
Interview With Joanna Potyondi

Date: January 30, 2003

Location: Fenwood, close to Melville

Interviewed by: Cheryl Troupe

- 4.7 Cheryl:** So I guess we will just start, so if you want to start maybe telling me a little about your the names of your parents and where you were born.
- 0.3 Joanna:** Okay, I was born in Estavan, Saskatchewan, September 14, 1939 and it was two days after the war started the Second World War. My grandfather ran a cold mine, Alfred Blondeau ran a coalmine down Old Tailor, Saskatchewan. That is near Ross Percy and the men that worked in the coalmine, they didn't have to go to the war but a few of the of the Broder boys were in the, went to war, my dad was one of them. And he served in quite a few countries, I have his history for that and my grandfather's parents cam from Quebec where they originated from, the Blondeau's, Simon and some other Simon, three Simon's. I grew up down there and went to school down there and got married down there. I had three children, Janet Lynn, her name is Jan Lynn Renson now, and two boys, Alfred A Thomas and another son called Andrew John. They both live in Estevan, my daughter lives here in Melville and works for victim services of Yorkton and works for the RCMP City. I have a farm out of Melville, just raise horses on it; I raise horses all summer. I am in quit a few uh, boards.
- 2.7 Cheryl:** You mentioned your mom and dad and do you maybe want to tell their names again and.
- 2.8 Joanna:** My dad was James Blondeau from Estavan and my mother was Josephine Blondeau from down in Rosverse??
- 3.0 Cheryl:** Do you know much about like your dada was he from a big family as well?
- 3.1 Joanna:** Yes, a big family. The Blondeau's are all pretty much a big families on each side. And my grandmother was Gordon...
- 3.3 Cheryl** On your dad's side?

- 3.3 Joanna:** On my mother's side.
- 3.5 Cheryl:** So you said both your mom and dad were from large families.
- 3.7 Joanna:** Yeah, my mother's family I guess there was only one boy and he died early, infancy I guess. And my mother, there is four girls, one boy in her family, that is me included. Now I have seven grandchildren, my sister has got quit a few grandchildren as well.
- 4.2 Cheryl:** So when you were growing up were your aunts and uncles, like your mom's brothers and sisters and your dad's brothers and sisters were their families close by then?
- 4.3 Joanna:** Oh yeah we were all close the Blondeau's were are best friend and we were all close. My dad's brothers and their family, I spent a lot of time with them and my aunt's were right around my grandmother all the time, we were raised all around family all the time.
- 4.7 Cheryl:** You were saying you went to school...
- 4.7 Joanna:** I went to school in old _____ it is called Black Diamond is where I went. I went to Rusbersy school and Estavan actually too.
- 4.9 Cheryl:** So did you grow up right in Estavan then?
- 5.0 Joanna:** No, around Estavan.
- 5.0 Cheryl:** So was it a road allowance community that you grew up in then or was it just.
- 5.1 Joanna:** Uh, a mining community I grew up in, mining and then farming everybody them days had cows and chickens and pigs so I grew up in around livestock. Horses were my big interest all my life and dogs.
- 5.4 Cheryl:** You had mentioned that your dad owned a coalmine.
- 5.4 Joanna:** My grandfather.
- 5.4 Cheryl:** And what was his name?
- 5.5 Joanna:** Alfred Blondeau.
- 5.5 Cheryl:** Do you know how he came to own this coal mine?

- 5.6 **Joanna:** No, I don't know I don't know, that is just where I was when I grew up and he ran that coal mine until he was too old to do anything.
- 5.8 **Cheryl:** Do you know if it had a name?
- 5.9 **Joanna:** I think it was called Old Mac. but I am not sure of the name. It was just a big hole in the hill and they mined in there and then after they started strip mining so there was no longer a need for under ground people.
- 6.2 **Cheryl:** Do you know if it was mostly Metis men that....
- 6.2 **Joanna:** Well yeah, my grandfather there was Cline's and Gosslin's and the Blondeau boys that worked in the coal mine down there. Like it would be my grandfather's nephews and his brother's children so it would be family that was working there.
- 6.5 **Cheryl:** So did they farm as well then?
- 6.6 **Joanna:** No, they worked in the mine and then in the summer they went to Estevan to work in construction, whatever work they could get.
- 6.7 **Cheryl:** Do you now how, like the wages that they got?
- 6.8 **Joanna:** NO, no I don't know nothing about that, I don't know how they were paid or, probably by the load I would imagine.
- 7.0 **Cheryl:** You had mentioned before that the Blondeau's had come up from Red River. Do you remember hearing stories about that?
- 7.1 **Joanna:** Yeah, my grandfather used to say like where uh talk about well he probably talked about the Riel Rebellion as a child your not that interested in it. He use d to go around in the summer and we would pick all kinds of herbs and flowers and dig out roots and he would take a horse and buggy and drive from down there for us to see and all the way to Labrette to trade for these medicines and I remember going with him one time and all afternoon we picked blue bells and he took the whole thing and I don't know if he what part they used but it was a medicine and I was thinking about that one day what a vast knowledge the older people had about what herbs to use and what grass. Because they would be making tea out of a certain thing if they had a headache and some kind of bark and as a child you don't pay attention to that and now that I am older, I wish that I would have paid attention.

