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BELOW.

Victoria: It's March 4, 1984, and I'm interviewing Joe Vandale
at Debden, Saskatchewan. Where were you born, Joe?

Joseph: In Debden.

Victoria: And have you lived here all your life?

Joseph: Yeah. Well, we live in a log shack and we didn't... The only way that we made our living is picking blueberries and stuff like that and sell it in the summertime. And we dig seneca root, sell it, and I used to work out, like, once in a while, but I worked for 25 cents a day for a farmer, farmers around. And in the wintertime we used to trap a few weasels, rabbits. And we never had, we never went to school. There wasn't such a thing as school and inside 15 miles. That was 15 miles, that was the nearest school. It's in Debden, but the rest of them there was no school. Then we moved old as I was no used to, I'm cutting right across. Anyway, then after that we cleared the road in the summertime. We cut brush from here to Pine Valley all over the country, municipality roads, you know, doing this roads.

Victoria: What did your dad do for a living, Joe?

Joseph: He didn't do much. I don't think he ever hardly work because he used, the only time that them guys they work is in the fall when harvest time comes. In the spring they work for the farmers but there was, there was no logging camps or nothing around there.

Victoria: So it was just seasonal work for them, eh?

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: What about your mother, did she work?

Joseph: Oh no, she look after, she had nine kids to look after. She didn't have time to work out.

Victoria: What about your grandparents? What do you remember about your grandparents?

Joseph: Oh, my grandparent, he was was the one that stayed with us. He was... well, my grandmother died was 104 years old, and he look after us. He had, he stayed with us all the time with his little cheque, \$10 or \$15 a month he was getting old age pension cheque.

Victoria: What was your grandmother's maiden name?

Joseph: Marianne Vandale her name was.

Victoria: That was before she got married?

Joseph: No. Oh geez, I couldn't tell you. That's one name, I never could find out what her first name was.

Victoria: What was your grandfather's name?

Joseph: Vandale. He was a Frenchman, half French. I know he was a French anyway. He could talk French and stuff like that.

Victoria: Do you know what they did for a living when...

Joseph: Well, I don't know. I couldn't tell you exactly what they did.

Victoria: Where did they come from? What part of the country did they come from?

Joseph: Well, they, well they had war at Batoche. They move to Victoire from Batoche. See my grandmother she had a boy there when they move away from... but during that... the row they had there...

Victoria: Yeah, the Battle of Batoche.

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: What was his name, do you know?

Joseph: Who, my grandmother?

Victoria: The boy that was born.

Joseph: Old Pat Vandale.

Victoria: Pat Vandale, eh. Do you know what he did there in the Rebellion?

Joseph: No, he was just a kid. He was not any more than 8 years old, 8 or 9 years old I think that time. Yeah, when he died a few years ago he was 86, I think, that old fellow. You know I never did, you know, ask him them things, something like that to the old fellow. He didn't want to ever told us anything.

Victoria: He never told you what happened eh?

Joseph: No. But my grandmother, she told us that they run away from them. They all moved to Victoire. There was a bunch of them moved to Victoire them days.

Victoria: Do you know some of the other families that moved? Did you ever hear the names?

Joseph: No, no. There was quite a few of them but I never find out what their name is. Then after that they moved, we moved to Park Valley and we stayed there. And my grandfather come and stay with us. He live with us all his life till he died.

Victoria: How about your grandfather? How old was he when he died?

Joseph: Oh, I don't remember when he died. He died before I

could remember that.

Victoria: Did you have lots of good times when you were young, Joe?

Joseph: Yeah, we had good times and we had bad times. We used to go to a picnic; we used to go to country picnics, play horseshoes, you know that. If we had to be good to make a few dollars: we didn't have five cents.

Victoria: Oh, it was like competition then?

Joseph: Yeah. Oh we used to, they called a place here Kelly's Lake. We used to go there, you know, play horseshoes, you know, just about one of the top, playing horseshoes. There was nobody that could beat me. That's how come I only got a few cents to go to a sports. And we used to have good times, some bad times not all the time we had money. And we used to get out and work for 25 cents a day to go to that picnic. Yeah. We never had no horses. We never had nothing to go. We had to walk. We had to walk 10 miles to go picnic and walk back again.

Victoria: What, didn't you have horses or...

Joseph: No, we did have horses way after like, you know. After that we just about grewed up, we managed to buy a horse then. And we did buy a horse. We cut cordwood for it. A horse were pretty cheap them days, you know. You could have bought a horse with \$100, \$75, but a lot of money that \$75 them days. And we bought a horse; I think we paid \$50 for it. That old fellow helped us to buy that horse. We cut cordwood for him. Yeah.

Victoria: And what kind of houses did you live in when you were growing up?

Joseph: Well, we had a log house, just a log house and I don't think there was any rooms in it even. It was one big house.

Victoria: One big room eh. What kind of flooring did you have?

Joseph: Oh we had good flooring, yeah.

Victoria: What type of heating?

Joseph: Heating wood in a cook stove and a heater we had.

Victoria: Any electricity?

Joseph: No, we didn't have no electric, no power or nothing. Oh, I don't know for how many years.

Victoria: Running water?

Joseph: No. The only time we had running water when the rain

went through the house. (laughs)

Victoria: What kind of furniture did you have?

Joseph: Oh, we had furniture. We had benches; we make benches and a homemade table. There was nothing fancy about furniture.

Victoria: Did you own title to your own land?

Joseph: Yeah, we did have own land, yeah.

Victoria: What...

Joseph: I guess the municipality took, they took it off, away from us, from Dad. We lose the land anyway.

Victoria: About how much was there? How much land did you have?

Joseph: It was just one quarter.

Victoria: How did you get it? Like how...

Joseph: Well, we got it through, we got it through... You used to bid, like you used to buy land that time for \$10, you know. You give \$10, you get a quarter them days.

Victoria: Land scrip or anything like that?

Joseph: No. We had to buy through the municipality. It cost you ten bucks.

Victoria: There was no neighbors around you. How far away were you from the nearest neighbor?

Joseph: My mother's relations, there were lots of relations around home. They were a bunch of Arcane. There was about 15 families around (name ?) not too far away from home. They all come from Duck Lake.

Victoria: Is that where your mom was from?

Joseph: Yeah. Yeah. Duck Lake, yeah.

Victoria: And she was an Arcane?

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: What nationality were your neighbors?

Joseph: My neighbors here were half-breeds, all of them, they were half-breeds. They was mixed up. There was Norwegians and some white people. There was some Swedes there, quite a mixed up lot around there.

Victoria: Oh, so there was other people besides breeds that

lived there, eh?

Joseph: Oh, yeah. They lived right around the lake.

Victoria: What was the name of the lake?

Joseph: They call it..., geez, I don't know what they call that lake, that big slough anyway -- Schuman Lake I think they call it.

Victoria: Shooman?

Joseph: Yeah. Shooman Lake, I think they call it.

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

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: Was there many around there?

Joseph: They were there, yeah. Yeah, I used to hear about the road allowance. This here, this, we shouldn't fetch that up. There's quite a few guys, they used to live on the road allowance, lots of them. But not, not the north people, like, you know. They had all kinds of land there anyway. They can live anyplace as long as they had a dollar a year to live on: it cost them a dollar a year to pay where they can squat down.

Victoria: Yeah. That's what they called road allowance people?

Joseph: No. A lot of road allowance people, they used to live on the road allowance, so they couldn't chase them out of there. I think we lived on the road allowance one time. Pretty sure, now I come to think of it, yeah, we did live in there in Clearwater Lake. I bought a house, I bought a house from my uncle and he bought it from another guy. All this time this guy built on the road allowance and they build a highway there. I can go and show you that place. I can go and show you that bloody place. But anyway they didn't build over the road allowance, they went around it.

