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GENERAL COMMENTS: Gwen Beck is a long time resident of La Ronge who has taken a keen interest in local social and political affairs.

Gwen: ...native people and they worked very, very hard. Most of the white people were stong enough minded either one way or the other, either CCF or... And of course there is the Conservatives and the Conservatives do quite a large vote in here, actually, through the northern area. But then we were all one constituency - Athabasca. And actually it was a Liberal seat for years, Deak Hall, Art McPhee. At one time we called it the (inaudible) but it's been purchased now. He was the M.L.A. from here, he was Liberal. He was for quite a few years. Actually the CCF never put up a very strong candidate until Mr. Quant there.

Murray: In 1960?

Gwen: And that was the strongest CCF candidate that ever in... Actually my husband agrees with Mr. Quant -- he ran and Mel Fontaine was his campaign manager. And I always said that

if Allan hadn't have been, if he hadn't been the Liberal it's okay, he probably would have won because he was not that many votes behind...

Murray: Allan Guy?

Gwen: Allan Guy, and the Liberals. It wouldn't have mattered who Allan Guy would face, it wouldn't matter who ran.

Murray: It's a certain standard Liberal vote, is it?

Gwen: Yeah, it was not for the man, it was the Liberal vote, so Allan had to work very hard.

Murray: To get (inaudible) go the way.

Gwen: That's correct.

Murray: Was that the case in all the elections, do you think? It was a basically a Liberal vote that either you pick away at or you fail to?

Gwen: Yes, until I think... there was only one other candidate that ever managed to win this seat and he only held it for one term. But the Liberals really worked and...

Murray: Who was that, was that Lee?

Gwen: Now just a minute, I don't know right off, it's upstairs.

Murray: I can find that out anyway.

Gwen: I have it all upstairs, it's hard to remember exactly the names. I didn't work at the gate so I didn't pay that much attention. But there was one before Mr. McAuley won the seat. Now Mr. McAuley did not only win his seat this time, it was not won just because it was NDP. There were a certain amount of NDPs, but he was a northerner and he spoke Cree, lived here a long time. He had quite a lot of experience. Mind you there wasn't a lot of campaigning the other way. It depends on who their candidate was. I didn't feel that the Liberal candidate was a match as a personal man.

Murray: Yeah right.

Gwen: With his ethic thing, and different things. So this time it entered into both politically and the man, I would say.

Murray: In those first elections...

Gwen: Even there were a lot of Liberals who felt they couldn't support...

Murray: The candidate? In those first elections, there was a lot of activity, and elections were considered an important event in the north?

Gwen: Well, always. I mean to get the vote and to hold the seat. Now why it was so important to hold the northern seat I can't understand, but each government fought very hard.

Murray: Thought it was.

Gwen: Yes, that's right.

Murray: How did native people (inaudible)?

Gwen: Probably, like, because it's the potential in the north. You know, there is a lot of resources and it's really an undeveloped... Like the resources are just barely touched. And I mean if we have the power that they're all looking for, for the electricity and things like that, and we do have a lot of minerals.

Murray: What, how did the native people relate to the election process?

Gwen: Well, at first they didn't even know. I mean if you ever went around campaigning like when I worked...

Murray: It wasn't a political process for them?

Gwen: No. I mean one fellow said he was going to vote, he was going to vote for the Hudson Bay manager. Well it wasn't the Hudson Bay manager running, who was Len Coates, it was Allan Guy that was running, you understand. But Len had been campaigning for him, you understand. (laughs) And a lot of them, they didn't know who was standing for election. It was a hit and miss. You know, you had to count down how many places, you know, and a lot of them, you know... It was very important that the man that was running would have an initial that would come first so he would be first on the ballot, or last on the ballot and then it was a chance whether they got the ballot upside down. It was not...

Murray: Very haphazard, and not a political...

Gwen: And there was a lot of, there was always quite a bit of liquor in those days, you know, involved in it.