- 8.5 Cheryl:** You said that you grew up surrounded by aunts, uncles, brothers, sister, cousins, and what were some of the roles in the family?
- 8.7 Joanna:** Well, my grandfather was the head of the bunch, he was the oldest and everybody asked him for advice and come and talk to him and he was a blacksmith and a dynamite person, he could handle that. Like he went to work as a boy on the railroad to BC. I don't know which one, the CP or whatever, I don't know I guess it was the first one and he learned how to dynamite in the mountains so when he came back home in this min, he had a chance to work in this mine. He probably worked in it a lot before he got the chance to I don't know if they just abandoned the mine of I don't know what happened or who had the ownership of it.
- 9.5 Cheryl:** So he was a very skilled man then?
- 9.6 Joanna:** Yes, he was very skilled. Trapped and killed, you know the last year that he lived he was still trapping, making a walk in the rivers in the wintertime.
- 9.8 Cheryl:** What about your grandmother, what was her role in the family?
- 9.8 Joanna:** Her role was, she was pretty well the head on too you know whatever the rule that was her rules you know. Like I never ever see the children step out of line around her either my grandfather, it was not heard of in those days. You know if an elder walked into the room the children left and most of the children didn't want to be around the elders, not like today when they are standing on your head. And in your face and kookum and mooshum, I called my grandfather Papaface. But I remember how that started, one time he was coming and he was all frosted and I was going to say there is my Mooshum and I said oh there is my Papaface and then after that I kind of kept that up. Dad went to war and mom went to work and so I stayed with my grandparents and then when dad came back from war, they moved into Estavan for work and I stayed with my grandparents, I stayed there for all my life with them until I got married and had my own world.
- 11.1 Cheryl:** Was there other like brother's and sister, your sister's?
- 11.2 Joanna:** No, they were born after the war, I was born before the war. Just about eight years between us.
- 11.3 Cheryl:** So your dad enlisted, where did he serve?

- 11.4 Joanna:** He served all over, France, Italy, all the places, I have that history. I could print out of that. France, Italy, Germany, I think he had about five or six stars after that.
- 11.8 Cheryl:** And your mother when he enlisted, she went...
- 11.9 Joanna:** She went to work in Estevan in a dairy, washing bottles and filling up milk bottles and that for the guy to bring in the horse and wagon and I remember that, it was a big thing when I could go to Estavan and my grandmother and I would go into town and catch the bus and go into Estavan and go and see mom and she would be filling bottles and I thought that was the neatest place to work, big vats of milk.
- 12.3 Cheryl:** What language did you speak when you were little?
- 12.3 Joanna:** Well they spoke Michif, but I never learned it because my mother when she went to school, se got whippings for speaking it so when I came along, my grandfather said that they weren't going to let me speak Michif because I would be the next one to get the whipping. That is too bad because, that is a big thing in our people but my aunt still speaks but I don't. It is bad that we lost our language cause my daughter now, she wants to take a Michif language course and I do too. We know a few words but not so that we could go and talk to anybody I can sit and listen to them and get the drift of it.
- 13.3 Cheryl:** What about were they quit religious?
- 13.3 Joanna:** Yeah, my dad's mother, I had to go to Estavan and go to Catholicism for six weeks every summer oh so then I got to stay at my uncles and they had horses sot hat was the good part but um yeah we had to go to Catholicism and get confirmation and all that. But once my grandfather was gone and my grandmother's, nobody ever went to church anymore, we go when there is a funeral. I don't know, I think it is sad and my daughters are not Catholic and I am and for instance I that is the only church I feel comfortable when I do go. I go to other ones for funerals and stuff but Catholic is my main one, but when you learn that as a child, that sticks to you.
- 14.4 Cheryl:** What about holidays, what did you do for Christmas and New Years?
- 14.4 Joanna:** Well, everybody came home for Christmas to my grandmother's house, the whole family was there at my grandmother's and stuff, that was the whole Christmas and New Yeas, they didn't go home until New Yeas

Eve, Christmas Eve everybody got there and they mostly stayed until all the holidays were over, well then days only one person usually had a car so they had to travel when the car was going, dad had to get back to work and....