Victoria: And you were on the road allowance?

Joseph: Yeah. Yeah, I live on this one. You know, this one farmer here, that one across there, you know, I guess he built his house, a brand new house on the road allowance. He didn't know that. You know, all this time this house burnt. They were gonna build another one but the government, they didn't let him, because they didn't want him to live on the road allowance. There's a lot of people them days they move on the road allowance by the mistake; you know, they didn't exactly know. There's quite a few white people I know here, they live on the road allowance. Now they couldn't do it because on account of the insurance and stuff like that.

Victoria: These people that lived on, especially the breeds

that lived on the road allowances, did they stay long? Did they stay in one place very long?

Joseph: Well, like us fellows, like in that place there, we could stay there yet because they never build a highway or nothing there. The highway they build there, they went quite aways around the house, but we lived right on the road allowance. We could still live there yet if we wanted to. But there's quite a few of them live on government land. I don't think... now they pay \$5 a year, I think, or \$6 a year.

Victoria: Okay. How did things change for you, like when you were growing up, as you were growing up, Joe?

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you. When I was growing up I went to B.C. I went to B.C. and I worked in B.C. for awhile and I come back. And after that I got into fishing. I used to go up north, Cree Lake, fishing there.

Victoria: How old were you when you went to B.C.?

Joseph: I was only about 14 years old, 14, 15 years old.

Victoria: How long did you stay there?

Joseph: Oh I stayed there quite awhile. I used to go (inaudible). I damn near starve to death two, three times out there. We eat bloody apples one time for two weeks. We couldn't find a job so we had a hell of a time.

Victoria: And then you came back here.

Joseph: Yeah, we come back. We had to, because we're starved out of there. And we stop in Alberta. I think we stop at Calgary and we stayed there and we got a job there. We got a job setting them power lines. Oh, we had a good job, but it didn't last long because they only... they wanted people, men there for so long and then after that they let them go.

Victoria: Then you said you went up north fishing.

Joseph: Oh yeah, I went up to Cree Lake fishing every winter. Yeah.

Victoria: How did you make out there?

Joseph: Oh, wages was \$50 a month and by the time you buy new clothes, mitts and stuff like that, you didn't have too much left over.

Victoria: What did you do with the fish when you got it?

Joseph: We shipped them with the plane to Big River, Glen Waite.

Victoria: To Waite's Fisheries?

Joseph: Yeah. Then from there... Then after that I got on the highways. I worked for the Department of Highways 14 summers, not all summer...

Victoria: Seasonal type of thing, was it?

Joseph: Yeah. At last I just about work year round because I was getting longer and longer all the time. In the wintertime I used to have a part-time job with them.

Victoria: When you were growing up, Joe, would you say it was a happy time or sad time?

Joseph: Oh no, there was more, I was more happy them days than I do now.

Victoria: Why do you think it was more happy then?

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you one thing. Them days, I don't know, I didn't have no bills to worry about. (laughs) I didn't have no money to worry about. I never did have 5 cents, I still don't have 5 cents but, you know, more like, you know, people them days, they were more free, freedom in the... what it is today (inaudible). There's a lot of things that, you know, a guy, I don't know what the... how the hell (inaudible), you know. But them days, oh yeah, used to go to dances, have a hell of a time, primed up or not used to have a good time. (laughs)

Victoria: What kind of responsibility did you have when you were growing up? Like, did your parents give you certain jobs to do, any types of jobs?

Joseph: No they never had, they never did have certain jobs to do. I was the one that looked after my family, you know. I look after my family since I was about 12 years old. I used to get out and work and buy stuff for them. You know, I look, really today, that I was the one that look after my family right through, right up to just about...

Victoria: When you went someplace -- like you said, I know you mentioned picnics and that before -- did your family always do special things together like the camping, and fishing?

Joseph: Oh no, we never did. The only time we do any fishing was in the spring, but in the summertime we used to go out camping, picking berries and stuff like that, you know, and all kinds of stuff. Hunting, we used to do quite a bit of hunting them days, make some meat, canned meat. You know that my mother was a going woman, you know that. I don't know how in the hell she can manage sometimes that, how to keep us going, all them kids like that. You know, you have to really pull and make things stretch sometimes, you know, to make it go.

Victoria: Do you know of anyone, do you remember anyone that used to do any storytelling, Joe?

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you, my grandmother used to tell us

little stories but they was a different kind of type stories. My mother that, you know... that my grandmother she wasn't... you know a lot of them things, we ask them a lot of times them things that they didn't want to tell us anything. I don't know why that.

Victoria: Do you remember any of the stories?

Joseph: No, not enough, much, no...

Victoria: Do you remember what they were about, what type of things they were about?

Joseph: Oh, it was all kinds of ghostly stories, I don't know.

Victoria: Mostly fun stories, I suppose.

Joseph: Oh yeah.

Victoria: Some kind of stories they tell to scare you, or...

Joseph: No. It was kids' stories, that's all it is. There's nothing in it much to...

Victoria: Did they tell them in Cree?

Joseph: Yeah. Oh yeah. My grandmother was mostly Cree.

Victoria: And you said you lived around where your aunts and uncles were, eh...

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: ...when you were young. Do you think your family was a very close one? Did they stick together?

Joseph: Oh yeah. They still, yeah, they still do. Oh yeah. But my dad, he was a type that, you know, he didn't care. He was a guy that he didn't care too much, he didn't care. You always (inaudible) went away and never come back sometimes for a couple of weeks. He didn't care if we live or not. That's how come that we just about make our living. But he got smarten up after, you know, after he get older and older.

Victoria: What do you think about... what kind of feelings do you have when you think about your parents?

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you, I really feel sorry for my mother. You know, my mother she work, she still work, she had..., you know, that 85 years old now. And my dad, she look after the old man all his life and she turned around -- and my dad's going blind now -- she turns around, still look after him. You know, that is... there's no end of it.

Victoria: Yeah. So you think she was pretty...

Joseph: Oh, oh, I'll tell you. You know, Mom was so good. I

never did see Mom, other man who was so good-hearted, you know, still like that, oh, so good-hearted, Mom was.

Victoria: So your feelings, I guess, would be... very much with love, eh?

Joseph: Oh yeah.

Victoria: Is there anyone that you really liked or looked up to when you were growing up or a little kid, somebody in your family or just a family friend?

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you, I liked them all. I liked them all, except maybe a couple of them we didn't get along because they were a little kinda too nosey and bossy. After they got grewed up, they got pretty smart. But otherwise, the rest of them there, they're not bad.

Victoria: You didn't have one special one?

Joseph: I look after them all, the whole works of them. No use, maybe I had a kid brother there, Roy, yeah, I used to buy him... I didn't favor nobody, I bought 'em everything. When I bought one, I bought the whole works, you know that. I used to get home and come home Saturday, all the neighbor kids used to come and meet me. I had buy them candies for them, not only my brothers and sisters there was a bunch of kids too, the other kids.

Victoria: Did you look up to somebody, though? Did you like somebody, yourself? Did you think of them as a real nice person, somebody that was older than you?

Joseph: Well, I was the oldest.

Victoria: But not in your family, Joe, anybody in your neighborhood.

Joseph: Yeah, I had an uncle, Victor Arkin his name. He was a oh... he was a good-hearted guy. He would do anything, too, for a guy that to help you. Many times he did help us. Even one time my mother took sick and he had only two horses. You know, he sold a horse just to get my mother to the hospital, that Victor Arkin. He used to live about 10 miles from here. Yeah, he's one of the best, kind uncle that a guy can have.

