: Okay, let's go into some of the things about the daily life when you were growing up. What do you remember about growing up in your family, the daily life of it?

Irene: Daily life was good, really. Some way was good, yes, my daily life was good, I would have to say, because this is all the way we all lived that way. So there was no difference, you know, for me to be any different than anybody else. And we didn't really go for this thing and this thing like the way it is today. No, no, no. We didn't go like that, we just had to take what was given to us and we accept everything, we kind of lived kind of happy. When my father and mother went away, you know, we made a little bit of candy for ourselves -- kind of enjoyed that life. (laughs) We made things for ourselves; my brothers were always home.

Judy: What words would you use to describe those years?

Irene: What do you mean by describing? What, how, what year?

Judy: Those years that you were growing up. How would you

describe them, were they happy years, hard years, confusing to you?

Irene: Oh, it was hard work, yes, it was hard work. Yes, they made us work. We all had to work. They made us work but I mean they didn't... At times you were a little confused about the work but then again you had to do it. When you seen the other kids doing it so you figure, "Well, I got to do it too. The other kids are doing it so I have to do it too." They made us pick stones even. We had horses and my brother and I we drove a team of horses. We picked all the small stones -- they made us work. We helped, too, as much as we could.

Judy: What would you describe as an ordinary day that you remember as a young girl, during the winter, let's say?

Irene: Well, the winter we, as being a young girl, I was able to go, to go dance. That was the most important thing was to go to a dance. And we had a good time going to school to a dance, at school or a private house. We'd go to some neighbor and start -- they have a violin, guitar, and banjo or something like that which we really enjoyed. That was our entertainment for at nights.

Judy: What kind of chores did you do during the day?

Irene: Well, we had to look after the horses and if we had any eggs. I remember one year before we sold everything, like cattle, we had some cattle, we had to milk the cattle, the cows, before we went out any place. And when we go out and then we'd go and play. We'd always go out and meet the neighbors, neighbor kids and we'd have a good time when we was with the neighbor kids. There was three of us, two of my brothers and myself -- my sister was a little too small to come out. They were kids then.

Judy: Did you do similar things during the summer days?

Irene: Oh, in the summer days, the only sports that we had in the summer, and I think this was the only thing that anybody had, was we had these picnics and then we played ball. That was the only thing that we had in the summer. We never had, you know, much of anything and our dances didn't carry on. In the wintertime our dances carried on but not in the summer.

Judy: Tell me about an ordinary day you would have as a young woman, say from the time you got up, what you did during the day till the time you went to bed.

Irene: Well, we'd go out, I'd go out and help my brother fill the trough up with water and everything, and help him. And after I finished all my work inside then would I go and help my brother -- my brother was younger than I was. My older brothers were out on the, in the bush chopping their fence pickets so we have to do this work for them. And, you know, while they were gone out they come in late. And we'd come back in and maybe we'd have some of the neighbor kids -- we'd play

cards at home, in the house and then they'd go home and then we'd go to bed.

Judy: How about an ordinary day as a middle-aged woman?

Irene: Well, when I was a middle-aged woman I had lots of work to do. I was busy, I was really a busy woman all the time, so my time went very fast because I had lots of work to do. And I helped, my mother was -- like I said, she was a sickly woman. My mom lived till she was eighty-two but then she didn't have very good health, and then my Aunt Louise, we'd work for her. And at the time, even at that time, we used to go out and, you know, to dances and we'd play cards, you know, there wasn't that much, really. We didn't, we didn't go to these halls or anything like that like the way they do today, you know, and they have all these banquets and all that. We didn't have anything like that.

Judy: You just got together with friends and family?

Irene: That's all, we just got together with them.

Judy: Let's talk about the house you grew up in. How many rooms did it have in it?

Irene: Had one big room and it was a log house. And there we had to work harder to fix our house up because we had to help my mother to fix this -- my brothers didn't have time.

See, my dad and mother was parted then, already, when I was about eleven years old. Well, the house we lived in had one room, two windows, and it had a big wide floor on it.

Judy: Was that a wood floor?

Irene: Oh yes, it was all wood. It wasn't the best but then we managed to live in it, anyway. There was not the dirt floor and we got by on that and then we had... And we had lots of flour sacks and sugar sacks and we used to make all our bedspreads with all that, and all our curtains -- we'd buy dye and dye our curtains. Sometimes we'd like to put our curtains in the blue, we'd dye them in blue and fix our curtains up. Try to make our place look a little bit better. And at that time I was about eleven, twelve, thirteen years old then, and we were able to get a little, a few things more than what we had when I was about eight or nine years old. So this house we lived in, we used the mud to fill it up with. In the log house you have to use mud. And we didn't have enough money to buy anything else to cover it, so we went out and we got some clay and we put that in the tub, and we used it as we whitewashed inside of the house...

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Irene: Well, there was not really any money to buy any

calcimine or anything. We didn't know what paint was at that time, at least I didn't. And we used clay, mixed it up in a tub and then we whitewashed the house inside after we'd packed it down with mud. But it looked real nice, it was white and, you know, it give us plenty of light and we put up our curtains with our sugar bags that we made. To us, at that time, it was real nice, we enjoyed. We had a nice little stove, cook stove and this is where we did all our baking. Of course, we had to bake our bannock in there.

Judy: What did you have for heat, did you have wood or oil heat?

Irene: No, we had a stove, a cook stove and there's coal in... Well, we burned mostly wood, we didn't have, didn't know what coal was at that time but then we had lots of wood, we burned wood. And it was just a small little cook stove but it was a cute little thing. Then we had the heater, too. We had to have a heater in this big house because the house was quite big -- we had to have two stoves in it to keep it warm.

Judy: Did you have electricity in the house?

Irene: No we didn't, we had coal oil lamps.

Judy: How about running water, did you have running water?

Irene: Oh no, we never had no water. We had a well outside and I used to haul the water in. We had an old tank, like, you know, water barrel where we put our water in. That was always our job too, my brother and I used to haul our water in there.

Judy: Tell me about the types of furniture you had.

Irene: We didn't have no... We had beds in our house and benches mostly wemade at that time. When we moved into this house, before we used to use apple boxes, but then this house we had made two benches. My mother was very, she was very nice about all kinds of things like that. She covered the benches, you know, with some old rags that she had and she fixed them all up nicely. It made it look nice to have it in the house with two benches on both sides of the table and being (inaudible) only we didn't... used the old coats, things like that that what we had to put our... There was no leather at that time, I'll tell you, to use. But I mean we were happy about it. We were standing there, we were helping my mother, we really thought that was really nice, you know. And which a lot of times I'd like to see all this stuff back again. Well, I don't know what happened to it all when we moved from there, we just left it there, you know.

Judy: So it was mostly hand made stuff that you had in your house?

Irene: Oh yes, everything was hand made. Our table was all hand made also -- our table was made out of 2 X 4s, you know. Then we just put the boards on top and then we (inaudible)

table, covered it with the oil cloth, the table cloth we put it on. But it made it look nice, you know. And sometimes we have small ones we'd put them... My mother was quite handy about things like that. She made them even for our night tables and then put little curtains around them, you know, and put little shelves on them. We even used the dry, just poplar, like, you know, we'd use that. We'd cut them all up and saw them, cut them in half, open them up like, you know. My mother used to make little shelves with things like that. And I will never forget the first thing that we ever bought. I never, never knew what a radio was or anything. And I don't know, my brother bought a battery radio and my God, we really thought that we were so, really so rich then because we had something... We couldn't believe it when we turned it on and

we're able to listen to the radio. And the next thing he bought -- he bought this from a farmer -- at that time they didn't call them stereos or nothing, they called them gramophones. Put one record at a time, you'd turn it just like a crank and my brother brought that in. Oh, my God, we really thought we were so well off to have all this in our house to have the radio and a gramophone.