Murray: So people would try and get votes by buying drinks?

Gwen: Well, they would be really intoxicated, a lot of the people, when they came to the polls. So I'm not saying the parties gave them the liquor, I'm only telling you the state that people... (laughs).

Murray: The final result.

Gwen: I have my beliefs and I'm not that foolish to make the statement. (laughs)

Murray: Never put anything on paper or on tape.

Gwen: Well, I mean, it was there.

Murray: It was pretty clear to everybody what was happening.

Gwen: And it was pretty clear when a person came in and you could smell it on their breath, and they were sort of wobbly and, you know, different things.

Murray: Was there ever an actual exchange of cash, do you think, in terms of getting votes? Would that happen?

Gwen: Well I have heard that there has been, but how can you prove a thing like that, you know? I mean you get a lot of rumors.

Murray: You think that one in particular was reliable in the early years?

Gwen: Well not as reliable as...

Murray: It was the liquor you could see and smell.

Gwen: (laughs) That's right, and the money, how could you prove it? Now you couldn't even see the drink, but there was drink, and a lot of intoxicated people at the polls in those days. In the olden days.

Murray: And that decreased?

Gwen: That sort of has decreased an awful lot.

Murray: Is that just recently in the last couple of elections?

Gwen: Well, yes I would say it has gradually got, it got, you know, it depended on the man and the ethics of the person, the people that ran, you know. Now, for example, Mr. McAuley was noted for his honesty. I campaigned for him and we certainly did not have any liquor at all. So, you know, it, if both sides are doing this, then you understand there is more intoxicated people. But if one side is not doing this, then there...

Murray: You can tell what the vote is going to be by standing by the poll.

Gwen: That's right. So, you know, I mean, so what's the difference? I mean all those things have been used and they have been used in politics for years. I mean it's just not in the north, in the south, in the olden days, there was a lot of it.

Murray: Politics has always had its corrupt side.

Gwen: But I mean, I would say that, you know, it depends not only on the campaigning, depends on who campaigns for you,

what the people think about you, how you put the programming over, the literature, how you take the time to explain it... if you do get accepted into the people's homes.

Murray: Did a lot of people vote, say, Liberal because their fathers had voted Liberal or their neighbors?

Gwen: Yes. That used to be. Now the young people are beginning to think for themselves. And in families you will find it a very divided vote. You find that in the white population and now you will find it in the Cree and the Metis.

Murray: And that didn't use to be?

Gwen: That didn't use to happen, if your father was Liberal you were Liberal -- but now, no.

Murray: The arguments and debates going on with these families.

Gwen: That's right. They begin to, you know, and each one says the other one's no good, and then they point out the points. And even if you go campaigning they find this out, you find this out.

Murray: That's a progressive move in your view?

Gwen: And then a lot, too, now they're beginning to think more about the candidates. They'll say, "Well, I won't vote for him because he did so and so." And one thing or another so probably a candidate who isn't well known in his own (laughs)...

Murray: He has a better chance! He hasn't done anything bad if you haven't heard of him!

Gwen: He probably hasn't done any good but he hasn't done anything for people to say so. So people are beginning -- on the reserve and the Metis people -- are beginning to think about the man, what he is like, and what he has done, and also, they're also beginning to think about what programming and what the government gives. Now to me, it always amazes me what you can get for free. (laughs)

Murray: Of course that's the way they've been taught in elections too. It used to booze so now there has to be something more. What do you think has changed? What factor has changed, that now they're starting to think in more political terms?

Gwen: They're becoming more educated.

Murray: That's the thing, is it? Is it the younger people who are debating these things more than the older native people?

Gwen: Well, the young people think about and they discuss

it, you know. I mean, and then they have arguments back and forth with their parents over it and things. But a few years ago you wouldn't have... they knew nothing at all about politics but now they're becoming quite politically aware.

Murray: When do you think that process started? When did you notice that starting to happen?