Victoria: Do you remember when you were young, Joe, did your parents grow a garden?

Joseph: Oh yeah. We did grow a garden every year, bunch of potatoes and stuff like that.

Victoria: Big?

Joseph: Oh yeah. Yeah, that's one thing we had. We had a bunch of white people there, they helped us, a bunch of them people there, making plow the garden and stuff like that.

Victoria: What did other Metis families in, you know, like where you were living -- you said there was a bunch of people who were there -- what all did they do for a living?

Joseph: Well, I don't know. Some of them, they had land. They farmed a little bit and between farming little bit and tried to work in Shults Lake, they make, some of them people, they make good. They're smart operators, you know, they were good them kind of years, because them years there was no money, there was no money that they could be make. You got to really look after yourself if you want to make it. Because the smart operators, they used to butcher pigs and cows once in awhile. And my grandfather -- my grandfather lives not far from us -- he used to go... he was a smart operator. He had a big family, I don't know how many boys he had. I bet you he had over 12 in one bunch. He married twice, you know. But they were all them good workers, you know, there wasn't a lazy type in them.

Victoria: And you said your grandfather married twice.

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: And how many did he have in the first family?

Joseph: He had five or six. And in the second one he had about that many. Yeah, he must have had about 14 kids all together. My mother was one of them, you know. I think he had five or six half dozens.

Victoria: Well, was it very easy to get welfare in those days?

Joseph: Well I'll tell you, we never did get welfare that much till, I remember that... oh, there was pretty tough to... We got welfare there, used to go and buy stuff in the store in Eldred, used to be a little store there, Eldred. We didn't get cash. He used to give us some kind of a coupon, food order to go and buy stuff. But them days if they give you \$10 worth of stuff, you can buy a lot of stuff for \$10, you know. You know, we went two families or three families with a team of horse to that store there. You know, that's all we could do is put it in that sleigh and went home with it. Yeah.

Victoria: What were the people like that gave the welfare? Were they mean or were they...

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you, they were pretty smart. It was Conservatives' outfit. You know, when you see the Conservatives... I never had no use Conservative. Remember, they were so dirty that Conservatives. My auntie, I remember my auntie, I was in... I went visit them. They come in there -- they had a quarter of land there -- and they come in and they had just about new stove, the storekeeper will give them new stove, a new cook stove. You know they took that cook stove out of the house, just to make him pay his taxes. You know that he didn't have no place to cook after, just a heater. Yeah, the Conservatives they were dirty. They knew better.

It's all right, Conservatives they were good long as you were a white man, but a half-breed, they never did help. You know, that the white, they supposed to help the people. They used to give them Frenchmen here some cattle, horses -- we never got anything that. There was no way that we could get horses or cattle.

Victoria: So they let... They gave to the whites and not the breeds?

Joseph: Yeah. No, no. They never did helped us, the government, helped us anything.

Victoria: What kind of work was there for people to do in the community?

Joseph: Well, there's only, like I said, we cleared the roads. Instead of getting the (inaudible). we used to haul gravel with the horses and load gravel, but if you didn't work -- we didn't have no horses -- we used to take shovels and load the (inaudible) and gravel the road, and clear the road, and cut the hills with the shovels. You know, there was... Oh, just to make a living, that's all. Long as you were making a living I guess people, they didn't care.

Victoria: Did your relatives work there too?

Joseph: Oh yeah, all of them, yeah. There's only one that... You know, the Frenchmen there too -- there's another thing -- the Frenchmen there, they used to hire us to work on the road there. They used to give us maybe a \$1 a day and them guys they used to get about \$5 a day to pay their taxes. See, they make \$4 on us just to pay their taxes, and us fellows work for nothing there.

Victoria: So was there very many people that you knew that did have steady jobs then?

Joseph: I don't think so. There was none that was sure of a steady job. It's only a steady job them days if you have an axe and if you know how to cut brush. You know, people they used to go around cutting a lot of brush for the farmers, so they used to get rotten deals too, you know.

Victoria: What language did you talk in your home when you were growing up?

Joseph: Mostly French. Mom was a... we always talk good French. But me, I was different than the other ones. I was mostly with the white people, you know, I never was mixed up with that, that... I could understand all the French. I couldn't... a fellow can understand but mostly I was English with them guys.

Victoria: How old were you when you first realized that you were a half-breed or a Metis?

Joseph: Oh, I remember since I was a kid. They used to call us, long as you can understand, a lot of them white kids they used to call us God damn half-breed. (laughs)

Victoria: Did your parents talk about themselves, like as being a half-breed or a Metis?

Joseph: Oh yeah, they know. There's no way that... that's one thing you couldn't hide, you know. We were born with that. A lot of them guys... I got some relations here, they live right in Debden here, my Uncle Lee's daughters. He's got about 5 or 6 daughters, oh geez, you know they think they're millionaires. They don't think they're half-breed. They don't, they couldn't talk Cree. Even my uncle there, he couldn't even talk in good English. My auntie is the same damn thing. Now they don't want to talk Cree.

Victoria: So your parents though were proud of being Metis?

Joseph: Oh yeah, yeah. My dad's side. I got lots of relations... like I got brother-in-laws, they're French, they're Swedes, they're Germans...

Victoria: Oh, you got mixed all in your family, eh?

Joseph: Oh quite a mix, Indian, (inaudible) there isn't a damn thing that... I got every nationality, I guess. Even I got a Chinaman for a cousin. Oh, for sure! You know that... that... you know that... what you call him, Uke there in Saskatoon. He married my first cousin. That's what she call him, Edgar. What she called Lorna, she work for Metis Society. And I even got a cousin there, he's a nigger, a nigger, yeah, married to my cousin too. But I got along with them guys...

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Victoria: Did your family ever talk, is there anyone in your family that talked about Metis history?

Joseph: Well, they never did, they never did talk about that. I never heard them anyway, you know, not on my mother's side or Dad's. They never did talk about anything like that, you know.

Victoria: Was there times, you know, like in your community when all the Metis people got together and what was it for?

Joseph: Oh, they got together. It's only time they got together when they're making a party, you know. They have a (inaudible) days, them days. They make, used to be an awful bunch that makes little parties and dances, play cards, you know. That's all they do.

Victoria: What about weddings?

Joseph: Yeah, their weddings.

Victoria: Funerals?

Joseph: Yeah, we used to go to funerals quite a bit. And... but to talk about the Metis Society or I mean, about the half-breeds, I never heard them to say too much about that, because they... Treaty there, they got nothing to say too much about Metis Society. They were born like that and they had to stay like that, you know.

Victoria: Did your mom and dad ever wear like any traditional Metis clothing, you know, like the long dresses?

Joseph: Oh yeah, my mother was a... she never was a... she never... still wore the long dress. You know, you never put the slack on... I never seen Mom to put a pair of slacks on, still I never seen them a day.

Victoria: How about the scarfs they used to wear?

Joseph: Still got the scarf, got it all the time.

Victoria: What about your dad? Did he ever wear one of those sashes, you know, those...

Joseph: No.

Victoria: Did your Mom know how to do beadwork and tan hides?

Joseph: No, she never did, but she sewed a lot of stuff. She make shirts for us. I remember... I never forget, Mom, she make me a white shirt with a flour sack. You know, you wash the flour sack and...

Victoria: She could sew, was it by hand or...?

Joseph: Yeah, by hand. Yeah. She make shirts and pants. Well, that's the only way... We can buy that cloth, you know, in the store. It was so cheap them days you can make an overalls for a dollar them days, maybe for 50 cents, you know.

Victoria: Was there any special songs that Metis people used to sing, or...?

Joseph: They used to sing French songs, but...