Judy: How old were you when he brought those into the house?

Irene: I was fourteen years old. And my brother was younger, he was two years younger than me, and the other one, she was younger yet. And she used to just sit there and listen to them and she used to just rock herself. She'd sit on the chair there, sit on the bed and rock herself -- she used to like that music so much (inaudible). She was the youngest girl in our family. Well, we really enjoyed what we got, really, that was a real thing that we enjoyed. And then we had our neighbors there, they were very good neighbors, their houses were the same as what we had and we had the white people there too, and they lived in log houses too.

Judy: The white people lived close to the Metis people?

Irene: Not that close, no. They were, oh, I would say they were about two miles. But when they did go, like my uncle lived about -- we didn't live right close to one another anyway. My uncle didn't live that close and the closest neighbor we had was over half a mile.

Judy: So your yard was quite large then?

Irene: Oh yes, our yard was quite large. And then the neighbor we had half a mile from us, we used to buy the eggs from her and some butter. She had chickens and she had some cows so we used to get some butter from her.

Judy: Did your father own the land?

Irene: He homesteaded along Procter's Lake.

Judy: How long was he there for?

Irene: Well, he was there for about, I imagine about eight or nine years. Well, it could have been longer now, you know, before -- that's where I was born so it could have been longer than that, as far as I could remember.

Judy: Where did you move from there after you left?

Irene: When we left that homestead where he had there, we moved over to -- in the same area only it was a different house we had, we got a different place. It was a bigger house and this is where we moved in.

Judy: And what was the name of this area that you were living in?

Irene: Well, it was called Round Prairie, only they used to call that one because it was by the lake and they called it Procter's Lake and this is where I was born, along Procter's Lake. And this is where we moved from, you see, and this is where my dad had the homestead. But from there we, well we was still in the area of Round Prairie all the way, all the time, we were in Round Prairie.

Judy: At the time when you were young, what did the saying "road allowance people" mean to you? Did you ever hear that term when you were growing up?

Irene: No, I didn't.

Judy: So you never heard that?

Irene: Well, what did you mean by...

Judy: What they called "road allowance people" were people that were allowed to live...

Irene: Oh, on the road allowance.

Judy: Yeah.

Irene: Oh yes. Well, there was people living there but they had mostly the people... There was some people that they didn't have a place there, they moved up there and they lived along the road, the road allowance. See, we were, just had our own place so we didn't live on the road allowance. That's one place I don't remember living, but I remember some other people living in there, you know, and they were Metis people too.

Judy: They were Metis then?

Irene: Yeah, they were Metis, yeah.

Judy: Do you remember anything special about them?

Irene: Not really, I didn't remember too much special about

them. But they were living the same way that we were living.

Judy: When you grew up and raised a family of your own did things change for you, and if so how did they change?

Irene: They didn't change that much, really, but you're more happy because this is your home. Well, when I had my daughter Phyllis I thought I had the world.

Judy: In general did things get better or worse for you?

Irene: Well, I really have to say that they got better for me.

Judy: How? In what ways would you say that they got better?

Irene: Well, it was more... like I was able to work and I was able to look after my family and help to look after them, and I was very proud of my family.

A VERY LOUD HUM ON THE TAPE COMMENCES HERE

Judy: What comes to your mind when you think about your family life as a young girl? Were you happy or sad?

Irene: Oh no, we were happy, I was happy. Well, like I said, I was happy for (inaudible). So we had something to do.

Judy: What were your responsibilities at home, what were your chores?

Irene: Every day our chores were, my God, I have to help to clean house and when I was finished -- my brother was younger and I had to go out and help him too, we had to clean the horses. And my brother took one out, we still had one to look after, and we filled the trough up and I used to help him carry the water in and the wood. When we were finished with that sometimes we'd get the homemade checker board out and we'd play checkers. (inaudible).

Judy: What were your brother's or sister's chores? Were they different than yours?

Irene: No, we had the one, only one brother who was able to work. He was two years younger than me. The other two they were too small to do anything (inaudible).

Judy: What special things did your family do together that you have good memories about?

Irene: Oh they did, they had a good time themselves (inaudible). Nowadays they go out and enjoy themselves (inaudible) parties or anything like that, I mean they enjoy themselves (inaudible). And then when we were young that's the

one we learned, even with our friends we'd play with them. My brother and I so that was six of us (inaudible). And we go out to the friends or the friends come over.

Judy: How about as a family? What did you do? Things that you remember doing?

Irene: Well, when we were finished with all our work (inaudible). We had nothing else to do.

Judy: Do you remember going out berry picking or camping, hunting together as a family?

Irene: Oh well, we did that -- just with my mother not with my dad -- my dad always had (inaudible). Where we lived there was lots of berries around. And then my brother used to set the traps, snares for chickens and we had to go and get them in the morning. (inaudible). So we'd all go down there and go check and we'd bring back some chickens that we had to pluck. (inaudible) And like I said, the two small ones at home, well, they just took it easy (inaudible).

Judy: When you were young and you thought of the word "family" does that just include your own immediate family, or did that include your aunts and uncles, and your grandparents. Did you think of them as close family also?

Irene: Very close. I don't know, the Metis people, they're very close people (inaudible). And as today, as I know, even my grandchildren today, how close they are with me. I know my friends come over here and they said, "You know, we're so happy to see this. We don't see this very often. But we sure see your grandsons are so close to you, very close." And that's the way we were with our family, we were very close. And we would help them with anything they want, bring in wood or anything like that. That's the way my grandchildren are today. Yeah, they're very close to me.

Judy: Did you have strong family loyalty? Did you stick up for each other no matter what you did, or what they did?

Irene: Oh yes.

Judy: Are there any other family members besides your mother and father that you especially remember?

Irene: My grandparents (inaudible) my dad's sisters and then he had one brother.

Judy: Why do you remember them especially?

Irene: Well, they were very close too, they were very close to us. You see, for a long time my dad and mother (inaudible). I remember all my aunts were very close to me. I was very close with my aunts from my father's side, my mother's side

too, the ones that were here. Most of my mother's sisters were all from the States, and her brothers were here.

Judy: How do you remember you mother?

Irene: I remember my mother being (inaudible). There was no way my mother would ever hurt us. (inaudible) My mother worked hard for us. (inaudible).

Judy: How do you remember your father?

Irene: My father was very, he was good, too. But the alcohol got a hold of my father and my mother didn't use the alcohol so she and my father had to break up. (inaudible) Alcohol caused all our hardships and it was very hard on us when our dad left, they broke up (inaudible)

Judy: What did your father do for a living?

Irene: He was, worked only, most of the time he went out in the summer and pick the stones and then in the fall he'd come home and he'd been out threshing. And then in the wintertime he went out and cut fence (inaudible). And then he'd sell hay in the wintertime to the farmers. And that's how he made his money in the wintertime. In the summertime (inaudible). I remember him buying everything in the case for the winter (inaudible) canned berries. I'd help my mother do all that kind of work.