Gwen: Well, a lot of it started back in 1960, when Mr. Quant ran. (laughs)

Murray: Do you think Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris had something to do with that as well?

Gwen: Well, of course, they both worked very energetically. You know, I mean, I think that probably there was a fair amount of it. Malcolm was very politically minded, Brady to a certain extent, but not as vocal.

Murray: He wasn't as out in the open as Malcolm was, eh?

Gwen: No, that's correct. And Malcolm was, you know, Brady was more of, he was a little more quiet with his, where Malcolm was very, you know, he would just talk to anybody about, you know, what he believed in. And whether I saw eye to eye with everything with Malcolm, I admired him for being able to say what he thought and still work for the government. (laughs)

Murray: That's fancy footwork sometimes, isn't it?

Gwen: Maybe it wasn't quite so fancy at the end, but however... He was a remarkable man and he stood for what he believed in. Now Jim Brady, well, you know, Jim used to come to the cafe quite a lot in my younger days. But, you know, I never knew Jim as well as Malcolm. Malcolm's daughter worked for me during the summer months at the cafe, Pinky, we called her, that was in the old days. But, so you know, I knew the Norrises a little better, but... I mean Malcolm was definitely for his people and so was Brady, really. But I would have said that the man that put it across in the north the strongest, for programming and things began to get more politically aware, was Allan Guy. Allan is a very strong minded person. Now, Allan and I don't always see eye to eye either, and we argue quite strongly back and forth.

Murray: What was the impression of how the native people reacted to Jim and Malcolm? Did they react the same to them or was there a difference?

Gwen: Well you know native people are rather funny. If one of their own people, that speaks their own language, gets ahead it's almost worse than having a white man get ahead of them! Really, there is, there is this... I've noticed it with a lot of... anybody that progresses very rapidly or anything, they seem to resent it.

Murray: It divides them, it separates them does it?

Gwen: I mean, you'd think that they would be interested in people that worked. But look at how hard Janet [Fietz] worked to get housing and stuff for the people. Yet, you know, she's not popular among her own people.

Murray: She realizes that too, though.

Gwen: Well, she knows it, and she feels it.

Murray: Was that the same with Malcolm?

Gwen: Well I would say to a certain degree. I mean, actually you see Malcolm, to me, was always more white than he was native really. (laughs)

Murray: His lifestyle and his...?

Gwen: That's right and the way he educated his family, the way he kept his home and everything. So, you understand, he was of a different world socially than what they were.

Murray: Do you think they viewed him as a white person to a large extent, even though he spoke Cree and was a native?

Gwen: Well, I think they do that with most of them. They used to do that with Mr. McAuley, too, to a certain degree.

Murray: What about Jim?

Gwen: Jim Brady? Well, he had native friends but how many of us don't have native friends. But when it comes to a staunch stand on certain issues, people like to believe and like to say to the people that lived socially in their own environment, not people that are from... No matter, I don't think that whether you're Chinese, whether you're white, whether you're an Indian or what you are matters, it's the social standing.

Murray: And so...

Gwen: And the class distinction.

Murray: Are you saying that Jim was more accepted by native people because of that?

Gwen: Well, not so particularly. I feel that Jim had too good an education for... He was rather a well... whether it was self-taught or whether it was by education, I couldn't tell you. But, you know, he had contacts with them, but not...

Murray: You don't see a significant difference then between how the native people saw Jim and how they saw Malcolm?

Gwen: Well, not in my...

Murray: Not in your experiences, eh?

Gwen: No. I mean, having worked in the business, and see who comes in for coffee with who and what not, you understand, you learn, don't you?

Murray: Well did Malcolm associate with native people as much as Jim?

Gwen: No, no, no. Because you see Malcolm used to go out, not Malcolm, Malcolm was more of a desk type job. And Brady used to go out into the field prospecting with the men, which was quite different. And I mean he was away with Abby Halkett, and, whatever happened, I don't know. However the men disappeared and they never were found, nor their bodies either, yet.

