

Road Allowance Interview, Shirley Sanders (Trottier)

Conducted by Scott Duffee
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SD: Could you please tell me your name and your home community?

SS: My name is Shirley Trottier, and I was born and raised in Willowfield, Saskatchewan.

SD: Oh?

SS: That's south of North Battleford. I was born at home, and that's where I was raised 'till I was 15. Then I moved to Cando, and that's where I took the rest of my schooling.

SD: So Trottier is your maiden name?

SS: That's my maiden name, yeah.

SD: And what name do you go by now?

SS: Sanders.

SD: Was Willowfield a road allowance community?

SS: Yes, it was. People just had houses wherever they wanted to, you know? They pitched them up and built log houses. I can remember my old log shack. In fact, I got pictures of it.

SD: So, people would just put up a log house and stay put for a few years usually?

SS: In the second house we lived in, I we moved in there when I was 8. I was 15 when we left. So, we lived in there for 7 years, and then we moved to Cando.

SD: And that house was built by your dad?

SS: Yeah, my dad built it with logs, and my mom did all the mudding outside, and on the inside, and whitewashed it. She made all her stuff. Even the floors were always boards. I think my uncle had a saw mill, and that's where they cut all those boards.

SD: So, who were your parents and grandparents?

SS: My parents were Leo and Elizabeth Trottier, and my granddad, on my mom's side, was John Baptiste Trottier, and his mother was a Lemire from Val Marie, Saskatchewan. And my mom's dad was Jean-Marie they used to call him in French. And her mother was Ernestine Lemire. Two brothers, two sisters.

SD: I was wondering, ok.

SS: Yeah, that's the way it was. So actually my mom and dad were related.

SD: So your mom's dad was a Trottier and your dad's dad...?

SS: Yeah, and his was name was John Murray Trottier, and my dad's was John-Baptiste Trottier.

SD: And those two guys were brothers?

SS: Yeah and back was John-Baptiste Trottier. These were his kids as was Basil Trottier, and it went on from there. I'm doing a family tree right now.

SD: Did your parents and grandparents always live in Willowfield?

SS: Just my parents. My grandparents were gone before I came along.

SD: You mentioned one was from Val Marie?

SS: Yeah, both of the grandparents on both sWell, were from Val Marie, Lac Pelletier.

SD: Your parents always lived in Willowfield as far as you know?

SS: Uh-huh.

SD: What other Métis families lived in Willowfield?

SS: Well there was the Ouelettes, the Pritchards, a lot of Trotters, there were Parkers.

SD: Parkers?

SS: Parkers, yeah. The only ones left out of the Parker family right now are Lawrence and Ken Parker. Ken lives in Cando, and Lawrence lives in North Battleford. They are the only Parkers that are left. The rest are all gone.

SD: Wow, maybe those two have descendants?

SS: They probably do, but I don't talk to them much. So, I don't know.

SD: Did any non-Métis live in Willowfield?

SS: No, they were all Métis.

SD: Did you live in any other road allowance communities?

SS: Probably in my younger days, but I don't remember because I was about five when we moved out to Willowfield. I think we lived further on towards Spinney Hill, out in that area. I think that's where we were because we used to live in tents in the summertime, and houses in wintertime.

SD: So, you'd live in Willowfield in the wintertime?

SS: Yeah, but we did stay completely there, from the time I was 8 until I was 15, in that little house.

SD: Right, so from the age five to the age 8 you remember being in a tent in a ...?

SS: Being in a tent and a small, one-room house.

SD: You'd move somewhere because your dad had to work?

SS: Yeah, well my dad was working for some farmers in Spinney Hill, and then when we moved out to Cando, while he was shearing sheep, and he'd hitchhike with his shearing gears out south somewhere. I don't know where he'd go, by Biggar out that way, but he was out shearing sheep all summer. And then we'd go picking rocks, out in Ruthilda, I can remember living in a tent there, and my dad was picking rocks.

SD: So, the names of the other road allowance communities you lived in, you mentioned Ruthilda. Can you think of any other names of any other places you lived in tents?

SS: I can just remember Spinney Hill and Willowfield.

SD: Willowfield and Ruthilda ...

SS: We lived in a tent in Ruthilda at Jack Gordon's farm. That's where my dad was picking rocks. It was just for the summer months.

SD: Yeah, that's something we're curious about. Did any other families live in those communities?