Victoria: You don't remember them though?

Joseph: No I don't remember. When they got few drinks they used to sing a lot. I used to enjoy go to them parties, you know. Good old songs they used to sing. Still, one day here out at a party, and this one young fellow, Vic, Rick Harten, you know that bugger sing them old songs just as good as ever the day that I hear them. You know that he sent for me but I

was there. The girls (inaudible) told him, "He's not around. He's in Rocky Mountain House."

Victoria: Did anyone in your family play a fiddle?

Joseph: Not in my family, but my uncles, all my uncles, they played fiddles, guitars.

Victoria: What were their names?

Joseph: There's Moses Arcane, there's Wilfrid Arcane and...

Victoria: That's on your mom's side?

Joseph: Yeah, my mom's side. And all of them, even my mother's brother-in-law there, that Gerard Sitstahl... Sitstahl Gerard... used to play fiddle, and Abraham -- he's in Saskatoon, that's my mother's oldest grandchild -- he plays fiddle.

Victoria: Did you jig?

Joseph: Yeah, quite a bit, yeah.

Victoria: How about your parents, did they?

Joseph: No, no. The only time they tried to, not my mother, but my mother used to dance square dances and stuff like. We used to go quite a bit dances. But to jig, I never seen them jig. Maybe (inaudible) tried to jig but he don't know how.

Victoria: Was there any elders in your family that ever practised any traditional Indian religion? Or Indian medicine?

Joseph: Well, there was... my grandmother had a real good medicine, but nobody ever tried to get the medicine away from her to learn what to use about. You know, that's all forgettin'.

Victoria: Did you ever see her use it? What did she use it for?

Joseph: Oh yeah. There was a woman one time that, yeah, we even had a belly ache. The doctors, they wouldn't do a bloody thing, you know. Well, she could cure them guys, you know, them stomach aches just as good as any doctor. And she had all kinds of medicine there, different kind of dark medicine, heart medicine. She used to be... claim used to be good, but that's quite a while ago. I don't hardly remember.

Victoria: Do you know what she made them out of?

Joseph: Oh, I couldn't tell you. That's one thing that... she wouldn't tell you nothing, you know. Them guys, the people, they were kind of, they wouldn't tell you what they used. They were awful particular about that, their medicine.

Victoria: Did you ever see a sweat lodge or use one, Joe?

Joseph: I did, yeah.

Victoria: What was it like?

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you. It's quite a thing. I never... you know, I used to like it after two, three times when they used to make a bunch of fire with a bunch of rock and you go in with a pail of water there, and it's well-covered and you...

Victoria: Like a tipi or something?

Joseph: Yeah. A little round tent but it's well closed in. You go in there and there's a steam bath, they call it. Oh man, that's a...

Victoria: Maybe just like a sauna like we have today, eh?

Joseph: But that's real healthy. I'll tell you, boy, you go in there and sweat it out. You got to be healthy to go in there, too. If it happen that if you got a weak breath, I think you'd choke, it's so hot in there. But when you come outa there, boy, you feel like a, feel good, you know. That's a real Indian stuff, that one.

Victoria: Who... where did you go to do it? I mean...

Joseph: They used to make... Indians, they used to come around at home and they make them tipis sometimes, you know. They figure that you need one, well, they make one for you. They do that. Used to be (inaudible). Used to have a place too, you know. In the wintertime you could go in and have a steam bath inside the house. They used to make it inside the house, special place for that. And I used to go there quite a bit.

Victoria: How long ago was this, Joe?

Joseph: Oh, I'd say about 30 years ago, that.

Victoria: Do you still have contact with Metis people here in Debden?

Joseph: Oh yeah, I'm a great guy with the Metis. I don't know why that I get along good with the Metis. If they want something, even that, the first place they would come in there to see me about the Metis Society. I'm the first one with them guys. It don't matter who it is, they all come here. Yeah. Victoria: So in your community how would you say the Metis are like? Are the spread out or in the town. Is it much like the old days or is it different?

Joseph: No, they're all spread out. Oh, they thinned out quite a bit around here too, you know. They all mostly moved away. And they all scattered all over. Before there they used to be quite a few Metis, but they all scattered all over. Some of them in B.C., Alberta. Mostly the old people, they stick

around here now.

Victoria: Do you still have your meetings here though?

Joseph: Oh yeah, oh yeah. We have meetings here.

Victoria: Do you get along good with non-native people in the community?

Joseph: Oh yeah, we never had a... I don't think I got a bad friend the Indians at all. I get along real nice with them, you know.

Victoria: How about the whites are they...

Joseph: Oh, the whites, it's the same thing. I get along good with the whites. 'Cause we work, we work quite a bit with the white people, you know, like you know the Metis Society there.

Victoria: Were you ever called names or anything because you were Metis?

Joseph: Oh yeah. I know that lots of times in a meeting we did have quite a stiff argument with the white people that they tried to run it, and one day I fired the whole works of them, even Shirley (inaudible), for instance. You know, that was quite a thing. You know, to do that with a best friend... I used to get along with Shirley, I still get along with Shirley, still working with us. Shirley, she's one of the best, I think, woman that we ever have to back us up with a thing like that. Anything we short, we want to find out about a paper, just got to do is take it over there, and she (inaudible) she's really smart woman. She's a school teacher.

Victoria: Did... you mentioned before here that when they were cutting brush the men worked for less. Was there any other jobs around, you know, where the Metis got paid less than other people working at the same job?

Joseph: Oh no, there wasn't a certain thing as a job around here. The only job you could get was maybe from the farmer, cutting brush or stuff like that. But you don't get a government job or logging camp. There was only one place you can get a logging job's in Big River. It's only got was Big River. Big River there, they don't... makes no difference if you're half-breed or a white man, they'll hire you there. Big River, they one hell of a nice people, you know.

Victoria: Do they get paid the same money though for the same job?

Joseph: Oh yeah, they get paid the same. Like me when I was working in Big River, I was just about the toppest wages I was gettin'. I was only 15. The boss come up and told me one morning, "Joe, we goin' to raise your wages," he said. "We'll give you \$1.50 an hour now instead of 75 cents." See, they...

like that, you know. We used to work for 75 cents a day.

Victoria: How long ago was that, Joe?

Joseph: Oh, that was about '32, it might be around '37 or something like that, 1937. Jack Carter that raised my wages. Then after that I work George Anderson. He used to have a big sawmill in Stony Lake there. I worked for him, I don't know how many years.

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

Joseph: No. I don't think so. Well, I'll tell you that... that I never was... really to say that... I always got a job, like in the highways there I used... like, you know, when I first got the job, we used to cut brush alongside the road there for so many hours, so many days in the summertime, you know. But the longer we worked there, the longer I was putting my time in. First thing you know they didn't have no (inaudible). I had more time in than anybody. That's how come I got in there. You know, I never was a... rejected from anybody, you know, I always got... it don't matter where I worked, I just about got on top to be a foreman. Lots of time, like on the highways, at last I didn't do hardly anything. I used to go around, change blades for the guy that's cuttin' grass, and I was really looking after men. In the summertime they used to give me a bunch of teenagers to work with, you know.

Victoria: Sort of supervise eh?

Joseph: Yeah. But I got along with the kids. It's only to try to get along with a bunch of kids. If you try to be bossy I think you have pretty hard tough time. I know there was quite a few guys there they tried to handle, they couldn't do it. They had to quit, so they give me the job. I got along so good that they work like hell.

Victoria: Did you feel uncomfortable when you were around white people?

Joseph: No, I didn't, because I was more used to white people because I was raised with them, you know. I was raised with the white people more than the half-breed people. I never was, really to say that I got really mixed in at last, at last there with the Metis people, like to go and stay with them or anything like that, always working there steady.