Murray: What was Abby Halkett like? I've haven't heard that much about him.

Gwen: Abby Halkett? Well, he was a young fellow that went out to Indian Residential schools, was very brilliant, and went on to university. Came back home. But he lived in one of those little log shacks that are tore down now around (inaudible) Hall. And prospect, went prospecting quite a bit and worked in the bush, but not that amount... Liquor and alcohol was again an awful problem with Abby.

Murray: He was going to be a minister, was that correct?

Gwen: Well, this is what he had hoped to be, yeah an Anglican minister.

Murray: Was he a close friend of Brady's or were they just associated?

Gwen: Well, I think that the working in the bush and the prospecting is what brought those two men together, really. You know, if you go to the bush and you're just one, or two, or three of you and you live together and you work together in one cabin you have a certain amount of closeness that you don't normally have -- if Abby lived on the reserve and Jim lived up on where he lived at his little place. And then again, you see, Malcolm usually lived in better quarters than what Brady did. And in the bush -- I would say that Brady had more contact, close contact with Indian and Metis people but it was...

Murray: Was that just because of the two different jobs?

Gwen: No, no, well, no I think it was, I think mostly, it was because of the jobs.

Murray: Getting back a bit to the CCF, what was the... I'm trying to get an impression of what the, if there is such a

thing as a general reaction, what the general reaction was to the CCF government when it first came to power in La Ronge? Of course, you were here a couple of years after, that but when you moved what was the feeling about the CCF?

Gwen: In the north?

Murray: Yes.

Gwen: I think there was a lot of good Liberals up in the north (laughs).

Murray: So it was, so the people in the north, it was largely a negative reaction to the government, was it?

Gwen: Well, I would say so, until they actually begin to have to have the programming that we had. You see the first schools in the north were built under the CCF. Before that all the native and Indian people, they had to go out for education elsewhere. Like, you know, education was the start.

Murray: They would go to Prince Albert, would they?

Gwen: Well, they could take a certain amount of them here at, they had a Residential school which burnt in '46. But they couldn't begin to take all of them, it was only the academic grades like, you know. If you were going to go any higher you had to go out anyway, so they went to Prince Albert, or Onion Lake, or... And, you know, Stanley... It took all the people, the children used to come in, you know, to go out to school. And yet there were an awful lot of them never went at all, or that would go one year and then stay, so this accounts for the illiteracy amongst them so much.

Murray: What sort of, the reaction did gradually change did it, to the CCF?

Gwen: Well, you see, once they begin to build schools and then they begin... You see they were in the province for

seventeen years and then there were only, they built the only (inaudible) in the province of Saskatchewan, if we're talking about Saskatchewan in our northern area. So the first schools were built, they weren't as elaborate as they are today, but they certainly were a lot better than what was here.

When we first came, what they were using for a school was sort of an isolation hospital and there was a cemetery down in front of it and it is where the (inaudible) School is. And actually, when I moved, there was seventeen panes of glass broken out of the school. There was a small air type heater -- the smallest you could buy, in one room, a big long string of pipes went into the other room, and it was one of these flat cast iron stoves. And there was two teachers - Isabelle Erikson, and Shirley Bartshot, who later married Kevin Olson, who was Cliff Olson's son. And those girls used to have to... It was about

ten o'clock in the morning before they could hold classes because, you know, the fires were out all night. And in the cold severe winter, what it's like. And the pipes would fall apart, and we would have to put on gloves and mitts and put them back together. And they had to, they used to make on that flat stove -- it had two lids that you have on a wood cookstove -- and they used to make macaroni and tomatoes and coco for the kids, you know, because a lot of them came without any lunch at all.