Judy: Did he have any jobs in places of business?

Irene: (Inaudible).

Judy: Did he try to earn money in any other ways other than what you mentioned?

Irene: No he didn't, because my father at that time, my mother, did not know (inaudible).

Judy: Did your parents have a garden?

Irene: We didn't have a garden. My aunt had a garden and she used to take (inaudible). My aunt didn't have a large family (inaudible). We used to buy a lot of stuff like that in the fall (inaudible).

Judy: Did you have any livestock, or a horse and a wagon?

Irene: Yes, we had horses, horses and a wagon.

Judy: Did you have any livestock like cows, or pigs?

Irene: No we didn't. We had some there before, then my dad sold them all. (Inaudible).

Judy: Can you remember any times that your father was not working?

Irene: Not really. (inaudible) he worked in the summer, like I told you, he was picking stones and threshing (inaudible). He was quite busy. He kept himself quite busy.

Judy: What did your uncles or any of the other Metis people do for a living there? Was it along the same lines as what your father did?

Irene: Not all of them. One of my uncles there he stayed right in there -- he had a very large family, my mother's brother, and he stayed right at Round Prairie, he didn't go away and work. (Inaudible) and he did all this work in the summertime like threshing, things like that, that's what he did. And he got by with that.

Judy: How about the other Metis people?

Irene: The other Metis people, they were doing the same thing because we were all, sometimes there was ten, twelve families went out, they all went south to pick stones.

Judy: What kinds of jobs were there around the community where your parents lived?

Irene: There wasn't too much during the time (inaudible).

Judy: How old were you when you got your first paying job, and what was that job?

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Irene: My first paying job was when I was seventeen, and there again I was cooking for those men out in the field. They were picking stones; I was cooking for them and I got paid. And it wasn't a big pay either -- I got \$3 a day. I thought it was big pay then. At \$3 a day I was able to buy my own things for myself, my own clothes, and I really thought that was nice.

Judy: What type of other jobs have you had during your life?

Irene: Well, those are the only kind like, you know, I couldn't do too much work like, you know. I'd work part time here and there, you know, and when my kids... Before, just before when I was a girl?

Judy: This is during your entire life, up till now.

Irene: Oh, I've had different jobs, I've had different places, I've worked different places. I enjoyed every place I've worked, really I did, I enjoyed everything. And everything I did I've enjoyed, all my life.

Judy: What types of things did you do? I remember you mentioned that you worked at Modern Press.

Irene: Oh yes, I worked there for... I don't know, I can't remember, I worked there for a long time. That was mostly when we first came back from... I was only about sixteen I guess when I first worked there. When I came back from picking stones I was able to work there. And I really enjoyed that work because I was getting paid for it. But I didn't enjoy working with the men -- they had to do my work, I didn't like that. Because I was only about a hundred pounds, hundred and ten pounds, so I wasn't too big.

Judy: What other types of jobs beside working at Modern Press did you have?

Irene: My jobs was more or less doing -- I was babysitting and doing some day work, that's all I could do. Like I said it before, earlier, I didn't have the education to get out and get a job of any kind. That was the only kind of work that I was able to do and I did a lot of that work.

Judy: You mentioned that you worked for the native women.

Irene: Oh yes, I worked for the native women, I worked for them for quite a while.

Judy: So that was later on in your life?

Irene: Later on in life, yeah.

Judy: Did you have a lot of periods of unemployment? Or did you find that you usually had steady work?

Irene: I had steady work, but some of the people that I worked for, they'd move, and they'd move so far that I couldn't get back to them, like, you know. That's the kind of work I was doing, you see. At that time I didn't even know my way around Saskatoon at that time, really, and then I lived up in Nutana and that was the only part of town that I did know. So

that's where I did all my work there. You see the greenhouse was up there and that's where I did all my work, around the greenhouse out there.

Judy: So you worked in a greenhouse?

Irene: Oh yes, I worked there three years. And then I left there and I started working in the hotel and then they called me back. They wanted me back so I went back and worked there for another three years.

Judy: That was at the greenhouse?

Irene: Yes.

Judy: What kind of work did you think that the other Metis women your age did, during the same period?

Irene: I noticed some of them didn't do any... they worked, they did some of that kind of work too. But I know the Metis women, there was one woman there, she was an older woman, she had a large family and she used to go out and work too. She used to go out and do the same kind of work that I was doing.

Judy: Let's talk about your community for a while. What sticks out in you mind about community life when you were growing up? What do you remember about the places that you lived, the people or the...?

Irene: Where I lived when I was growing up? After we left Round Prairie?

Judy: Even at the time that you were living there and the places (inaudible).

Irene: Well, me moved here in Saskatoon after we left. It was 1932 when we left Round Prairie.

Judy: And you moved to Saskatoon?

Irene: We moved to Saskatoon. We lived up in Nutana and we lived there. We had a little old...

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INFORMANT'S ADDRESS:

IRENE DIMICK #2  
3866 JOHN A. MACDONALD

INTERVIEW LOCATION: SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN  
3866 JOHN A. MACDONALD  
SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN

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INTERVIEWER: JUDY M. THIBODEAU  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- General account of her life.
- Discusses her attitude to being Metis.

Judy: So what do you remember about your community life in Saskatoon, in the Nutana area, let's say?

Irene: Well, I can remember there it was good, it was really good, I really liked it around there. And like I said, we didn't have everything really right up to date, but then we got by and just come along. When we first moved in 1932 -- from Round Prairie we moved there -- and we lived in a tent for about two months, then we got a house. That was on 4th Street. And we remain in that house for about, I would say, maybe eight years.

Judy: What do you remember about the people while you were living there for that many years? The people around you and the businesses around you.

Irene: All the people around there, they were good. As far as I could remember they were all good people around there. But they were white people, you know, they were white people. But there were only two Metis people there, two families, with us like, you know. We lived on 4th and the other ones lived on 5th Street, and then the other one lived on 4th Street just about a block from us there.

Judy: Do you remember their names?

Irene: Pritchard and Ouellette. They had a large family too.

Judy: What language was spoken in your parent's home when you were growing up? Do you remember what the first language was that you learned?

Irene: Cree.

Judy: That was the first language that you learned?

Irene: Yes, Cree.

Judy: And as you were growing up did it always remain Cree?

Irene: No, no. They would speak maybe one word of Cree and another word in English. And then that just carried on. Then after a while, when my younger brothers and sister went to school they started speaking English all the time. Then my mother got to start being in the city here, she starts speaking English to the kids, but we didn't forget. I can still speak

Cree and my older brothers can. My younger brothers they understand but they can't speak it.

Judy: When were you first aware of being Metis?

Irene: I heard that, well, way before, I couldn't even remember when my dad said we were Metis people. And when the father, the priest, came here from Saskatoon he was very proud of his... I remember going to church that time, going to this house and he said the Metis people, they believe in God so much. And the French people -- we had French people there, we had a place called the French Flats. And he used to go there, like one Sunday, and he'd come one Sunday to the house there, and then he would come back to Saskatoon.

Judy: What age were you when you remember your father telling the priest that you were Metis?

Irene: I was about eight years old.