Victoria: Did your family go to different, like to dances or different functions that the white people put on?

Joseph: No, they never did. We never did. The only place we used to go was them rodeos in Sandy Lake and stuff like that.

Victoria: Mostly Metis and French people there eh?

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: How did the town authorities treat your family? Were they good to them or did they have any problems?

Joseph: Well, well I'll tell you. There was a lot of different people, they have lots of problems. But you see that us fellows there, I never... You know that I deal with the IGA store, them people, I grew up with them guys. You know, I deal with them since I was a kid, I'm still deal with them, no problem at all. I can charge up stuff and borrow money from them, you know. I really get along good. Maybe there's some guys they wouldn't trust you with the money, but really to say I never got stuck.

Victoria: How about the town people, like about housing or anything like that, the town authorities, you know?

Joseph: Well I never, maybe the other guys, the other Metis, but I never did. I got nothing to complain about there, the town people. But lotta... lotta... lots of rumors I hear that people they do, the Metis there, they're bunch of pigs. They won't let them even stay in them old age pension house.

Victoria: Did they try to get them to move away or move out?

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: You don't know any of their names or anything?

Joseph: No.

Victoria: What about the church? Was it really important in your life or in your family's life as you were growing up?

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you, I'll tell you, the church, the church part, we had our own church at Pine Valley. Metis Society had a church and they had one at Clearwater Lake, a little log church. But Debden here, it's only that high-class people, they went to that church. That poor man there, if you go there if you dress poor in that church they laugh at you, you know. A lot of them, even the old French people, they wouldn't go to that church. They'll go to church to Big River or Victoire in the reserve. You know, there was more white people went to that Indian reserve, that Catholic Church there, than come to Debden.

Victoria: Is Victoire, is that on the reserve?

Joseph: Not Victoire, no, no. But the other church that Whitefish Church, Whitefish Lake.

Victoria: Oh, they build a church there? Yeah.

Joseph: Yeah, build a nice church in there.

Victoria: Well, was Victoire there, was that a native settlement too for Metis people?

Joseph: Yeah. Oh yeah. There was quite a few breeds there. But they all went there, the breeds and the white people to that church. They had a big convent there too one time, you know. Oh hell, they had a bunch of kids goin' from north there. They had a Sister looking after the place.

Victoria: Did any of your family ever go to the convent there?

Joseph: No, they never did, never did, no.

Victoria: So did your family go to church regularly, Joe?

Joseph: Oh yeah, we used to go to church. The priest here, the priest used to come, he used to come at home even, to the house, the priest. And he used to go to Pine Valley Church. Oh, my mother's a strong Catholic, you know, and goes to...

Victoria: Do you remember what the priest talked about when he came to your place?

Joseph: Oh no. Well, I'll tell you, the priest, he was a rough customer. (laughs) He wasn't scared to tell you what he want to say. Many stiff arguments me and Father Paquette, we used to have. He died now, you know.

Victoria: Paquette was his name?

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: Did he talk about politics?

Joseph: No, he did... never did much politics, but sometimes he used to, people (inaudible) on the side, people used to tell him not this and not that.

Victoria: Oh, he told you the dos and the don'ts. Do you think that the church back then had a stronger influence on the people than it does today?

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you one thing. One time here there was... there wasn't a... there wasn't a people that they had anything to say. The church here was the priest that runs... runs everything, you know. In Debden here if the priest... if the priest... he doesn't want to dance he don't have to make a dance. They could take the priest to make a dance. Yeah, they wouldn't... you know, everything what they do, they gotta ask the priest. But now, they're mostly out of that now.

Victoria: Starting to move on their own, eh?

Joseph: Yeah. Before here, even outside kids, they wouldn't let them come to school here, the white kids. If you're not a Frenchman you never could come to Debden school. But now, when the CCF come there them days they're cuttin' off them country schools, they didn't have no choice. See, they got mixed in. Now the French people in town here, they're raisin' hell because their kids, they don't know how to talk French. They

got a Catholic French school going in Debden.

Victoria: Oh, they got a French school goin' here?

Joseph: Oh yeah, none of them want to talk French. Otherwise, lots of time you walk in the street, you hear them French people talking English to their kids because they don't know how to talk French.

Victoria: Did you never go to school when you were small, Joe?

Joseph: No, I never did go to school. No.

Victoria: Did your parents, like did they ever ask a priest
for help, like...

Joseph: No they never did. Yeah, they did, not for me. It was my grandfather... My grandmother died... not my... my mother's uncle and he come up here to Debden. He asked the preacher if he could come... he asked the preacher if he could go and pray for the old lady. The priest he didn't want to go. He said, "If you sell one of them ox and have money," he said, "I'll go." So he had to sell one of them ox there so the preacher can go there and pray for the old lady.

Victoria: He had to pay him?

Joseph: Oh, you're God damn right. The priest he wouldn't go there for nothing...

Victoria: How far was it?

Joseph: Just a... not any more than about 10 miles, 10 or 12 miles.

Victoria: Do you know how much it cost him?

Joseph: I don't know. I forget. But it cost him that steer anyway. Oh yeah. Oh, them priests, oh, they used to be bad, you know.

Victoria: Do you know if, do you think the church helped Metis people, you know, with problems they had?

Joseph: Well, they never did. I never heard of helping in a Catholic Church around here, anytime that... I never heard 'em. I never heard anybody that gets... It's only the nuns maybe sometimes, they give few blankets out and... but I never heard the Catholic Church help anybody.

Victoria: Did you, what did your parents think about politics, Joe?

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you, my grandfather... my grandfather was a real Conservative asshole, you know. Oh, I hate that bull. You know, I couldn't get along with, I never did get

along with my grandfather just account of that, you know. I never was a Conservative in my life. I seen too much what the Conservatives done about the people that... guy made them sick, you know. Well, maybe I shouldn't say that but they're going in again anyway, but it doesn't make no difference.

Victoria: Oh, say it!

Joseph: Yeah. Yes, they were dirty, you know.

Victoria: What type of things did they do to people?

Joseph: Oh, they do it now. They didn't want election. They decided they looked... they looked like... they didn't... the less they helped... they didn't want to help the Metis. No way that anybody in Metis Society got help or anything like that.

Victoria: Do you know if your parents voted?

Joseph: Oh yeah, we vote ever year. Conservatives used to come around every four years with a bunch of sandwiches and drinks to make a whole of them half-breeds there, just to make believe in them. They gonna help them. They gonna help them this. And then after the election you never seen one of them. They feed them with nothing.

Victoria: What about your grandparents? Do you remember if they voted?

Joseph: Oh yeah.

Victoria: What did they vote?

Joseph: The Conservative.

Victoria: They were Conservatives, were they?

Joseph: Yeah. They used to give them little jobs here, cutting few brush on the road there just about election time. Used to make \$1, used to suck the people to vote for them.

Victoria: Do you think that's why they voted that way, eh?

Joseph: Oh yeah. They were smooth-talking buggers.

Victoria: Did they ever come and visit your home, the politicians?

Joseph: Oh yeah. Once ever four years they would come.

Victoria: What did they talk about?

Joseph: Oh they talk about politics, how they going to help people. You know, they never did help.

Victoria: Did your parents ever get involved in party politics?

Joseph: No, they never did. No.

Victoria: Do you know if the church was ever involved with politics?

Joseph: Oh, they... Sure! At one time the priest used to tell the people how to vote, even right in Debden.

Victoria: Is that right?

Joseph: Oh yeah. If the priest vote Conservative, all the people, they vote for Conservative. If he votes for Liberal, they'll vote for liberal. But that's not any more though, you know.