SS: Well not in Ruthilda, it was just my dad and just our family, and there was just my oldest brother, myself, and my youngest brother.

SD: How about when you went and had a short stay in, was it Cando or?

SS: In Sonningdale or Spinney Hill?

SD: Spinney Hill, yeah...

SS: Well, my oldest brother did work for a farmer there, too because he was six years older than I was. He started working for the farmer there.

SD: But it was just your family in Spinney Hill?

SS: After we moved to Cando, my oldest brother left and went to Calgary, and never came back.

SD: So your short stays in Spinney Hill and Ruthilda it was just your family?

SS: Just for work, but it was mostly in Cando or Willowfield. Yeah, we stayed in Willowfield in a little three-room shack.

SD: Spinney Hill is located where from Willowfield?

SS: I'd say probably about 14 miles east of Willowfield.

SD: East of Willowfield. Where's it located from Cando?

SS: Cando, you'd have to go on the highway going towards Biggar, and then there is a road sign that says "Sonningdale," "Arelee," and you go that way and then you go east.

SD: And that's where Spinney Hill is. What about Ruthilda, where is that from ...?

SS: Ruthilda is south of Landis, probably about 35 miles south of Cando.

SD: How'd you guys get there?

SS: Team of horses, a wagon.

SD: Did any of the people in your road allowance community own their own property?

SS: Not that I know of. I don't think so because they were just up here and gone. Some of them moved to Green Lake, but it was just a short stay. I think, one winter or something, and then they moved back.

SD: How did your family and other Métis families make a living?

SS: Well, my mom had a garden, and my dad hunted deer, rabbit. We used to snare rabbits in the wintertime. I even knew how to set up a snare myself and skin rabbits. My mom did some canning, like Saskatoons and she ground up her chokecherries and dried them outside. She dried deer meat on a little rack Dad made from some trees that he tied together. On the little branches, we'd hang all our dry meat.

SD: How did the other families make a living? You mentioned some of the jobs that your dad did. What were those jobs?

SS: Well, my dad picked rock, and he sheared sheep. Then we moved to Cando. Then he worked for Clem in the store. He fixed windows and did some painting and that. But that was after we moved to Cando, but before, it was just shearing sheep and picking rock.

SD: And the other families, do you know how they made a living?

SS: No, I don't. The closest one, the Ouelettes, was probably about half a mile, maybe a quarter of a mile away, and then maybe another half a mile is where the Pritchards lived. That was Ed Pritchard, and then George Pritchard's bunch lived at Baljennie area. Yeah, that was about 12 miles away.

SD: What sort of resources did your family harvest, and when and where were those

resources collected?

SS: Well, berries were in the fall as soon as they came out, and deer hunting was in the fall. Dad would hunt deer, and rabbits were in the wintertime. We ate partridges and prairie chickens, all that. I've even eaten owl. My dad went and killed one and plucked and cleaned it. It was like a big turkey. I remember that one. Yeah, we had all wild meat. Dad would go to Cando once a month, and he'd go there with a wagon, which is 18 miles. He'd leave early in the morning. He wouldn't get home 'till late at night. He'd do the shopping for the whole month when we needed sugar, flour, and things like that. 'Cause mom had the garden vegetables, and the fruit.

SD: So, your mom did a lot of gardening then, eh?

SS: Yeah, she did.

SD: Ok, what kind of things did she plant?

SS: We had potatoes, carrots, and onions. Dad used to go buy the seeds in Cando. He'd plough the whole garden with that old plough with the horse in the front.

SD: What all types of berries did you pick?

SS: Well, there were Saskatoons, chokecherries, pin cherries, and cranberries. My mom canned strawberries, raspberries, and she went out to the bush and picked them.

SD: Did you pick those yourself?

SS: Oh yes. In fact, I was still picking Saskatoons and chokecherries 'till about two years ago. Now my feet won't let me do it.

SD: What sort of traditional medicines were used in your community and your family?

SS: My mom was always out in the bush picking wild plants. In fact, I use a lot of it myself right now. Yeah, I use rat root, and we use these I don't know what they call them in English, but in French we call them "le bois blé." It's little willows, and we'd boil them. Mom used them for a lot of things, and sage if you had a cut or something. There are all kinds, and there were some plants that had yellow flowers and she'd boil them for muskeg tea. There was sage, muskeg tea, and these willows, and rat root, and Seneca root, we used to dig that and sell that, too.