Judy: So that's when you first realized that you had a title, that you were Metis?

Irene: Yeah.

Judy: Did your parents think and speak of themselves as Metis often?

Irene: Oh yes. Even when they had company they would speak about, you know... the Metis people come from like, you know, they were in the States, eh. And they left this place there because they used to call them -- they didn't say Metis at that time but it was always a halfbreed.

Judy: So you said that other Metis families used to come and they would talk about it.

Irene: Oh yes. They would discuss about their Metis life. And the older people, I would imagine, you know, their fathers like, you know -- I didn't remember them people because I used to hear them discuss their people. When you're only eight years old you could hear a lot of things being said. Eight and nine, ten years old, you know, I was all the way through with them. No, I was really...

Judy: So they were proud of being Metis?

Irene: They were, yes, they were very proud.

Judy: Did your parents or grandparents or any of your other relatives ever tell stories about Metis history that you can remember, specific stories?

Irene: I can remember my grandfather telling stories about even their carts -- how they had to move with the little -- those were the two-wheeled carts. And they had the one horse in there, and they had a pack horse. I remember my grandfather was telling this to my dad and some of my dad's friends there, they were visiting my grandfather there, and they were talking about this, what do they call them again, charrettes. And he said they enjoyed that. That's when they moved, so that's how they moved, with just the two-wheeled carts. They didn't have no wagon, just two-wheeled carts and then they had one horse on there, and then they always had the pack horse. Sometimes, like, my grandfather said when they moved they had two. And then when they moved from the States then they got wagons; they had the covered wagons. That's about it that I could remember him saying about things like that about them carts.

Judy: The other Metis families in your community, did they get together for social events such weddings, or parties, or Christmas? Did they get together to celebrate those?

Irene: They got together -- more or less the Metis people celebrated New Year's, not Christmas as much as they did New Year's. New Year's was the biggest day, known as the biggest day for them that I could remember, because they would have, they'd go from one to another and they would set up nice tables and they'd have everything -- all kinds of food, good food to eat, you know, and that's the way they carried on. And I kind of liked that -- you'd hear them bells just ringing, coming. It really reminds you a lot of Santa Claus but then it wasn't, it was New Year's. Christmas we'd get a little bit of gifts -- not that much, not the way it is today now. Oh, you'd get more or less a lot of fruit to eat and that's what we got. But New Year's, well, that was a big day for the Metis people. I'll tell you, they went around all over. They would start early in the morning and go from house to house and they would stay there and then they would move on to another house. The other family will come and... Well, they had a good time, and then when they all got together at night in a big house -- they would meet in the largest house -- and that's where they had the dance; that was their New Year's dance. And they had a

good time, very good time.

Judy: Do you remember your father ever wearing a Metis sash, or other traditional Metis clothing?

Irene: The belts, what the... They were more like a buckskin. They were made of buckskin and they were all cut, you know, you wear it as a belt and that was to be worn on their good clothes. That was more like saved for specials dos.

Judy: Do you remember your mother ever dressing in Metis style?

Irene: Oh yes, my mother has dressed that way all the way through. They all dressed that way.

Judy: Describe to us something typical that she would wear.

Irene: Well, they would wear the long dresses. And they would wear the high top shoes. I can remember the lace ones they had -- they were laced to the top ones there, you know, they were fancy shoes, they really looked smart. But then at that time, you know, I really thought they were really smart looking, dressy looking. And that's the way my mother was dressed. And they didn't wear all colored, bi-colored clothes, it was mostly darker clothes they wore. You didn't see anybody wear real light clothes. It was always darker clothes they wore. And the same with the men even, the men didn't wear no light shirts and things like that, they wore darker shirts.

Judy: Did you know if your mother ever knew any of the traditional Metis skills?

Irene: Well I, I don't know, but I suppose she did. I imagine they all knew.

Judy: Did your parents know how to jig?

Irene: Oh yes. (laughs) That was the number one dance, square dance.

Judy: Did they teach you how to?

Irene: Oh yes. That was the first thing we were taught when we went to a dance was the square dance, and to, like, seven steps, two steps, and your waltz. That's all you danced when you went to dances.

Judy: So you did a lot of jigging at the local dances when you had dances?

Irene: Oh yes, yeah.

Judy: Were there any fiddle players in your family?

Irene: Any what?

Judy: Fiddle players.

Irene: In my family my brother was. My oldest brother.

Judy: Did he ever play and sing any Metis songs?

Irene: Yes, he did sing, he did sing. But he would sing more or less Indian.

Judy: More Indian songs than Metis songs?

Irene: Yeah. I don't know, if he sang anything else would be French songs too. He would sing those too, you know.

Judy: Well, what would these songs be about that he would sing?

Irene: Well, like what they do. Well, like with the powwow, with them kinds of songs, like what they sing here when they do the powwow. And your French songs he used to sing, you know, about, well, like the way they do about the girls today and those kinds of songs he used to sing. Because when he bought his gramophone he bought records and that's where he picked this up from.

Judy: Did you have any non-native relatives living in your community?

Irene: Oh yes, we had lots, we had lots of them but no relatives at all.

Judy: How about ones that were relatives?

Irene: Oh, we had some, we had some of them too. But we had quite a few families there that was not, were not relatives at all.

Judy: What was your relationship with relatives, like, say your sister married a white husband? What was your relationship with him, the family's relationship?

Irene: You know, really at that time, the only one that I could remember she married, and that was my cousin -- not my sister, but my cousin -- she married this white fellow. He more or less got in with, really, with the Metis people. So, I mean we didn't hold nothing against him, you know, because he really joined with the Metis people.

Judy: Did any of the elders in your family believe in, practise the traditional Indian religion? Did any of the elderly people believe in Indian medicine?

Irene: Indian medicine?

Judy: Or Indian religion, something along that line?

Irene: They did with the medicine, yes, they did. That's all they... they used quite a bit of that medicine.

Judy: What kind of religion did they...

Irene: Well, they believe in... their religion you said?

Judy: Yes.

Irene: Well, Catholic religion. And you said the medicine? And they did use the Indian medicine, and they used it on my kid sister. My kid sister was lying there and the doctor give up on my kid sister. She had diarrhea so bad that she, they didn't know what to do to her. They just let her go and she just lay there and we thought she was going to die. So this older fellow came up to her and he said, "I think I can help your daughter," he said. He went out and got some herbs. Whatever kind of herbs they were I do not know. But he brought them in and he boiled them and he put it in the bottle for her, and she took that like drinking milk. And it stopped her diarrhea and she got strong, she still... and that's my younger sister today, she's still alive. But I remember the doctor saying he couldn't do too much. They had a doctor from Dundurn. But this old fellow cured her with these herbs; so I guess they had to believe in some of the medicine that they used, you know, the Indian medicine.

Judy: The Metis people used this?

Irene: Yes.

Judy: Do you remember them ever using sweat lodges?

Irene: Not really.

Judy: You don't remember them using them? Did you follow any of these practices when you were growing up?

Irene: Just... Not them herbs, I couldn't get them herbs, but I wanted to practise on that really bad. That was very important to us, I don't know, because I seen her -- she was very weak and we felt so bad because there was our baby sister.

But he didn't tell us what it was and the old man passed away that way and he never got to tell us what it was. But then there was another medicine there that he told us even if she had pains, kidney trouble, she could use this. And I could still get that, I remember that because he showed us that.