And I know I sent my daughter with stockings and a skirt and a toque or wool (inaudible), you have to have lots of socks and overshoes, and, you know, and ski pants, you wear them. And I said to her, "I'll look for..." One of the school board members had come down and placed a brown paper over the windows, over the holes. And I said, "That's ridiculous!" I said, "We should have glass." And she says, "The glass has been here, it's behind the old organ." And she said, "I came

in in September and it's been here ever since, and I can't get them to put it in." So I said, "I'll have it in tomorrow for you." She said, "If I've been here that long how do you think you're going to get it in?" I said, "My husband is a carpenter and I'll go to the Anglican Church minister." -- who was Stan Cuthand, he used to teach here. And I said, "Your glass will be in tomorrow." And the men went and the glass was in the next day, only I said, "You keep the little devils from breaking it." (laughs) Isn't it awful, I shouldn't say little devils or little darlings... (laughing)

Murray: Whatever. So that was the state of the school in '47 was it?

Gwen: ...I don't even know them or anything... Yeah, and you know, then in January I was secretary, I was elected to the Board and then I started to negotiate to get a better school, because I said, "My daughter went to a school that was... my father had a better barn." But I suppose we got off the track, eh.

Murray: Well sort of, but it's good to get an impression of what things were like. So as the government started actually doing things in the north, people started to look at it with a less suspicion, is that it?

Gwen: That's correct. At first it was tight, I think, but then gradually... And a big factor, I think, was having the schools where the children did not have to go away from home. And then you see it was a shared cost. Indian Affairs paid so much to the school for each child that attended. And, you know, the mothers I used to, I used to help Chris Cuthand when

the children all came in, you know... and they used to haul them in the back of the truck with a tent over the truck. That's how they hauled them all the way to P.A. from here. And they just had benches in the back of the truck, and that's how

they took the kids out to take them to school. And sometimes we'd have a bunch would come in, from Stanley...

Murray: They'd come in on the weekends would they? They'd come back on the weekends?

Gwen: Well, from Stanley, most of the children were flown in you see. And then they came to the Anglican and United Church missions in here. And so one morning we met forty-five for breakfast, but we just made a big pot of oatmeal porridge and we fixed them powdered milk and sugar and everybody ate. But, I mean, you understand then those children went. And then the parents that lived in La Ronge they'd come there to see the children off. And the mothers would be standing there and they'd be crying, you know. That's when I decided that I was going to start to work towards the children staying in the home and there's integration in the schools.

Murray: What kind of an effect did that have on the sort of nomadic lifestyle of native people? Did that contribute to changing that, where they'd take their whole families onto the trapline and then come back again?

Gwen: Well, that... I don't know whether it was right or it was wrong. You see when I was on the School Board I felt that education was very very important and to meet the children. So I couldn't tell you whether it was correct or not, but Family Allowance came into being somewhere about then and, you know, they were supposed to educate the children.

Murray: That was the condition of the Family Allowance?

Gwen: So this was the condition that I stipulated, that I felt. That anyone that took the family away and did not educate them, they were not entitled to the Family Allowance. Now probably... now I'm not proud of that stand that I took -- I don't know whether I was right or wrong, but I was very strong on it when I was young. (laughs) I think after you have lived quite a number of years, you wonder whether it was worth it or not.

Murray: Whether the final result was beneficial.

Gwen: That's right, how many people were productive out of it, by my insistence that they have this education. But still, I still feel myself that education is very important, especially if you want to change. But maybe they did not want to change, maybe I was wrong in wanting to change their lifestyle.

Murray: Right. That was part of the, so much of what I've heard from people talking about the first activities of the government... So many of the programs had to be imposed on people because it was difficult to sell it to them, you know, to explain it to them -- was that part of the problem?