- 14.9 Cheryl:** What about dances and that type of thing?
- 15.0 Joanna:** They had dances right at home, they would push all the furniture when the meals were done and they would be jigging all night with the fiddle playing.
- 15.2 Cheryl:** Do you remember who would have been some of the...
- 15.3 Joanna:** Victor Cline, used to play fiddle and my grandfather's brother used to play fiddle, I think it was Bill Blondeau and he had two brothers that went to school in Labrette and they could sing those songs, they were in the choir down in Labrette and so they sang really beautiful. My grandfather taught himself how to read and write, one of the guys that he was working with at the railroad taught him how to say his A,B,C's and how to do the A,B,C's and after that he did his own, he learned himself how to sound out the words but he never went to school, he worked at a coal mine and he did all that, he could add in his head faster than I could add on paper.
- 16.2 Cheryl:** What about clothes, what kind of clothes do you remember them wearing?
- 16.3 Joanna:** I wore like what I wore was hand me downs and my grandmother sewed for us so we were well clothed as far as she was a great sewer.
- 16.4 Cheryl:** What do you remember her wearing?
- 16.5 Joanna:** Um, cotton dresses bright coloured cotton dresses, not long ones but regular length.
- 16.6 Cheryl:** Do you ever remember her wearing shawls or moccasins.
- 16.7 Joanna:** No shawls, no moccasins, aprons.
- 16.8 Cheryl:** What about the men?
- 16.8 Joanna:** My grandfather used to wear those something like a big, big felt shoes like these but with laces and my grandmother had a pair too of

those shoes, those felts lower ones she would wear those to work and walk. Most of the time it was quit a ways away too to go to the bus.

17.4 Cheryl: You mentioned that your grandmother did a lot of sewing, is that where you learned how to sew?

17.4 Joanna: No, no it is no I was no interested in sewing and I married a cowboy and he liked these fancy Western shirts so she taught me how to sew these fancy Western shirts so and from there I decided I wanted to take an apoulstry course because I needed furniture on a need, so that is how I got into sewing. I took an apoulstry course from Parkland Community College in '78 and I was just finished my course when the college got me teaching and I have been teaching apolstry ever since, since 1978. So it was just something that I could handle, just like that. Like I could sit around and it don't take me long to see how it goes back together right from like you see the skeleton's of the chairs and that and I can put them together no problem, it is not something that I get worried about so I just go do it, that is just how I am, tackle whatever.

18.8 Cheryl: Let's just backtrack a little bit, did you and your family always identify as Métis?

18.8 Joanna: My grandfather told me, I brought some papers to fill out for citizenship or whatever I am not sure but at school you had to fill out these papers, I brought them home from that school actually I have a picture, Black Diamond school, I took them home and he filled them out for me and he put down Métis and I brought them to school and the teacher said to me there is no such thing as a Métis, she crossed it out and said you are a Blondeau, she said you are French and she crossed it out and put French down. It still bugs me because I don't think she had the right but of course them days they did whatever they wanted. So I still, it still gets me the nerve she had to do that and my grandfather signed his name on that and she should never have done that.

19.9 Cheryl: He sounds like he was quit a proud man then.

20.2 Joanna: Oh, very, very proud. Very dry sense of humour, you would never think he would say something, he would whisper something and it was really funny. They had their way of saying things that.