Judy: This man that you were talking about, was he Metis?

Irene: Yes he was.

Judy: So you wanted to learn about these herbs and so on when you were growing up?

Irene: Oh yes.

Judy: Were your parents able to teach you anything about that?

Irene: Well, my parents did not know too much about that. No, it was the older, the one that was older than my parents yet, that was able to do this. He was the one that did, he was an old man. He was a very nice old man.

Judy: And he was... Where did this happen, in Round Prairie or Saskatoon?

Irene: It happened in Round Prairie.

Judy: At what age do you remember this happening at?

Irene: I was about ten years old. Because my sister, I know she was so sick, she just lay there and then they had this doctor in from... They had to get him in, he used to come from about twelve, fourteen miles from Dundurn to Round Prairie there. And he came and he said he could... he gave her medicine but it didn't help. So they went to the neighbor -- the white people lived there and they had a telephone there, so he said to phone. And so my dad went and used the phone there. And he said there isn't much he could do for her but he would be back to see her. So he did come back to see her but there was nothing he could do. He brought some more medicine out, it didn't help, so this old man took over with the Indian medicine and it really worked.

Judy: Do you remember that when you moved into a larger city that these practices of Indian medicine between the Metis people were still happening?

Irene: They were kind of, they were kind of scared to use the Indian medicine because of the doctors.

Judy: So do you think that is one way how they lost that tradition?

Irene: Yeah, that's right.

Judy: When you moved into a larger city, did your living standard increase or decrease?

Irene: Well, it decreased somewhat living in the bigger city. (laughs)

Judy: Why is that?

Irene: Well, it's a bigger city. It seems like it... and there again, see, we had to, we couldn't depend on our Metis people to do anything for us -- we had to go to our doctor. That kind of decreased a little bit of different things there.

Judy: How about food wise?

Irene: Well, food again, yes it did. Where we had... See our meat, we buy it in the meat market here. But out in the country we did not have to buy in the meat market, we used to go and buy it from the farmer. And then we'd butcher in the fall and have it hanging there -- it was such a lovely tasting meat. And today our meat is not as good as it... to me it don't taste as good as it did at that time. And even our pork, we'd cut our own meat up and we always had a little, kind of a wood (inaudible). We'd fix that up with all logs, too, a little granary where we'd put... and we'd make it with shelves with poles and then put our meat in there.

Judy: So you would smoke your meat then?

Irene: Yeah, we'd smoke our meat. And our bacon, we'd dry salt bacon.

Judy: And you weren't able to do that in the city?

Irene: No, we weren't able to do anything like that in the city.

Judy: When you found that you moved to the city, did you find that the ties that you had with other Metis people, did they become stonger or did they get weaker?

Irene: Where, in the city?

Judy: Yes.

Irene: Seemed like they got weaker.

Judy: Why do you think that is?

Irene: Well I, just through my own experience, because I know I was not as strong like, you know, as I was being out in the country, being out there... That was just (inaudible) my own experience, myself.

Judy: You did not feel you were as independent as you were before?

Irene: That's right.

Judy: How would you describe the Metis community in Saskatoon when you lived here? Would you even call it a community or do you think that the people are too far spread out?

Irene: They're spread out too far.

Judy: So you don't think there is anything such as a community of Metis people?

Irene: No, I don't think there is.

Judy: Not like there was when you were growing up?

Irene: No, not like when we were growing up.

Judy: When you were growing up in your family, did your family fit into the white community? Did they get along with them?

Irene: Well, they didn't bother them that much. There was white people in the, you know, there, but they didn't bother them that much. And they more or less got along, but then, you know, they're not... I wouldn't say they were really good friends, but then, you know, they were just...

Judy: When you were young did the white kids ever call you names because you were Metis?

Irene: Oh yeah. Their number one word was "you're a dirty halfbreed." (laughs) And then this is where we learned to ask of our father what was a halfbreed. And he said, "That's

because we're Metis people," he said. And he said, "We were halfbreeds. That's what they call us," he said. But he said, "Don't pay any attention to that. That's what we are," he says, so he says, "We should be proud." So we didn't pay too much attention to that and there wasn't that many white people really around us. But the white people that was there did say them things, you know.

Judy: Did you or any other Metis people that you knew of ever get paid less than the white people did for the same work?

Irene: Well, not really that I know of.

Judy: They were all paid equally?

Irene: Yeah, not that I...

Judy: Do you ever remember being denied a job because you were Metis?

Irene: Not in my time. But I know this other girl -- she was a friend of mine -- and she went and applied for this job and I don't know, that they told her at that time they didn't hire native people, they put it, they just put it native people.

Judy: So people that you knew of were turned down because they were Metis?

Irene: Yeah.

Judy: Did you feel comfortable when you went into stores or cities where there were a lot of white people?

Irene: No, not that, no, no, I didn't. Not from the start I didn't.

Judy: How old were you that you remember going into larger cities and businesses?

Irene: Oh, I was quite, I was quite old then, when I start to feel that I, you know, that I was able to mix with these people as well. And they were coming to mix with us so, I mean, I thought, "Well, it's all right now."

Judy: You got used to it after?

Irene: Yes, I got used to it after.

Judy: Do you remember the city authorities such as police, or someone like that, treating your family fairly? Did they treat you fairly?

Irene: Well, at that time I would have to tell you we were not mixed up with police at all. But I know some of the other people that had been mixed up with police, they were not treated fairly, no way. They were not.

Judy: What incidents can you remember being told to you about something like that?

Irene: Well, the police themselves here, well, said here, well, they didn't say Metis they just said halfbreed. So you know what it was then. Because a lot of these right now, right today, I know that they are mistreated, because when I worked here at the halfway house. It changed a little bit there, it changed a little bit with the judges even it changed a little bit, but not that much. But the police hasn't changed too much and yet again you have to give it to the judge, you have to leave it to the judge on that.

Judy: Did your family and other Metis go to social events that included non-native people?

Irene: My family went what?

Judy: Did your family and other Metis people go to social events that included white people?

Irene: I can't remember that.

Judy: You can't remember that. Tell me some of the memories you have of dealing with the government during your life.

Irene: Well, the only time that I ever dealt with anything with the government like, you know, it was nothing really only... Well, when we were younger like, you know, it was all Liberal. When they used to come up to the house my dad and my mother they were strong Liberals at that time and my grandfather, and everybody was. I don't know why but that's what they were. I remember that because every time you mention this, I don't know what they used to call the CCF and they say, "Oh, no."

Liberal are the ones." That was NDP, I guess, was CCF at that time.

Judy: But the Metis people were mostly Liberals?

Irene: Liberal. All the people that I knew, all our Metis people out in Round Prairie, they were all Liberal. And it took a long, long time before they changed. After they got in the city here that's when they changed, really. That's when my father changed, I know that's when my father changed then.

Judy: So the only dealings that you remember having with the government was politics wise?

Irene: Yeah.

Judy: What about with welfare?

Irene: Well, with welfare, I've dealt with welfare, had lots of welfare. Not really too much for myself but I dealt through with the girls that I had at the (inaudible) home. And then my mother was on welfare when we come into town here -- she had to go on welfare with us. And it wasn't no good, welfare, I'll tell you.

Judy: What was it like?