Gwen: Well, an awful lot of it. You understand I don't

think that an awful lot of people... There's still a lot of truancy at the school, and... mind you, no longer do they take the children. You see then, at one time, it was more economical for them to take the children to the traplines. But those children did not receive an education. And an awful lot

of people in those days did not read or write and I thought that that was just horrible. And anybody that is for education can't very well say, "Well, that's fine. Take your family to the trapline." And, you know, and they'd go in the spring, you know, I mean, the child wasn't in school to make any progress. If he did come back then look what was it was to the teachers, having somebody thrown in in May or June, you know, really. So I don't know exactly whether it was correct or not, but gradually the Family Allowance was the biggest drawing card for keeping families in. But it did split up... the women had to stay behind or they had to find homes. We talked about building a hostel -- which we never ever got to -- to take the children so the children could stay. We went through all these phases but, you know, I think it finally ended up that more people stayed home and sent their children in school.

Murray: Was there a resentment among other people at all on that issue?

Gwen: Well, the resentment would probably would be more from the men than from the women because they stayed and kept the children here.

Murray: And they were satisfied to do that?

Gwen: And, well I would say most of them, you see. Money-wise, money again was a big thing, the Family Allowance meant quite a lot to get, and most of them had good-sized families, you see. So it meant they stayed, and trapping became less and less, really. Even today they cannot support themselves by trapping, no matter how good a trapper they are, so you understand... Let's be realistic. What are going to do with a group of people that can no longer live? They want their old

environment, they want their old culture, they want everything but yet it can't support them.

Murray: Not the numbers anymore, certainly.

Gwen: It certainly can't support them. It's the same with having, educating them on the reserves, it's exactly the same. Are they going to be able to... The reserves aren't large enough to find employment. They have to go out and compete with... You see, this was my idea. These people must be brought to a certain level in education and social environment and everything so they can go out in the world and compete with the other people that have had these advantages for years. Because otherwise they're always going to be welfare recipients, and the big bulk of it.

Murray: What was the reaction of the business community of

the CCF, when it was... well, over that period of time?

Gwen: Well the business section of the town is practically all Liberal and has been Liberal over... from day one. Not that they're (inaudible) with the times, and there are some businesses that are NDP but the bulk of the business people are Liberals.

Murray: Was there a hostility to the CCF, an active hostility or just a...

Gwen: Well, there probably was, but if they are honest today every business man has got where he is practically not from Liberal support, because it was only seven years of it, but from the NDP government. And now they have never been better off than they were in their lives, since the government raised its... the Department of Northern Saskatchewan as far as the... But they'll still vote Liberal because that's their thinking and their way, and there may be programs they don't like but it is not the CCF members that are benefiting a great deal by having the government here, it is the Liberal members that are. (laughs)

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Gwen: I don't think that they were fleeced near as bad from the government as what they were from the white trader.

Murray: Right.

Gwen: But the white traders (laughs) as they called them, were naturally opposed to the concept of it. But as far as it being for the people, I feel that...

Murray: It was a benefit.

Gwen: It was a benefit, even if maybe at times I have thought differently, but I realize now as I grew older and looked over the situation that...

Murray: They tended to be less exploitive, did they, of the native people?

Gwen: That's correct. I mean, well... A white trader could give you next to nothing, you know. Now it went on the market and was being sold, so you got a fair going market price for it. Mind you, it took quite a while to educate the people to this.

Murray: What was their reaction to that originally, that whole fur marketing program?

Gwen: Well, it's like anything else. It met with a little

opposition at the beginning, but the people soon settled to accept it. I mean...

Murray: Did they recognize as it being a better situation?

Gwen: Well I don't think that they realized that it was a benefit to them. No, I mean, well, they had their fur and they had to sell it... So, you know... but it certainly was, because in the olden days regardless of what they say the way... even way way back before our time, centuries back, the free trader always...

Murray: Out for number one, obviously.

Gwen: Was for number one himself, and he certainly did fleece the... I call it 'fleecing' -- maybe there's a better word, but that's the word I use. It's very descriptive. And actually I feel that, I feel quite strongly that it was better for the people because at least they were given a fair market price when they were sold.