20.4 Cheryl: So what was the relationship like then between the Métis community and the Non-Aboriginal community?

20.4 Joanna: Well where I grew up there was Ukrainian, German, Polish, and Luthawanian, Hungarians, Scotchmans so they were all very, very poor people so everybody them days were in the same category. And I remember as an Aboriginal child going to school my grandmother said that I had to be the cleanest and the best dressed and that is the way it was in our family. My hair was always shiny, my clothes were up to par never went with raggedy clothes, even if it was made up from someone else's dress, it was neat and tidy. Yeah that is how she was very that way well they were very hard working women our Métis women years ago. They had to wash clothes by hand your clothes were pure white on the line, I was just talking about this the other day how the women would hide their underwear on the line between the sheets and that way nobody would see them. Now a days they are flapping in your face, of course they were Robin Hood underwear and things like that you think of. Always fresh bannock for breakfast and

22.2 Cheryl: What other kinds of foods do you remember?

22.3 Joanna: We had a lot of deer meat canned chickens canned and big gardens. My aunt and everybody came home on the weekends to work on the gardens cause the water wasn't that close for my grandmother to be hauling water so they would come on the weekends and haul water with the team and somebody always had a team around there to haul water fill up all these barrels for her so she could water the tomatoes and plants all week while they weren't there. Big gardens, I mean huge gardens them days, they had a lot of potatoes everybody got potatoes so they worked as a community. As long as my grandparents were there that is what happened and then when they were gone, that was the end of all that.

23.2 Cheryl: So it was just the family then that pitched in.

23.2 Joanna: Yeah, sometimes the neighbours like the neighbours had a tractor they would come and plow the garden for my grandma and grandpa or with the team or whatever stuff like that. Everybody them days in that community worked together there was German there was Ukrainian in that valley where I grew up and it was good, they were very good people down there. I guess like I said everybody was in the same category and they all worked together like if we needed butter and you were going to town you could run to your neighbours to say ___ butter, we had milk cows, they had chickens and a mule. Yeah I think it was a pretty good life. Between Christmas and New Years my grandfather would go and shoot pheasant and we would have a big roaster of pheasant and cream, oh that was so delicious.

24.4 Cheryl: So your grandmother then would do the canning from the garden then?

24.4 Joanna: Yeah, everything was canned.

24.5 Cheryl: So when you would have this pheasant what would you have typically served with this pheasant?

24.6 Joanna: Well they would have potatoes and we always have lots of potatoes, we would have potatoes and bannock and all kinds of chokecherry jams and strawberry jams that they would make. They would pick wild strawberries Saskatoon pie and any of that wild fruit you would have that. Deer meat, she canned deer meat all the time and they shot it anytime as long as it wasn't a doe, a mother and a baby. They had deer meat too can all year because nobody had fridge's. Big gardens, that was a big thing years ago and I don't think it would hurt young people to learn to make a garden, not only that it teaches people to work together, everybody had to work them days if they wanted to eat. It is not like now a days our young women don't know how to do things, they won't go to school, it is sad. I know I got invited to a friend of mine, I like her very much, she is a nice girl, she invited me to she was so excited to visit with me she said you have got to stay for supper and she went to Pizza Hut first and bought a bag of potatoes, she must not have had anything cooking.

26.4 Cheryl: Did your grandmother teach you how to cook then?

26.4 Joanna: no, I actually learned how to cook from my aunt because my grandmother couldn't afford to have things burnt. I can make a bannock but it took me awhile, no I am not good a baking but I could cook anything, deer meat, wild meat nobody believes that it is wild meat when I am done with it because they just think it is so good. Most people get deer meat and then they marinate it with this and marinate with that and then you don't know what you are eating. I was taught that you just cook it, you don't do anything with it, you just cook it with some onions and everyone, oh is this ever good. I can cook regular food but I am not very good at anything else like baking, a pie forget it, it would be a disaster. The hardest crust you would need a hammer to smash it.