SD: Right, but you never used it yourself?

SS: Never used it, though. Yeah, we dug that. What else did mom use? She used to take some willows from the Saskatoons and dried them up. I don't know what she used them for, but I can remember this one guy from Red Pheasant saying he used to be blind, and my mom used some kind of medicine on him and he could see. He wanted to find out what kind of medicine my mom used, but she had passed away already, and I didn't know. But he said, "If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be able to see today."

SD: Wow, so your mom really knew medicine?

SS: Yeah, she knew medicine.

SD: Did she pass it on to anyone?

SS: Well, just whatever little I know. She and I would get together, and we pick plants, dry

them, and then keep them for winter. But most of us road allowance people know medicines, like the ones from Midnight Lake, Dave Trottier's side of the family.

SD: Do you know what kind of little willow that was specifically?

SS: No, I don't know, I wish I knew. I don't know the name in English, but I just know it as French.

SD: Oh, in French?

SS: Yeah, le bois blé.

SS: Yeah, that's what they called them. That's a French word.

SD: Yeah, do you know if it's similar to a red willow or...?

SS: Well, I don't know. I think they grow about two-feet high, and they have little black berries on them. You waited until fall when it was dry because you could pick them better. Then you pulled all the leaves and berries off of them. I could remember my mom using them after a woman had a baby. She would boil them. There was a certain way you do it. You tie them up so you wouldn't break them. You'd just tie them, and that was to clean a woman out after she had a baby. Different things my mother used...

SD: Peppermint at all?

SS: There was peppermint, too. It grew in the slough. She used to pick that. I remember her picking these...they grow in the slough. Oh, I can't even think of the name of those things, but we used to pull all the tops off. They were like feathers, and you just kept the bottoms and boiled them.

SD: Like a Cattail?

SS: Cattail, yeah that's what it was.

SD: That's what it was! She used to boil the bottom of it, like the root?

SS: Yeah, she used to boil that.

SD: For medicine or for food?

SS: Yeah, for medicine, anytime we had a cold or something.

SD: And rat root, who used to harvest that?

SS: Well, they'd go up by Glaslyn and would pick a bunch because it floats on top of the water. Somebody has to go in there and pull them all out, and then they'd scrape them clean and let them dry.

SD: Okay, and your mom, or a relative used...

SS: The relatives used to do that.

SD: And they would bring it to her?

SS: Yeah. I still use rat root today, and anytime I don't feel good or something, I'll make myself a drink. It's good for bladder infections. It's good for a lot of things.

SD: Any other medicine people in your family or community?

SS: Well, my aunt was, too.

SD: Yeah, your mom or dad's sister?

SS: My mom's sister, Alvina Day. She was married to a Day. Yeah, she used a lot of medicine, too. But they didn't live close to us. They had a different place all together. They

lived out towards Baljennie with George Pritchard's bunch.

SD: You mentioned Midnight Lake, where is that?

SS: Midnight Lake, that's northeast of Glaslyn.

SD: And you had some family up there?

SS: Yeah, well that's where Dave Trottier's family lived, eh?

SD: And who's Dave Trottier again?

SS: That was my mom's cousin. It was Harry and Dave Trottier. That's where they moved when they moved from the South Country. That's where they went.

SD: Is that a road allowance community?

SS: It must be because they just had places just along the highway. They had made a shack.

SD: Did you go visit up there?

SS: I used to visit there quite often, yeah.

SD: As a kid like?

SS: Well, they had lots of kids, yeah. As a kid I went and visited them.

SD: Do you have anyone in your family that made beaded or embroidered moccasins or other items.

SS: No, not back in those days. I know mom did a lot of sewing, but it was all by hand whatever she made.

SD: No one wore moccasins or shoes?

SS: No, she never made moccasins, but maybe my grandmother did on mom's side, but mom didn't do that.

SD: Did you have any relatives that did that?

SS: Yeah, I got lots of relatives that did that.

SD: I wonder why your mom...

SS: I don't know why. She sewed and embroidered. She would make blankets and embroider them. She would take an old coat apart and turn it inside out, and would make a coat for me, and it was all by hand. She never had a sewing machine 'till much later on. All the flower sacks back then had flowers on them, and she'd make curtains and my little dresses with them.

SD: Do you know what happened with any of these artifacts?