Victoria: Well, how long ago was this, would that be?

Joseph: Oh, it would be around '30s, '40s, something around... round this.

Victoria: Did most of the Metis people vote the same way as what the church did, or the same way as their parents did?

Joseph: I don't know. Mostly what the... they used to go by the old man, I guess. The old fellow vote for Conservative, all the young fellows, they vote for Conservatives. Still like that around here, you know, that French people anyway.

Victoria: Do you still vote for the same party as your parents did?

Joseph: No, I never did vote... I always vote for CCF and I stay with CCF.

Victoria: Oh, you're still a CCFer, eh. Did you ever help campaign for any political party?

Joseph: Oh yeah, damn right! Yeah. I did for Liberals here a few years ago, CCF and Conservative, ...er CCF and (inaudible) I run around here.

Victoria: What did you do? What did you have to do?

Joseph: Oh, good (inaudible) good turn-out. But the only thing that... they suppose to come and see me and they never did. Well, I got this kinda sick then, see, and that was time to quit. Oh no, I run around.

Victoria: What did you have to do when you went?

Joseph: Well, I would see the people, see how to tell them how to... what they think of the government. And I didn't go for rich, I went for the poor people, you know, the people that they didn't have nothing. They didn't have a... They could only stand nobody'd see 'em to go and talk 'em. And you know I made out real good with them guys.

Victoria: Do you think that Metis people,,, do they vote for

the party that will do the best for them?

Joseph: Well, I hope, you know, but I don't know. The mostly Metis people... I heard that they're, specially in P.A., I learned a few little things about all different guys how they go and vote and how... Nobody don't want to say too much what they... people, they go and do, you know.

Victoria: Were you involved in the first Metis Society in the 1930s and '40s?

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: What did you do there, Joe?

Joseph: I was a member for them and I used to make dances for them. I used to sell pies.

Victoria: What was the money for?

Joseph: To go to the Soundland Inn and they used to go to Saskatoon. Like the far they used to go to Saskatoon them days, you know. They figured that was a long trip. Old Mise Isbister...

Victoria: What was his name?

Joseph: Mise Isbister.

Victoria: Mise Isbister? And Bert Landry?

Joseph: Yeah, Bert Landry and Sam...

Victoria: Jim?

Joseph: Jim. All them Landys, There was about three brothers, I think. They used to come there. Sam, I think used to go to... I never went to Saskatoon with them. I coulda went two, three times but I didn't wanna go. So Mise went. And that petered out. We were pretty good at it. I don't know, seems to me that just, just quit.

Victoria: Before the war, I suppose, eh. Did you have a local in your community?

Joseph: Oh yeah, we had a... first local in...

Victoria: Does it have lots of Metis people who have joined?

Joseph: Oh yeah, quite a few. Yeah, damn right.

Victoria: Was there some of them around here that didn't take part?

Joseph: Oh yeah, lots of 'em. Oh, no, lots of 'em, lots of 'em. You know, they didn't believe in that...

Victoria: They were whites for a while, like?

Joseph: Yeah. They were laughing at us.

Victoria: You went to the meetings did you, Joe?

Joseph: Oh yeah, I went to the meetings and...

Victoria: How often did you have them?

Joseph: Eh?

Victoria: How often did you hold the meetings?

Joseph: In them days? I think every once a month, I think.

Victoria: Did you ever go to one of the big conventions they had?

Joseph: No, I never did. I had a chance to go. I was asked to go but I couldn't hardly walk the last time there, and I told Hamilton, I said, "No use for me to go," I said, because I couldn't hardly walk and I don't want to push around and there's only one place to...

Victoria: Oh, that was just recently here, eh?

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: But back in the old days with Bert and them did you...?

Joseph: No, no. But we never went anyplace.

Victoria: What did they talk about, you know, back in the '30s at those meetings?

Joseph: Well, that's about the same...

Victoria: About the same thing as we got now, eh?

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: How to better life for...

Joseph: Yeah. We used to have smart, good meetings, you know. People, they were smart, but we never had no chance, no backing. The government, they didn't back us up a bloody cent.

Victoria: Who was the government then? Who was in?

Joseph: I think it was Conservatives them days. They didn't want to even look at us.

Victoria: Did they ever talk about Metis scrip at these...?

Joseph: Yeah, they did. Yeah. But they never got anyplace with that. They talk about it and they still talk about it,

them old timers, you know, that scrips of ours. That's for the dogs ...

Victoria: Why? Why do you think that?

Joseph: Ahh, they never... they'll never get anyplace with that. If the Conservative win this election (inaudible) Metis Society (inaudible) will be polished off, you know that.

Victoria: Did they ever talk about jobs or the lack of jobs, and discrimination?

Joseph: The Metis Society?

Victoria: Yeah.

Joseph: Oh yeah. They used to talk about that, all kinds of things. But...

(END OF SIDE B)

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DATE OF INTERVIEW: 03/04/84
INTERVIEWER: VICTORIA R. RACETTE
INTERPRETER:
TRANSCRIBER: HEATHER YAWORSKI
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BELOW.

Victoria: The old Metis Society like the Saskatchewan Metis

Society in the '30s and '40s there, what did they do for the people? Did they help them get relief or housing?

Joseph: Oh no. They didn't, they didn't, they didn't help. We never got any help around any stuff like that. We never got any help. The only help that we give 'em is go to... (inaudible) back to go to the meetings in Saskatoon, but to get help, to get anything fixed really we didn't get anything from the government.

Victoria: What did the white people in your area think about the Metis Society back then?

Joseph: Oh they, they were sure laughing at the people, you know. They figure that, that never work. But some of them guys, some of them white people, they were right in it to help us, you know. You try to get ahead, but a lot of them, they didn't care. They didn't want nothing to do with it.

Victoria: Do you remember the name Joe LaRocque?

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: What do you remember about him?

Joseph: Well, I don't remember too much. I just remember to see him, that's all, but I never remember...

Victoria: Where did you meet him at?

Joseph: I met him at Meadow Lake, I think. There was a meeting in Meadow Lake, I met him there.

Victoria: A Metis Society meeting?

Joseph: (inaudible) I'm pretty sure. It was some kind of a meeting. I went with Sam and I'm pretty sure that's the place we met him, or in Battleford anyway. I just couldn't say.

Victoria: Sam Landy you mean that was, eh?

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: Do you remember Joe Ross?

Joseph: No. I heard of his name though. I never... I don't...

Victoria: How about Tom Major?

Joseph: No, I don't remember, I don't remember, I don't never hear, first time I ever heard.

Victoria: Solomon Pritchard?

Joseph: Yeah. I heard of his name, that one too, but I never met him.

Victoria: You didn't meet him, eh. What about Joe McKenzie?

Joseph: I think we did meet Joe McKenzie, yeah.

Victoria: Do you remember where you met him at?

Joseph: No, I don't remember that, (inaudible) meet him. You know, you met so many of them guys, you know, you goin' to... you don't know where they're at. Either Meadow Lake or Battleford, I met them.

Victoria: How long were you involved in that Metis Society in the '30s and '40s?

Joseph: Oh, about 10 years, I guess... 5 years, 5 or 10, well, we'll say 10 years.

Victoria: What all did you do during that time?

Joseph: Well, we never do much. We try to make always pretty scrimp to make 5 cents. It was hard times and stuff like that them days. You had a hell of a time to collect a few dollars them guys, they could go to Saskatoon to go the meetings there. I don't know, they used to go the meetings and they used to have...

Victoria: What were the meetings for then?

Joseph: Well, they try to get the government to help us to start a Metis Society, but we never progressed too much.