27.5 Cheryl: So then it wasn't just your grandmother then that helped raise you it was your aunt.

- 27.6 Joanna:** The whole family yeah. Actually everybody was, I was around everybody but where I stayed was at my grandparents there, I had my dog there and when I think of home, that is it.
- 28.0 Cheryl:** So what do you remember most then about the times when your whole family would get together?
- 28.1 Joanna:** Well, the dancing, the drinking, somebody always brought something to drink and then there was always a fight for some reason. Yeah I grew up, they worked hard all week and then they partied hard all weekend that is what I grew up in. I always my children were never going to see me drunk and that is something I did, I just can't understand what the horse smoke because when I was younger I wanted to go to the race horse barns to train race horses, if you came there with a cigarette they threw you out. So and also nobody every said Joanne you can't smoke nobody ever said that, if somebody would have said that I probably would have never smoked two packs a day, not one of my things.
- 29.2 Cheryl:** What about school, what do you remember most about school?
- 29.3 Joanna:** Um, walking to school in the cold, going to school in the cold, we had big hill. My grandfather always used to walk to the top of the hill to see cold it was in the winter time and if it was okay for me to go to school, he would wave and I would go to school. If he didn't wave and just came down the hill, then I knew that I didn't have to go to school, it was too clod or too blizzards or something.
- 29.8 Cheryl:** And was it a one room school with all of the grades mixed in?
- 29.8 Joanna:** Yeas, and I still think that is the best kind of school because the older ones help the littler ones and the teacher sure some of the rooms had 25 children or 32 children but the older ones grade ones them days there were no kindergartens. I remember the first year I went to school, actually I didn't even get there for a year and I got there and the supervisor that used to go around, they always had a supervisor and he sent me home because I was too small, I was very tiny and fine but I was six years old and I want to got to school, he said no you are not old enough and he sent me home. It is so funny now when you think of it when you are six years old and in grade two already.
- 30.9 Cheryl:** Do you remember having like ball games and stuff like that?
- 30.9 Joanna:** Oh yeah, we played ball and went for picnics and we had sports day and to be Fate, Estevan and there was district Latman and around

that area there and people around those towns, we had picnics and sports days. Rosversy used to have big celebrations and then the big thing for me was the fair, big thing in July and that was great for me because I could go and spend all day at the horse barns and watch the horses race.

- 31.7 Cheryl:** Being that horses are so intertwined with your life do you ever remember people telling stories about why horses were so important to the Métis?
- 31.8 Joanna:** Yeah, my grandfather was saying that how to treat a horse when I was a girl I used to ride a horse and kids would be racing the horse and I remember three of us come running in very fast and he would be sitting there having a smoke and he said well, you guys get off that horse and you walk him now for forty five minutes and then you bring him to me and I will tell you if they are cool enough to go down in the pasture. Because we used to just jump off of them and turn them loose in the pasture and so then he sat down and sprayed us and said you can't do that. get a horse all sweated up and turn her loose because it can get black water that is kidney for being too hot and then they run and get cool water so the kidney infection foundered, their feet all tangled up. So we would walk those horses and after that I never ever rode a horse like that again he said you walk the last two miles you are coming home if you can't walk the last two miles he said you get off your horse and you walk so that horse is cool when you get home. So that was one big lesson that all my children learned, all my children can ride horseback. My daughter had two, three outstanding member of the breech of Canada horses, they showed everything like she showed them to the top of Canada. Now she has got one horse now she is getting ready to show in a couple of years, she said it will be a couple of years before she gets it to where it is going to start winning.
- 33.7 Cheryl:** What about you mentioned a little bit before about decorating horses?
- 33.8 Joanna:** Yeah, I might be able to um come up with some things for that.
- 33.9 Cheryl:** Do you ever remember them being decorated for weddings or anything?
- 34.0 Joanna:** No I don't remember but I remember some of the people that like when we went to town oh we seen some fancy horses but hat was not Métis horses. There was not that many Métis people down where I grew up in fact there was just the few that are actually the Métis from my family. The families around there ___ background too they built the Catholic

church in Estavan, they are the ones that built the Catholic church in Estavan, those Métis from down there.

34.6 Cheryl: You were talking about Labrette, was there a lot of movement then for the Métis?

34.7 Joanna: I guess my grandfather went but nobody else went because it was quit a trip you would have to go to Regina on the bus first and then on the bus to Fort Qu'Appelle so it would be just about a two day trip, my grandfather used to take the buggy and go on a trip up there and I thought it was the end of the world when he was not home. Oh when is he coming home and then him and I used to go out and get coyotes because they had a bounty on them. That was the thing to digging out coyotes he would dig all day for about five or six pups out because there was a bounty on them all over down south there, he knew where all of the coyotes were.

35.6 Cheryl: You were mentioning something about some of your family they used to have their numbers on the police posts???

35.7 Joanna: Yeah, his brother was a NWMP, he had a

35.8 Cheryl: Your grandfather's brother?

4.6 Joanna: Yeah, he was a last NWMP Peter Morcine Blondeau he was and he was NWMP and like my grandfather's family they came from the Red River Settlement and they came from Labrette and they all spread out from there apparently. My grandmother's mother and dad they ran the Remount Station for the NWMP around the border, around Rusppersy, they had a they patrolled that border, the American Canadian border, they patrolled that.