Irene: Well, it's like my mother was in the hospital for three months because they nearly starved you. They would give you a half pound of butter for a week and you had to pick that up yourself on 1st Avenue there, and they would...

(END OF SIDE A)

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Irene: And they would give you maybe a half pound of tea. If you took the tea you didn't get the coffee; if you took the jam you didn't get the coffee. You didn't get no cash, it was just groceries. And they'd give you white beans -- you'd boil them all day and they were still hard. And a little bit of meat, that had to do you for a whole week. So we were kind of in rough shape there.

Judy: What kind of things did you get for clothing?

Irene: Oh, we got shoes that nobody could wear. They were just... soles, they were just like wood. And you wore, girls got black stockings, and they got everything that the people did not want is what we got. Which is more or less all the garbage that the stores couldn't get rid of, they'd give it to

them and then that's what we got. We had to go and pick them out and you were only allowed two pair a year -- if you wore them out in a year you do without. The welfare wasn't like the

way it is today. Oh, no, it wasn't. My mother got... she had to walk. My poor mother was sick and she had to walk. The bus, the streetcar -- it was a streetcar that time, it wasn't a bus -- was only a nickel and the man at the welfare office seen her getting on this bus, on the streetcar, and she paid only a nickel for it. And they told her, "If you can ride a streetcar," he said, "you can buy your groceries." "How, what can you buy for a nickel?" Well, at that time you could buy a piece of baloney for a nickel. She could buy two pounds of meat, two pounds of shortribs for a nickel, they were two pounds for a nickel. But I mean, that was pretty slim living just the same.

Judy:       What kind of memories do you have of dealing with places of business, like a bank, or perhaps a shopping store?

Irene:       I deal with the bank, I deal with the bank now. But at that time I didn't deal with anybody, I didn't deal with no bank or nothing, I didn't know what it was. But today I deal with the bank and I get by pretty well with the bank today, and in the stores, I do.

Judy:       Did you have any trouble in those types of businesses?

Irene:       No, I have no trouble, not today, no.

Judy:       How about then?

Irene:       Well, I had no trouble. Well, I never tried anything like that before, you know, because I didn't think they would even bother looking at us. That's the way I felt about it, you know. But then today is different. When I started to work, that was about fourteen years ago when I worked for the native women there and I put all that money in the bank there, and I started dealing with the bank. Then I bought a car from there -- it worked out pretty good for me.

Judy:       So you didn't start dealing with those types of businesses till later on in your life?

Irene:       No way, not till later on in my life, no.

Judy:       Do you remember if the town you lived in ever tried to force Metis people to move away from it?

Irene:       No, not the town... No, not where we... Where we lived there there was nobody to tell you to move there because, that's what I told you, Dundurn was our closest town and that

was about fourteen miles. And we were out there in the sand hills and there was nobody there to come and tell us to move. Really, there, no. Maybe if we would have been closer to town we would have been asked to move, but we were not close to town.

Judy:       How about when you moved to Saskatoon?

Irene: Well, we moved to Saskatoon, no, we were not asked to move. But we had some friendly people there too, you know, I just couldn't say. I can't condemn, really, the white people, you know, but then we had some and then there was some bad ones and some good ones.

Judy: Let's talk about religion for a while. Did the church play an important role in your life?

Irene: Did the church what?

Judy: Play an important role in your life. Was it very important to you?

Irene: Oh yes, it was very important. It's still important, still is. That I'll never give, no way.

Judy: Was that as important to your parents as it was to you?

Irene: Oh yes, so were my grandparents. Oh, they were very religious people. I don't know, Metis people there seem to be very religious people. I know when I lived up in the north here I went to church with those people every Sunday, there wasn't a Sunday we didn't go to church, and anything that went on during the week we were in church. I was with them, and we were all Metis people up there, and I really fit right in with them because they were Metis people althoughn my husband was a white man but then he went along with me. He's not a Metis but then he went along with all that.

Judy: Do you remember your parents going to church regularly?

Irene: Oh yes, sure. My mother went to church and my father. And when they did part even my mother went to church all the time. My mother went to church, St. Joseph's Church there -- priest never miss that place there -- and my older sister. Every Sunday they'd stop there and they'd pick us up. They'd say, "You have to go. We have to go to church," so we used to go to church. During Lent we'd have to go, we used to go every morning for forty days.

Judy: Do you remember the priest ever visiting your home?

Irene: Oh yes, there were a lot of priests. There were so many of them coming to visit our homes.

Judy: What did they say to you?

Irene: Oh, they would make their home visits, you know, because we belonged to the parish. And they come and visit with us, and then us kids going to Catholic schools, they would be there. See, my brother-in-law even bought one of the benches, they called it, you know, the benches in the church there. Well, we used to use all that together.

Judy: Did you or your parents ever go to the priest for help besides for religious advice?

Irene: No, no, not that I remember, ever going to the priest for any help. I went to, we went to church. It seems like when you go to church you're helpless there. I don't know, I can still go today and I can just feel, I feel that my help is there as soon as I go into the church. I don't know, I guess that is the Lord's house.

Judy: So your belief in the church didn't get weaker as you grew older?

Irene: No, it never, not... No, the religion is still there and it will always be there for me.

Judy: Do you think the church has more or less influence than it had in the past, over Metis people?

Irene: No, they still, there's still lots there. You mean for Metis people to be in the church? Oh, there's lots of them, there's a lot of Metis people that goes to church.

Judy: So you think that it has about the same influence that it did?

Irene: Yes it did, it does. I see lots of them in there.

Judy: Do you think that the church had generally helped the Metis people to face their difficulties?

Irene: Yes. As I told you, when you go into the church it's so different. It's a different place altogether and you can go in there and, I don't know, you just feel so good. But even my, that little boy I had -- I had him when he was small -- I used to take him in there all the time and he used to enjoy

that. When he got a little bit older he got mixed up with, you know, the other little guys and he doesn't attend the church that much. But he does still believe in God because he always says, "Well, that's the way God wants us to be and that's the way we have to be," you know. So there must be some way that he believes in God there.

Judy: So you think that young people nowadays do believe in God, but the church doesn't have as strong a hold of them as they did on you?

Irene: That's right.

Judy: Let's talk about your education for a little while. What do you remember about going to school?

Irene: I remember quite a bit of it because I was old when I went to school.

Judy: How old were you when you started school?

Irene: I was twelve years old when I went to school, and I went for about two years. Well, I went till I was about fifteen years old, but then I never had one full week because my mother was too sick. My mother was sick all the time and I had to stay home and wash for the other brothers that were going to school and the sister that was going to school, I had to look after them and look after her.

Judy: So you had very little education?

Irene: Yes, I did. I had very little.

Judy: What do you remember the schools as being like when you went to them?

Irene: I mean, they were very nice, the schools that I went to. I went to St. Mary's school and I went to St. Joseph's school and they were very nice, both of them schools was very nice.

Judy: What do you remember about your teachers?

Irene: Well, the sister I had in grade one she was a French sister and the one in grade three she was a French teacher too.

Judy: How did they treat you?

Irene: They were good, they were really good. They were very nice because she, even that sister in grade one, told me,

she said, "You haven't got enough education," she said, "you should go..." They were going to put me into this place but then I had to stay home all the time, and see, my mother did not believe in this kind of thing because, I don't know, they didn't have the education. My mother had very little education, too. My father didn't have any.