Murray: Right. Was it compulsory to sell to the fur market?

Gwen: Well, I'm not that up on it, you know, because I didn't buy. I just heard a lot of complaining and fussing around about the people that probably were curtailed. But now

they seem to buy... the stores buy it, IGA buys furs, Alex Robertson...

Murray: But they probably have to conform somewhat to what the prices would be that the government is giving?

Gwen: Oh, certainly, now, yeah, sure. I mean it's quite different.

Murray: So the effect is basically the same even if the selling is going out?

Gwen: That's right. And so I feel that now, but at that time there was no competition.

Murray: Right. Did native people, I'm trying to get a feeling for how they related to these government programs. Was it just that they said, "Well, the white man's doing something again so we'll just have to accept it?" Was that part of the attitude?

Gwen: Well, I don't really know how they really felt about it, because when a thing becomes law, or what is supposed to be, you adhere to it, don't you? And you have mixed feelings, and, but, well, it's something that, it just came along. The same as bussing -- there was an awful uproar about the transportation and about the bussing. But who could give the service. I mean, free enterprise cannot give the service that the government can give. It's the same with telephones, it's the same with power and all that sort of things. You know, you

can knock the government but it certainly has spent a tremendous amount of money. And people can have their own political views, but they spend a tremendous amount of money

into making the lifestyle of northern people easier and better. Mind you, at one time hardly anybody had, well in '52 we didn't even have power. It came in '52, we had our first plant, then you couldn't have electric stoves, you know. You could just have lights and things, you know, but you couldn't run a lot of...

Murray: But there were some pretty dramatic changes in those first few years.

Gwen: Well there was then. And on Nun Street, if you can believe it, it was 1968 when the housing project went ahead, and those people were right on the outskirts, and they had no power until '68. They used the old coal oil lamps. Well, you know what that is for children going to school and for learning, and...

Murray: You go blind trying to...

Gwen: Well, not only that but, you know... I feel that housing does change people a great deal, really. And when you have electricity and especially if you have running water for baths and, you know...

Murray: The whole lifestyle... it's capable of changing at that point.

Gwen: It's capable of changing. How you look after it is different, but if you don't have it... But I mean you'll notice all, practically, the children from Nun Street were educated. You could tell right away the difference. But then you have to have, now the mothers were all, most of them went to work and they had next to nothing -- wood stoves, coal oil lamps, terrible furniture. Then all of a sudden they got the houses and the mothers went to work, and they have fridges, and electric stoves, and nice curtains, T.Vs, you know, we've progressed a lot. I've seen it come from...

Murray: From nothing to...

Gwen: From nothing to what it is. So I feel that you cannot build everybody a house, but I feel that there were twenty houses built then and they do have a program... And then, too, there's not just La Ronge, there's all the northern area. So, and they do build 125 homes every year. Now it is public funds, so there is a limited amount of housing that you can do. Sometimes I feel like the rest of the people -- that there's priorities put on probably recreation and different things. I worked with recreation, I'm interested in it, and I think it's an essential thing, but probably as not as essential as a home.

Murray: All things have to...

Gwen: But the government always has been and always will be... It has a certain amount of money appropriated for the different things, and I don't think you're ever going to get money from recreation to take it and put it all into housing, so... We just sort of have to go along with what we have. You see I feel quite differently because I came here when there wasn't anything and I watched the schools being built, the first schools, which kept the children home, and I worked for integration.

Murray: That was in the late '40s, was it, that they were built?

Gwen: We did not have integration of the treaty Indians in the schools till 1958.

Murray: But the schools were built?

Gwen: The schools were built prior of that. Well, the Gateway School, like I said it was in '49 that we... No, pardon me, '47 they started to build it. '48 we moved into it, in May.

Murray: You said there were just a few retail stores in La Ronge. What was the activity of the people around besides trapping?