36.8 Cheryl: And what were their names?

36.8 Joanna: Gardipy's.

36.9 Cheryl: Their first names, do you know?

36.9 Joanna: See that is the trouble when they have nicknames, Louis I think his name was Louis Gardipy or Lewis.

37.0 Cheryl: So did everyone then have nicknames?

37.1 Joanna: Pretty well everyone yeah, pretty well everyone.

37.1 Cheryl: Why do you think that is?

- 37.1 Joanna:** I think it was a pet thing a lot of the time our family were named after someone in our family and you know you would have two Fred's in the house or two Peter's in the house so you gave the one a nickname, usually the youngest one or the older one already had a nickname. I think that is why because years ago you passed your name down to somebody else. Yeah there wasn't very many, I think when I was a little girl the First Nations people that would come through pass our place and go down to the states to Rocky Mountain, Rocky Boy, Montana, North Dakota or wherever it is and they had such beautiful horse pinto horses and I thought oh when will I ever have one of those? And I was just could barley remember, but I could remember how the horse looked, I don't remember the guy but I remember I could see him sitting by the campfire making tea and my grandfather would go and sit with him in the evenings and bring down some food. And then he would come back from Montana with a bunch of horses in the Fall going home. He went down there early, early in the spring and worked hard I guess or they would powwow trail or whatever they did and that was few First Nations people that we seen, they were all Métis people down in the south there.
- 39.1 Cheryl:** Do you remember is there anyone in your family that told a lot of stories?
- 39.1 Joanna:** Yeah, my grandfather did.
- 39.2 Cheryl:** Do you remember any of those stories?
- 39.2 Joanna:** No I don't. a lot of time they talked in their own language and well we couldn't hang out around the adults anyway, the kids would get sent out. Your gone, yes now when you think of it, it would have been good to sit around and listen nut if you didn't understand the language. They had some really good laughs.
- 39.7 Cheryl:** Probably a lot of jokes and things that kids wouldn't understand anyway.
- 39.7 Joanna:** Yeah.
- 39.8 Cheryl:** What about do you remember any legends or anything like that that he would have told you? Nothing.
- 39.9 Joanna:** No, but the things that he said like we were picking bones or working on the railroad and he would tell about all of these long wagons, loads of buffalo skulls, bones and I just couldn't imagine that. Lots of times he was out hunting or fishing down at the Souis River there where I grew up.
- 40.4 Cheryl:** You never heard any Rugaroo stories?
- 40.5 Joanna:** Yeah but mostly from my aunts they would tell Rugaroo stories.

40.5 Cheryl: And what would, do you remember any of them?

40.6 Joanna: I do remember the one that my grandfather was saying that if Ross persy there was a big dance at the Porto. Porto must be 18 miles from Russ Persey, about that, and anyway he said that they were all going to that dance and this guy said he wasn't going and they met him on the road and when they got there with the car he was there already. So they always said he was a rogaroo and I don't know who he was but they said he was a Rugaroo because he beat them to the dance and they were going to give him a ride but he didn't want a ride and when they got there he was already there so they said don't give him a ride because he is a Rugaroo.

Tape One Side A ends at 41.7

Tape One: Side B

0.0 Cheryl: What about do you ever remember anyone talking about scrip or did anyone in your family get scrip?

0.1 Joanna: The Gardipy's did.

0.2 Cheryl: Do you know where?

0.2 Joanna: Yeah, it was around Russpersey, around where the Shan power station is now and I think a person could still find something like that out. I don't know if one of the Blondeau's did I think one of the Blondeau's might have got scrip but I am not sure. A person can have to look into that.

0.5 Cheryl: They probably would have got it in Red River though?

0.6 Joanna: I don't know where they got it from, but the Gardipy's I don't know where they got it but they did have scrip. I mean I don't know which one of them would have got it, my great grandfather, that would be the great, great grandfather that got it.

1.0 Cheryl: What about other Métis communities, were there any other Métis communities near by?

1.1 Joanna: No, our was and then they had one in Estavan that was bigger because the Métis there were in Estevan construction and all that stuff that was happening in Estavan and the digging sewer lines in the for the ____ and that was all the kinds of things they did in the summer and then in the winter they worked in the mine. There was two big coal mines there, ____ mine there that started and they made briquettes and that was what was going on around there at that time and then the oil came in.