Victoria: About how many would you say was involved in your local here in those days?

Joseph: Well, them days we'll say about 30 I guess.

Victoria: About 30 people. Were they all the Metis from around here?

Joseph: Not Arcanes. No, there was no Arcane mixed up in that. You know they were, them Arcanes, they were slow. In fact, they didn't... the Metis Society, they didn't believe in that. I don't know they were kind of pushy or proud, or anything like that. When they seen the people they were getting stuff though, you should have seen them getting in there now, even some white people, they were half-breeds, no half-breed in them. They tried to claim they were a half-breed just to get the stuff free.

Victoria: So what really happened after awhile there? You said you were in it for about 10 years and then...

Joseph: They kind of forgotten that, you know, the Metis Society... The meantime and it's... what... too long... I bet you it's about 20 years after that, they start all over again, you know.

Victoria: Were you involved the second time again?

Joseph: Oh yeah, with the neighbors.

Victoria: What did you do this time?

Joseph: Oh, I run around for the Metis here. Me and Ernest, we were just about on top, you know. We done everything to help the Metis Society, you know. Cripes Almighty! we made a lot of miles.

Victoria: Ernest is your brother, is he?

Joseph: Yeah. Ernest is an old man. He put up a lot of his own time, wreck even a brand new truck. Tried to set up the Metis Society, and he was fighting against the Metis Indians, stuff like that, you know. They didn't want to help them.

Victoria: They didn't want to be Metis?

Joseph: No. Hell! we had a hell of a time.

Victoria: And where all did you travel?

Joseph: Oh, all over. I drove practically all over, we drove all over. We drove... me, especially me, now I drove Meadow Lake, Green Lake, Glaslyn, all over, I went all over.

Victoria: What year was that in, Joe?

Joseph: That's, geez I don't know what year. We used to drive every year. We used to do that every year except the last two, three years. About three, four years now, I never go much. I never go to hardly anyplace since I've been sick, but before that I was...

Victoria: Would that be in the '70s?

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: Probably in about the '70s, '75...

Joseph: '75, '76 yeah, something like that.

Victoria: Did you know Josephine Pambrun then?

Joseph: Yeah, oh yeah.

Victoria: Was she...

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: ...helping out too?

Joseph: She's from Meadow Lake. I used to go and see him. (laughs) I even run, the time that election here, Jim and them, I went, oh, I went all over Canoe Lake, James Bay, Green Lake...

Victoria: Up north, eh?

Joseph: ...up north there, for Jim there, you know. But I made out good too, you know, That's what I said, I didn't go for them high-class people; I went with the guy that could... middle-class people that I knew they were (inaudible, background noise). You know, I always got good outage with them.

Victoria: What do you think they've accomplished so far with the Metis Society? This time around I should say.

Joseph: Well, they were doing real good. I think they accomplished housing anyway, know a lot of people they got good houses a nice place to live on. But since the Conservatives started taking over things sure changed that housing quite a bit. You know, that you don't know what the hell you're at, you go an' kicked outta them houses or not, you don't know. Finally, I got some stiff letters from Conservatives already, you know. They would ever raise my rent and everything.

Victoria: What do you think has been the most important thing in your life, Joe?

Joseph: Well, I like the Metis Society. I really enjoyed that, you know, that go around and talk to people and try to help people. We did help quite a few poor people around, you know, and I really enjoy that. I really like that. I still can go in the summertime if anything that is going on I'm going to try to get interested just to get out of the house. Once I get in the car I can drive, you know.

Victoria: What kind of a person do you think you are, Joe? What kind of a person do you see yourself as?

Joseph: (laughs) Well, I don't know, I don't know. I must be not bad because I haven't got a bad friend nowheres.

Victoria: Oh, that's the main thing.

Joseph: I don't know, I don't think I got an enemy to say that anybody that actually that I don't like or he doesn't like me. Oh, there's a lot of people, they talk, but when it comes to brass tacks at least they come and see me to get my help anyway. But I've got nothing against nobody. I don't give a hell what the other guy does, how much money he makes, if he needs money I always help them.

Victoria: What kind of life do you say you've had, what type of life? Do you think it's interesting, satisfying or...

Joseph: Oh, not bad. I had... my life I really enjoyed it. You know, I had a good life to say I was working all the time.

Victoria: Do you think it was interesting?

Joseph: Yeah. Sure as hell. And I had different jobs. I didn't have only the highways, I had pretty well steady job. I work on the water shores for so many years. And in the winter time I used to go up north and fish.

Victoria: Do you think your life was very different from your grandparents'?

Joseph: Oh yeah.

Victoria: How do you think it was different?

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you, I was more civilized, I guess, try to be civilized. And them guys, they didn't care, them guys, you know, they never got any... To say that my relations, them, they were different people altogether. They didn't care if they farm or not. They wouldn't... so long they live.

Victoria: They didn't really get excited about it, eh?

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: What about from your parents'? Do you think it was very different from your parents', from your mother's and father's?

Joseph: Well, I don't know. Pretty hard to face, you know that... like my dad there, I don't know, to say, "I hate you," is all right, but he, my dad, he didn't care. That fellow, I sometime, I've often wondered when... if he was care for us or he didn't care. Sometime we didn't see him for two, three weeks.

Victoria: Why do you think he did them sort of things, Joe?

Joseph: I don't know. I guess... I don't know. What the hell... You know them old people, some of them guys, you know, they didn't care. They liked to go around, move around, and they didn't stay in one place.

Victoria: Do you think maybe it was because of responsibility they had?

Joseph: Yeah, they didn't like them. Like them Arcanes there, you know, they used to move every so long. They'd stay one year, maybe a couple of years in one place, they'd move, move to a different flock. You know, they didn't move only one family, the whole shooting match, you know, 15 families and like that. First... when they first moved from Duck Lake, they moved to Maidstone -- Maidstone, was a hell of a pile of them there. Then after that, they moved to Jackson Lake where we used to live, around the lake there. There was about 10 families there too, you know, them Arcanes, there's about the same outfit. And after that they tried to buy farms and they were scattered quite a bit that time. Still now, there's not much Arcanes out in the country.

Victoria: What has mattered most to you in your life, Joe? Is it your family or the things that you did, your religion?

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you. My religion, well, I used to go to church but I never was a, I was a relig... religion, I used to go to church but I'm not, I wasn't that religious anyway, you know. But the family, I'm saying a word of my mother. My mother's one of the best, you know that, if it wasn't... if there wasn't my Mother I wouldn't stick around here. I think I'd pull the... I'd go away.

Victoria: What do you think about economic security? Like for when you're old, Joe, what do you think is going to happen?

Joseph: Well, I don't know. The shape I am, I never know. (laughs) The shape I am, I never know what the hell's gonna happen. Maybe I live the next 10 years: maybe I won't live that long.

Victoria: What do you think are this, your native community here around here, what do you think are their worst problems?

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you. There's, oh there's all kinds of problems with them guys. You know, the more you feed them, like, the worse they get. You know, you never could satisfy them, you know. You know them guys, they're hard to please. Don't matter how good you are to them, they always something complain about. Mostly now, they got the nice houses and mostly they all moved to town. There's only about 30 Arneseys still in the farm, but him, he's different. What he's got, he didn't get it from the Metis Society. George always had a bunch of cattle around home there. But like this odd breeds, they still out in the country but mostly they're in town, you know. They get the new houses. But now again, see, where the problem is, if the Conservative comes in over... over... over all of them guys, they go and chase out of them house. Only...

Victoria: So you think they're worried then, eh?

Joseph: Oh yeah, they're worried over that, sure. And I'll tell you, another couple of years that the Metis guys, they'll be moving out of them house.