Gwen: Well, it was nearly all trapping. There was a DNR... just one field officer stationed here. And there was a radio operator here. And there was the May Store and the Hudson Bay and the Co-op Trading -- well it was called Saskatchewan Government -- and there was Saskatchewan Government Airways and again I think Allan Quant was probably the first manager of Saskatchewan Airways. And we had that one school which was just, you know, an isolation hospital -- not very big, two small rooms in it. And we had the Anglican Church; and we called it the Gospel Chapel, which is the Alliance Church, but it wasn't on the same grounds. It used to be just up from Quant's on the hill, you go down on (inaudible) Street. Or Irving Street, I mean. And what else was here in those days? Oh yes, Mr. Summers had built what was called (inaudible) and it was a log building. We later brought that building and covered it over.

Murray: As far as actually any industry there was nothing?

Gwen: There was no industry. Trapping and fishing.

Murray: When did tourism start to develop?

Gwen: Mining didn't really start until 1949, and then we had the rush over to Chapala(?) Lake and... But then you see then they begin to build. With the mining activity came the hotel,

but it wasn't operable till '51.

Murray: When did the first tourist camps start to establish in the north?

Gwen: Well, let's see. When did it first start? Red Boardman had built the house that is on the Red Camp now. He had built that and he had just one or two little cabins.

Murray: What year would that have been?

Gwen: That would have been in about '48. In '49, I think it was, that Mr. Quant started with (inaudible) Outfitters, which is the Rodney Gun Shop today.

Murray: Was there any time when there was a big influx of tourist operations?

Gwen: The government built the first... a few small shanties... you know, unfinished with double bunk steel beds in it on (inaudible) property. And they operated it for one season and then Mr. Quant bought the property and started on a free enterprise basis.

Murray: Was it static for quite a while, the tourist thing and then how long...?

Gwen: Well, you see, until the road was finished, you know, there wasn't much for tourism. The coming of the roads made a big difference. Just like the blacktop is going to make a big difference again.

Murray: So it grew gradually once the road was in?

Gwen: That's right, it grew gradually. And Mr. Gibson, they moved here, they had Gibson's Cabins. They bought out McDonald's, which had a few cabins but didn't amount to anything like, you know... That's one of them over there. That was from the McDonald camp and Mrs. Gibson finally she sold them off when they were going to build... buildings like, you know, better buildings. But they came in '54 and the village was incorporated in '55, of August. La Ronge did not become a settlement until October of '45, I think it was. You see I have it all upstairs like, you know, and then I kept clippings and things from the papers on it. We didn't get our hospital till 1960, either, you see.

Murray: What was there before that as far as health facilities?

Gwen: We only had Indian health nursing stations where there was a...

Murray: Doctor once a year or something.

Gwen: Well, the doctors flew in. If it was essential,

they'd fly in from Prince Albert, you know. But mostly the patients were taken, were treated by the nurses as best they could. And there was hardly an facilities, let's say there was hardly any healthwise. If you looked in the cemetery that is... up behind, you know, where the Catholic Church is. Well there's a cemetery behind what Indian Affairs has for a lumber yard now, up from the hospital, up that street, that second street. You'll see an awful lot of small graves. If a child made it past, you know, his first or second year, they lived. Then the mothers had their babies at home, the child, you know, it didn't stand... or had them on the trapline or, you know, I mean...

Murray: So there were a lot of child birth... deaths?

Gwen: So actually the coming of the hospital was a wonderful thing healthwise for the community.

Murray: Do you think a lot of native families had large families because of the high mortality rate?

Gwen: They still have large families. There are two reasons. Now in this day and age, with the Pill, it isn't necessary to have a family. But there are such things as people on welfare -- you get more money for the larger your family. The drink causes you to forget, because they can have the, they can go and get the Pill free. It doesn't cost them a thing, so, you know, it's... But there are reasons for it that, but we still have... you still see big families.

(END OF SIDE B)  
(END OF INTERVIEW)

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