- 1.7 Cheryl:** What year would have that been that the coal mine operated?
- 1.8 Joanna:** In the '40's because when dad came from the war that was in '45 I guess dad came back from the war and that was when that was going on and I think it only ran for a couple of years after that. My grandfather was too old and then everybody went and had their families.
- 2.2 Cheryl:** What about the house you grew up in, what was that like?
- 2.3 Joanna:** Well we had a few houses but most of the time it was one big room or one big room and then a bedroom and it was everybody was in the bedrooms. There was single beds and double beds and curtains were wired.
- 2.8 Cheryl:** So was the furniture all home-made then or would have it been purchased?
- 2.9 Joanna:** I remember my grandmother had a big beautiful, round table, I don't know where they got that and regular chairs that I can remember, wooden chairs, everybody had those old, old wooden chairs them days so...
- 3.2 Cheryl:** She didn't make any hooked rugs or braided rugs or anything?
- 3.2 Joanna:** Yeah, yeah she hooked rugs all of the time and made the one she sewed them little flaps, they are just little pieces of material sewn together and then you just lay them down and sew another layer you come on down like that they are not hooked but you can shake them out.
- 3.6 Cheryl:** She didn't sell them though?
- 3.7 Joanna:** No, no as gifts but she made quilts all the time and big blankets.
- 3.8 Cheryl:** Patchwork quilts?
- 3.8 Joanna:** Yeah, all the time and she had always one on the go and she did a lot of sewing for the other people too and people from the mine would bring her sewing and she would do that.
- 4.1 Cheryl:** What about for like the rugs, did she have patterns on them or did they?
- 4.2 Joanna:** Well the ones that she hooked she did make patterns, most of the time roses um and I wanted her to make a dog so she made one with a Scotty dog on it for me. I remember Scotty dog, other than that I don't remember but I do remember the flowers on the corners. Scotty dog.
- 4.6 Cheryl:** Do you remember where she would have got the material?

- 4.7 Joanna:** Well just from scraps around the house like old clothes, like her sewing all the time she always had a few scraps laying around. Big wool blankets made out of wool oats, those were warm.
- 5.0 Cheryl:** What about feather ticks and that kind of stuff.
- 5.1 Joanna:** Yeah, she had feather ticks and yeah from the ducks and the chickens because she always had a flock of chickens.
- 5.3 Cheryl:** And do you remember how she would have made those?
- 5.3 Joanna:** No, I remember seeing her put the feathers in bags and washing them and putting them on the line and fluffing them up and drying them out in that way. That would be weeks and weeks of work, drying them feathers, big bags.
- 5.6 Cheryl:** What kind of bags would they have been?
- 5.6 Joanna:** Cotton bags.
- 5.7 Cheryl:** Flour bags or something?
- 5.7 Joanna:** Yeah and you put them in there and wash them.
- 5.8 Cheryl:** Very resourceful.
- 5.8 Joanna:** Oh they did everything hey.
- 6.0 Cheryl:** So after you grew up you got married you moved to Estavan?
- 6.1 Joanna:** Yeah just to Estavan, I was never too far away from them until they passed away.
- 6.2 Cheryl:** And then when did you move up here?
- 6.2 Joanna:** I moved here in 19, lets see I got divorced of my husband in '67 and then we moved up to Manitoba and worked in the pmu gardens up there and then I moved up here and we did artificial insemination for the whole area here and then I took a course in Rackel and then I had my own cattle and my own farm here and my own horses. I worked in the pasture for a fulyards for three summers doing all of the ___ for the cattle, they had pure bread cattle, my husband and I did that. I guess and I am still here, I am still here. Probably think of a thousand things after. But if we go down in the summer to Russpersey I can show you all of the all of the places, all of the tepee rings that were there before the mines dig them all up. They must have dug up thousands of them down there with the strip mines and graves.

- 8.1 Cheryl:** I bet, what about senicka root, do you ever remember picking senicka root?
- 8.1 Joanna:** Yeah, my grandmother did yeah we did, he had a mule and a buggy and we went out and severed like I said he picked so much root and stuff and took them up to the, he sold some of the Senica root in big bags full of them and sent them to Winnipeg from Ruspersy, he used to go and take the train there...
- 8.6 Cheryl:** Do you know where they went from Winnipeg?
- 8.6 Joanna:** No, I don't know where they went from Winnipeg, that is where the main place was, they shipped the furs, senica root or whatever they had and they shipped them to Winnipeg and they had to Winnipeg.
- 8.9 Cheryl:** What about berry picking.
- 8.9 Joanna:** We picked berries every summer, chokecherries and saskatoons, wild strawberries and cranberries, some kind of cranberries.
- 9.3 Cheryl:** High bush cranberries.
- 9.3 Joanna:** Probably yeah.
- 9.4 Cheryl:** What about hazelnuts?
- 9.4 Joanna:** Yeah, there was some down there and wild plums, there are wild plums in my valley and they are delicious.
- 9.5 Cheryl:** do you remember how to like prepare any of those kids of foods, nobody seems to know what to do with them once you have them.
- 9.6 Joanna:** Well you heat them up put them in the oven that is what they used to do with them at home.
- 9.7 Cheryl:** Just heat them up and that is it?
- 9.7 Joanna:** Yeah, heat them up and then take them and let them dry out because they are full of oils hey and if you didn't do that they would get rancid. And there was buffalo berry they used to call them and that was really sour and oh I love them and we picked gooseberry because they had gooseberry jam and there was all kinds of wild prairie fruits.
- 10.2 Cheryl:** And those you canned as well?
- 10.3 Joanna:** Yes, she canned.