Judy: What type of place did your grade one teacher want to put you in?

Irene: Well, she was going to help me to go at night, you know, at the school, in the convent. Well, where the sisters stay here, they were going to help me go there at night.

Judy: In a rectory?

Irene: Yes, and then my mother didn't, she didn't allow that for me to go out at night, so I couldn't go. She didn't think I was going to be going there. I don't know, I guess my mother didn't trust me that much, I guess, at that time. But she didn't want me to go there so I didn't go because she said, "no", and I just couldn't go.

Judy: Were you allowed to speak Cree in school?

Irene: No, we weren't.

Judy: It was just English?

Irene: Yeah, we were not allowed to speak Cree.

Judy: What do you remember about the kinds of things they taught you at school?

Irene: Well, it was your reading, arithmetic, religion from 3:30 on to 4:00, that was number one. And all during Lent -- it starts on Ash Wednesday -- we went to church every day when we were at school. We walked to church every day, which it was good. I liked that. And they would learn us different things, you know, the colors and all that.

Judy: Did you feel that you belonged in school or did you feel uncomfortable there?

Irene: I felt very uncomfortable there because I was, you know, I was not the same age as the other kids in the class -- if I was maybe I wouldn't have felt that way. Because I know the other girls at the same age as me, they were in grade six and seven, you know, or grade eight and here I was not in that. You know, they were in grade six or twelve and they were Metis girls too, they were Metis girls.

Judy: Is that another reason why you didn't feel comfortable there?

Irene: That's right.

Judy: Because you were Metis? What did you enjoy about school?

Irene: I enjoyed school too, you know, because I had some friends in school. And then we'd play these games at school, like jacks, which I never had them at home. But we got them at school there, we used to really enjoy that at the school. And we had, there was a lot of those Metis girls there.

Judy: Did your parents encourage you to do well in school?

Irene: Well, I wouldn't exactly say because, see, sometimes I went to school only two days in a week. But of course maybe if my mother wasn't sick because she wanted the other kids to go to school but she was sick all the time.

Judy: So you think if she wasn't sick she would have encouraged you to go?

Irene: Yes.

Judy: Did they teach you anything about Metis or Indian history?

Irene: Well, they did but I didn't, like I said, I didn't

get that far in school. I remember my brothers and them talking about it after, you know, how they talked about the Metis and Indian people. But see, I didn't get that far, I guess they started at that... like I said, I went only for about two years. And you know a lot of times I figure I did very well for the days I missed in school.

Judy: How did the white kids in school treat you?

Irene: Some were good and some weren't.

Judy: The ones that weren't, what were some of the things they used to do?

Irene: Well, they were the ones that would be calling us names, you know, they would call us that we were halfbreeds, we don't belong there, we shouldn't even go to school we don't belong there, we should have our own schools and all that, you know. Well, our teachers, if they'd find out all that thing too, you know, they would be punished for that. They were not supposed to say them things, but then they did say it anyways.

Judy: Did you ever find yourself fighting because of that?

Irene: Oh yeah, we used to fight with the white girls, a lot of the white girls. Even the white boys we used to fight with them over that, "dirty halfbreeds," you know. Oh, I mean, a lot of time, but then again we'd make up again, be friends again for a while until they start again. When they get mad they would say the same thing again.

Judy: Looking back at your school years do you think your experience there was good or bad?

Irene: It was good. I'd have to say it was good.

Judy: Let's talk about politics for a while. I remember you mentioning that mostly the Metis people were, mostly voted Liberal.

Irene: That's right.

Judy: Did they ever get involved with the parties or did they just go and vote?

Irene: Well, when it come like, you know, the time for them to vote, you know, like every four years I guess the way it is now, you know. But I used to see them, they'd come up there in nice, well not in big cars, you know, in these cars, the older cars, but there were new cars at that time. I'd see these people come up there and then, you know, naturally kids are always nosey -- we'd want to find out who they were. And they would say, "Oh, the people that wants us to vote for them, that's Liberal." And that's how we know who they were. And they would go and talk, see my grandmother and my grandfather, they didn't speak English at all. They could just talk Cree and they would have to go tell them it was Liberal that was

there. And they would talk to them and try to, you know, like my dad would tell them in Cree who they were and they would always get their vote for them, tell them how to vote and everything.

Judy: Is that all they would discuss with them?

Irene: That's all they would discuss, yeah.

Judy: They never discussed any of the issues with them?

Irene: No.

Judy: Who do you think influenced your parents to vote the way they did, for that certain party?

Irene: Well, what I heard them saying because Liberal was... that you could depend on. You were able to depend on the Liberal, you couldn't depend on anybody else. So this is why they all got together and they would vote for this Liberal all the time. That was years after years they vote for Liberal and that's why the Liberal got in because he was very strong with Metis people.

Judy: Do you know if the church was ever involved in politics?

Irene: Not that I know of, really.

Judy: What did most of the Metis people in your parents' day think of politics?

Irene: Well, for all what they discussed they were quite happy about it. There was just a little bit of discussion about Liberal and Liberal was going to do this, Liberal is going to do this for them and they were quite happy about it. And when he did get in he didn't show too much.

Judy: How did you vote over the years? Did you find yourself keeping in with that tradition of voting Liberal?

Irene: No. No I didn't. For one reason, too, Liberal, I went against Liberal. My grandfather was eighty-seven when he died -- my grandfather never got one cheque from the Liberal. Not even one little cheque he got. And my grandma died when she was over her eighties, too, she was about eighty-five and she never got nothing. And there they voted for Liberal, Liberal all the time. And people when they get that old they were able... they had to go out and go and work, and do their own work. And I just couldn't see... as I got older I was able to think that Liberal couldn't have done too much for them. And after when they did get in, Liberal got in and I was older, and I couldn't see them doing too much in there, you know. But I thought, "Oh well, I don't know too much about it," you know. But I got to learn that we had to change. And when we did change things helped a little bit.

Judy: Did you get involved in party politics or elections?  
Did you ever campaign for a certain candidate?

Irene: Oh, I campaigned for... yes, I did.

Judy: Did your friends ever get active in that way also?

Irene: Yes, they did.

Judy: Did Metis generally see one party as the one which spoke the best for the Metis? So I guess that would be the Liberal party -- that's the one they felt spoke the best for the Metis.

Irene: That would be the only one, yeah, that's why they voted for them.

Judy: What about the other parties like the CCF or the Conservatives? What about those parties?

Irene: They were not even recognized at that time.

Judy: The Metis people didn't...

Irene: No, they had nothing to do with them. And there was a lot of Metis people and all the northern people they all went, you see they all voted for the Liberal. That's why they got in strong, Liberals.

Judy: Let's talk about the Metis politics. Were you ever involved in the 1930s Saskatchewan Metis Society, or were your parents ever involved?

Irene: In 1930?

Judy: Yeah.

Irene: Yes, I was involved in... my parents were involved in 1932, I think, but they had started in 1930.

Judy: What do you remember about that organization?