Victoria: What do you think can be done about it?

Joseph: Well, the only way... I don't know that. If that, if... I don't know a guy should have meetings over that, talk about for leader take there Jim Sinclair but no use to talk anything to Jim anymore, because that's his last year too, you know. He's going to quit the Metis Society. So I don't know, I don't know a guy... what the hell to say, who to... a fellow's got to hang on for another year just to see what the score.

Victoria: I was going to say, what can you do about it, but...

Joseph: Well, if there was a pure Liberal would come in. You

know, the Liberals they were good with the, like to try to help the poor people. Maybe there's some ways they were no good, but like building them houses and stuff like that. You know, they were good but since Conservatives started butting in there... I got two, three letters here already that... Any my rent going up (inaudible) at \$75. If they keep going up, how the hell can I pay? Victoria: How much will it be then?

Joseph: \$275 a month, I couldn't do it.

Victoria: You're just on pension now?

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: That's bad.

Joseph: Yes, you can say that again. \$500 and you pay \$200 for your house -- that's what I paid for my payments for the house. It is a... I put my lots for down payment. That's the biggest mistake I ever done, to get a new house. But I didn't think... Everything sounds good, you know, oh, about this new housing, you know. So I signed my lots to the housing for down payment. I don't know what the... I don't know, I never really to see anybody anymore, you know. I never seen a Metis worker over two years now.

Victoria: So you don't really know what's going to happen.

Joseph: I don't know what the score is.

Victoria: What was it like? Was it fun or bad to grow up in a large family, Joe?

Joseph: Oh, we never had... I never got no trouble with them, no way. We all got along really good, because I never was, after I was 14 years old I never was home much anyway.

Victoria: And you enjoyed working in politics, eh, with the Metis Society?

Joseph: Yeah. I still got the... That was nice. You meet people and talk people, and some of them, they were pretty nice to talk with and lot of them guys, there was quite an argument with them guys. I think some of them Metis Society guys they loved a short meetin'.

Victoria: Do you think it would have been different if you would have been born white?

Joseph: Oh no, I don't think...

Victoria: Or maybe a Treaty Indian?

Joseph: I don't know. Well, the (inaudible) I got more relation in the reserve than I do on the outside.

Victoria: So your relations...

Joseph: Oh yeah. All them Ahenakews, that's all my cousins, every one of them, first cousin in Sandy Lake.

Victoria: Do you visit much with them?

Joseph: Oh yeah, they visit me. The Indian chief there, what you call him (inaudible) he come up two, three times (inaudible) me and him, he didn't even say good-bye or hello or nothing one time he come and visit because he start to argue with me. Oh no...

Victoria: If you had a chance, Joe, to be born all over again would you have wanted your life to be any different?

Joseph: No. I think... well, I done... I think I would keep on the same way but I would do it a little different.

Victoria: How would you make it different?

Joseph: Well, I would save more money anyway now. I wasted a lot of money, I didn't save. If I made a dollar, I give it away. I never could keep a dollar. Help people there (inaudible), you know. Lots of time I used to come to town and buy stuff for people that I didn't even know, give them money.

Victoria: So you would have saved more money. What else would you have done?

Joseph: Well, I think I would have had a better home, I guess. And I would have a better vehicle because the money I made all went in the farm too, you know, I never got a bloody cent back. I have quite a bit of (inaudible) in the farm there, I'm suppose to get some back but I never did get anything. Oh, it's no use to say anything because it would be just a bunch of argument. This way I get along and I didn't need it anyway.

Victoria: Is there anything else you would have changed, like your wife or your family?

Joseph: Well, (inaudible) she's said... she's said he wasn't much fun. She was young kid. He was nothing but... He didn't have much money. He was just a drunkard and he never care for us. If you care for us you'd be home today.

Victoria: What do you see about the future, Joe? What do you think is going to happen in the future? Is it going to be better for your kids or for us?

Joseph: Well, I hope. You know, if the people, they would smarten up and stick together, you know, them half-breeds, you

know, they had a nice thing going that Metis Society. If they would stick up together, and instead of fighting amongst themselves whose going to steal that extra dollar there, you know, everything would have been all right. If...

Victoria: You figure money is the bad point, eh?

Joseph: Oh yeah, 'cause there they were fighting over that few dollars and the one who was going to be on top of that, that one done this. You know, that time... did you not... you know, that it's a... remember that time you used to run Batoche there, how nice it used to be. Stuff, how much we used to have left over, and we had money left over. We paid for the power, we paid for everything there, you know. Now, how much in the hole they were, them guys since that. They don't go ahead a bit at all. You know, they should let them old people do the work they'd like to do, things like taxes. And Tony and them, Tony and...

Victoria: You think the older ones should organize Batoche, eh?

Joseph: Oh yeah, you're God damn right.

Victoria: Do you miss it out there? Do you miss working out there?

Joseph: Oh yeah. In a way, I didn't miss... I didn't like working with... I could have worked, but I didn't want to work with them, the other guys. I liked to work with the...

Victoria: The old crew, eh.

Joseph: ...the old crew, like Harry Vandale, Dexter and all them guys. You would've... one of the best, you know. You know, they look after the stuff good. We used to have quite a time there, you know, and people, man! you know, there was people there... I was told that people there less and less every year that Metis Society there. You know, they don't, they don't cooperate like we used to do. No way.

Victoria: What do you think about the community around here? Do you think it's going to get better in the future?

Joseph: Well, I hope. If there's anybody that... if there's anybody that... Ernest, soon as he knew the... soon as we quit little... that's what I mean, Ernest from Metis Society everything dies out. We got to keep push them all the time, otherwise... like Ernest, he didn't do much for the last two,

three years, the Metis Society goes haywire. The people they don't, they don't go anyplace.

Victoria: What do you think it will be like for your grandchildren? Do you think they'll still have a Metis Society or...

Joseph: Well, I hope if everything goes right. I hope they go to Metis Society.

Victoria: By then maybe some land claims or something.

Joseph: Yeah.

Victoria: Free hunting?

Joseph: Be still Conservative and they give us free hunting already. (both laugh)

Victoria: Do you think native people have a better future, like in the towns, or would they be better off in the north?

Joseph: Well I'll tell you one thing. It's good for them, the Metis people, in towns 'cause they don't have to work. They can get juiced, live there, and they live like kings, you know. That that's the biggest racket the government, he ever done in his life, to have them Indians and Metis Society to stick up in the reserve, er... in the... in the towns, you know. Oh boy, something wicked down there. Out in (inaudible) Lake guys there, healthy guys they're getting juiced (inaudible) don't have to work. You know, some of them guys, they get \$1,500. a month sitting on their ass. And they talk about Indians. Sure Indian, that's another bad thing -- what the hell they doin' chase all them Indians off the grounds, they don't go and stay on the reserve. Oh that piss me off. Every God damn one of them go to town, go to Regina, go to Saskatoon, go to P.A. That's all you see in the beer parlour. You go to the beer parlour, there's nothing but half-breeds and Indians filled up with the beer parlours. Yeah.

Victoria: Do you think it's the, like the Metis Society now has changed a lot from the first one that they had?

Joseph: Well, I don't know how much they changed 'cause we never used to have meetings like used to have either. You don't know what the heck's going on. I've never been to a meeting the last four years. I don't know what the ... how the Metis Society's doing or anything. They used to have them meetings in town with Jim. I don't know, I never heard anymore, anymore what the score is.

Victoria: Well, I guess that finishes our interview, Joe, and I thank you very much.

Joseph: You bet you.

Victoria: I'll get back up to see you again.

Joseph: Yeah.

(END OF SIDE A)

(END OF TAPE)