- 10.4 Cheryl:** Would she dry them too?
- 10.4 Joanna:** No, she just made jam out of gooseberries.
- 10.6 Cheryl:** What about you said your grandfather did a lot of hunting, what about the hides, did anybody prepare the hides?
- 10.7 Joanna:** Yeah, he had beaver's all of the time and prepared the hides, oh yeah every spring they were hunting beaver and trapping and sending hides all over on big boards all over the place, oh yeah he was a real good trapper.
- 11.1 Cheryl:** So he would just prepare the hides and then...
- 11.1 Joanna:** And then, yeah after they were dried out and cleaned then he would ship them.
- 11.2 Cheryl:** Nobody ever made clothing with them or...
- 11.3 Joanna:** No, because they would have to be tanned first so.
- 11.4 Cheryl:** Do you remember what type or what he would have got for them or anything like that?
- 11.5 Joanna:** No I don't. It would have been a good thing to know. Everything was shipped top Winnipeg I remember that they had a fur market in Regina and he sent some there but he didn't like the prices so he quit sending the furs there.
- 11.9 Cheryl:** Yeah he probably wouldn't have got as much there because they would have still probably have sent them to Winnipeg from Regina.
- 12.0 Joanna:** Yes, probably yeah they had a fur market in Regina. One uncle lived with us, he would have been a great uncle, my grandmother was his auntie so he came and stayed with us and worked on the CP worked as a worked on the railroad, not in the cars but on the track. He lived with us until my grandfather and grandmother passed away. My dad got killed in 1961, in September of 1961, he got in a construction accident, he was 43 years old. He went to war and then he gets killed at home.
- 13.1 Cheryl:** Do you know if there was a lot of other Metis men that enlisted when he did?
- 13.2 Joanna:** There was a lot of Blondeau boys that enlisted in there um everyone of my grandfather's brothers were I am sure that somebody said there was 18 of them that were enlisted out of that generations, out of the Blondeau's. Some of them stayed in the army until the retired and stuff like that. Yeah they were quite a few of them. I have one uncle yet, great uncle, he is from Moose Jaw, Art

- Blondeau I call him, he was in the second world war and the Korean war, his dad was in the first world war, so the Blondeau's went over there, there is a lot of history there too.
- 14.0 Cheryl:** You said your mom was a Blondeau as well and your dad was. They would have been distantly related somehow, do you know how far back that would have been?
- 14.2 Joanna:** No that is what I am finding out in my genealogy right now.
- 14.2 Cheryl:** But both from Labrette?
- 14.2 Joanna:** No.
- 14.3 Cheryl:** You said the Blondeau's come to Labrette and dispersed from there.
- 14.5 Joanna:** Yeah, from there somewhere down in the States. From the Red River settlement they went down into the states, that is from my dad's side. From my mother's side was from here.
- 14.7 Cheryl:** You don't know where about they went in the states?
- 14.7 Joanna:** No, I have got some genealogy here today, one says Missouri and one says, I forgot we are finding that actually we traced our roots to Cuthebert Grant. On cousin in Regina has all that information so we are going to get together one day and stick it all together, a big tree. My sister, I am the darkest one in my family and all of my kids are dark and my sister's kids are all fair and their kids area all fair, same mother and same dad, it is funny how that is.
- 15.7 Cheryl:** Well I think that we are almost out of tape here so...
- 15.9 Joanna:** If we think of anything else anyway if we go down to Ruspersy.
- 16.0 Cheryl:** Maybe we will just go over some genealogy or something.

Tape One Side B ends at 16.0