Irene: Well they, I guess they would have went quite a ways but they didn't have the money, and they didn't have no fundings for anything. They couldn't even go to meetings, to Regina or nothing, you couldn't go anyplace. We didn't have much money and we tried to raise some funds here. Money was very hard to get at that time, it was very hard. It was not as easy as it is today. You can get a little bit of money today but not at that time. That time they got \$20 that was big money. And we even try to have whist drives and things like that, you know. We couldn't afford much... they get for a nickel you can imagine. And how many whist games do you have to have to get to go anyplace? So we didn't raise too much money. So it kind of broke away like, you know, and then the younger people kind of picked it up, picked up the pieces

there. And they kind of got into it and it worked really good then, their organization kind of stick together now.

Judy: What did this organization try to do for the Metis people?

Irene: Well, they've tried different things for them and it works so far. Different thing has worked for them like, you know, for their school even, you know, work for them.

Judy: How about towards housing?

Irene: And for that part, oh lord, the housing, I guess, up in the north now it's so different -- I just couldn't believe it.

Judy: But in the 1930s.

Irene: Oh, at the 1930s they couldn't do too much. Today they went right up to date but in 1930 they couldn't do too much because there wasn't enough money -- money was too short. We didn't have enough money.

Judy: Were most of the Metis people in that area involved with this organization?

Irene: Yes, they were involved. Some of the people up north that I know they were involved but they didn't make that much money, neither, up there too, you know. They didn't have that much and the people here even in Saskatoon, they couldn't make that much money here. They started an organization and they used to have meetings and they attended meetings, they got together. Well, they came up with some good ideas and things like that but, you know, they didn't have the money -- it was the bucks that held them down.

Judy: Did you ever go to some of these meetings?

Irene: Oh yes, we were... See, we went to all these meetings. We were, right from the start, my mother used to say, "Well, you never know, you know, what could happen." So we'd go these meetings, like, you know, with the other girls, the other Metis girls, I'd go with them and my mother.

Judy: Did the men not go along with you?

Irene: Oh yeah, the men used to come along, there was a lot of men there. But you see that was 1930 -- my dad and mother were not together then. So we used to go with my mother a lot. Every place she went to we went with her, you know.

Judy: What did the white people think of the Metis Society in the 1930s and 1940s?

Irene: They didn't think very much of it. To be honest

about it, they didn't.

Judy: It didn't bother them at all that the Metis had an organization?

Irene: Well, they didn't seem to... Like, you know, we got places, like, in some churches in the basement. It wasn't a Catholic church neither where we held our meetings. And we held the card games more or less in some home, like. It was somebody's house and then we'd have little card table -- that's where they have them in there. And we really had nothing to go on with. But the white people, I don't know, they didn't... Well, as far as I know they didn't seem to know at that time that there was an organization that's going. Maybe the ones that did find out they were against it -- I couldn't say that much because we were not that old, really, to pay that much attention to it.

Judy: Did they ever talk about Metis history at these meetings?

Irene: Well, they would talk about, you know, like the way the people lived a long time ago and this is the way they should have continued on living. And even they wanted to move away from the cities, you know, they should be back out in the country. This is what they had in mind all the time but then it seemed like there was no way we could go out of town because we had no money. And then once we got on welfare we had to stay on welfare and welfare wasn't that good but it was better than nothing. I don't know, that's why we didn't...

Judy: Do you remember them ever talking about Metis scrip at the meetings?

Irene: They were fighting for that quite a bit. They were trying to fight for that but they never got nowhere with it because they didn't have the money. Maybe if they'd had the money at that time they would have got it because my mother got her scrip and my father got one too. My mother got a land scrip and my father also got one. But what became of them nobody knows. So this is why they were trying to fight about these things.

Judy: Does the name Joe LaRocque mean anything to you?

Irene: Joe LaRocque. I know a lot of LaRocques but I can't remember this Joe.

Judy: He was involved with the organization.

Irene: Oh yes, there was quite a few of them. There was Ouellettes, Trotchies, Vandales. They was all involved in this sort of organization...

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HIGHLIGHTS:

- disposition of scrip by many Metis
- response to plan for possible Metis settlement in the North

Irene: Mr. LaRocque and (inaudible) when I met him. That was in 1932.

Judy: Do you remember meeting Joe Ross or hearing of him?

Irene: Oh I heard of him. Him and Mac got together at the meetings. There was quite a few of them. There was from either... from, they come from the north, you know, North Battleford. They'd all come into Saskatoon and have a meeting here and try to raise enough funds to go Regina, or from there they trying to go to Ottawa -- but they never got that far.

Judy: Do you remember the name Tom Major?

Irene: Tom Major, yes I do, I remember the name. But I don't know them that good, I just heard them speaking at the meetings.

Judy: How about Joe McKenzie did you ever hear him speak at the meetings?

Irene: Joe McKenzie, yes I did. There was Joe and LaRocque, Pritchard...

Judy: Is that Sol Pritchard?

Irene: Yes.

Judy: And which Vandale was that?

Irene: It was Joe.

Judy: And they would just speak at the meetings?

Irene: Oh yeah, well the same... you know, they'd talk about different... and we'd sit there and listen to them talk, telling us how badly the people should... how they should live and what they should do now, you know, and not to give up. But then, like we said, we had no choice. If they had the money they would have went on with this, but we were just unlucky, we didn't have no money.

Judy: Was discrimination ever talked about at these meetings?

Irene: No, not really, they never talked about anything like discrimination, no.

Judy: Were any jobs talked about? What kind of jobs that they could find for Metis people.

Irene: Well they wanted the Metis people to go up in the north where they could, you know, do their hunting and fishing, and buy shelter, and work on roads out there, road allowance you know. This is what they talked about there. This is what they wanted them to do. This is what they wanted the government to give them out there -- but it didn't get right down to the government, where they got a few letters out and, I mean they didn't push that hard, I guess, because they didn't have enough money. I wish they would have at that time, I really do wish they would have so we could have went back out onto the country.

Judy: So that you could have gotten the land that you...

Irene: Yeah, got some land out there up in the north. It would have been beautiful, it's beautiful country out there.

Judy: What pieces of land you said that your father and mother...

Irene: They had the scrips, they called them scrips at that time, land scrips, and both my father and mother got, both of them got land scrips. What became of the land scrips we do not know. They said somebody bought them out so cheap. They come along and told them they had to get rid of this. This was the white people that done it.

Judy: Were they representatives of the government that told you this?

Irene: Yes, my mother said they were government people.

Judy: Do you remember that happening to any of your family's parents that their land had also been sold out from under them?

Irene: All of them, all the people. They had their land

scrips and all that and they all got taken, every one of them. They never got really nothing, \$200, \$100. So what the heck is \$100?

Judy: They actually got the money though.

Irene: They got the money, yeah, but then you see they were being bought out.

Judy: Did any of the people that you remember try to do anything about it, or did they just accept it?

Irene: They just accepted, but there was some other people later on tried but then they didn't get that far. They didn't, I don't think as yet they got that far, but they were just talking about that here not too long ago here, we were talking about that. Like, you know, your land should be worth more than \$100 and they said it was good land. And I don't know they got it anyway, that's what they got for it. But again that was government people that bought it, they said, so the government must have done all right.

Judy: Well, Mrs. Dimick, that's about all the questions I have for you. I'd like to thank you for your cooperation.

Irene: Well I was glad to give my... what I know. I'd be glad to do it again, and I'd be glad to go out in the country and live again. (both laugh)

Judy: Thank you.

(END OF SIDE A)  
(CONCLUSION OF INTERVIEW)

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