SS: No, I don't even know what happened to all this stuff. Even the old coal oil lamps and the old irons that you used to heat on the stove, I don't know whatever happened to my all my mom's stuff. It would be nice to have them now. But I guess they just picked up and left.

SD: How did your family celebrate special occasions and holidays like Christmas, New Year's, Easter?

SS: On Christmas, my mom, I don't know where we got it from, but she had a turkey. She'd also bake. She made lovely fruitcakes, and I can remember her decorating them with icing sugar instead of what they do nowadays. She had icing on them, red and green icing to make it red and green for Christmas. We had a Christmas tree, a Charlie Brown Christmas tree. She had crepe paper on it, and decorated it all up, and we'd hang up our stockings,

which we got whatever we could because they couldn't afford anything. And, New Year's, well, that was a celebration! We'd go from house to house eating. The main thing for Métis people back then was boolets. I still make boolets on New Year's.

SD: Meatballs, right?

SS: Yeah, meatballs. Every New Year's, I still make them.

SD: How big do you make yours?

SS: Oh, I don't know, about like this. I don't make them too big, because I like them cooked. Yeah, my kids even come and say, "Mom, are you making boolets for New Years?" and I say, "Yup, I am." And then, my dad played the fiddle. He'd go from house to house, have a little dance, and go again.

SD: So, your dad was good at playing the fiddle?

SS: Oh yeah, my dad played the fiddle. He played the fiddle, guitar, and piano. And then my oldest brother played the fiddle and guitar. I used to sing back in my younger days.

SD: What kind of songs?

SS: Country songs.

SD: Okay, yeah. Any jiggers?

SS: Yes, my mom used to jig, and I'd jig a little bit myself, but now I can't do anything.

SD: How about men, did they do much jigging?

SS: Oh God, yes. Yes, they did a lot of jigging. That's what they used to do on New Year's Eve. They played the old fiddle, and they guys would jump up and start jigging.

SD: Just on their own?

SS: Just on their own. The women would join.

SD: What about square dancing was there much of that?

SS: Oh yes, a lot of square dancing. I used to square dance when I was a little girl. I can probably still do it now.

SD: Do you remember the names of any of the tunes?

SS: No, I don't. I didn't know they had names for those tunes back in those days. I can remember "Drops of Brandy." That's the only one I can remember.

SD: When did you guys do that one?

SS: New Year's. If there was quite a few, they'd get about maybe four or five couples, and they'd just keep playing the old fiddle 'till they finished the whole thing. It was really interesting.

SD: A lot of fun I bet. So, what about Easter?

SS: Mom would cook on Easter, but I don't think it was anything much. She'd boil eggs and would decorate them. New Year's was the big one; Christmas, too. It was just us. People wouldn't go visiting at Christmas. They'd stay home, but on New Year's, they'd go door to door. Load up all of us in the old cutter. My dad used to heat rocks, and he'd cover them. That's where we got the heat from to travel.

SD: So, if your whole family was going door-to-door and the other families were going door-to-door, who stayed home at your house?

SS: Nobody stayed home. They used to wait 'till they were finished at our house then we'd go. They must have said, "We'll end up here at a certain time."

SD: So, someone would come and visit you guys at your house and then everyone...

SS: Yeah, they'd come and eat and would then go. They didn't stay long, just enough to eat, and then go.

SD: And then you guys would eventually go....

SS: Yeah, eventually there were about five or six families leaving there after the last one came. Well, he could go, join in somewhere else.

SD: When did all that start, on New Year's Day or New Year's Eve?

SS: New Year's Eve. I remember going to Ed Ouelette's. They had the biggest house. That's where most of the dances were because they had a fairly big house.

SD: And the visiting started in the morning or afternoon?

SS: In the morning.

SD: Really? So, you'd get guests in the morning, by afternoon you'd be out of your house going to other peoples' houses?

SS: Yeah, I remember going from house-to-house. Mind you, you didn't eat that much when you got to the last place.

SD: Everyone cooked special food for that day?

SS: Well, it was mostly bannocks and bannock. I don't recall anything else. Maybe cake or fruitcake from Christmas time, they put that out.

SD: Did anyone or does anyone speak Michif?

SS: I do.

SD: Okay. Anyone else in...

SS: My youngest brother did a little, and my oldest brother did very little because, like I said, he was quite young when he moved to Calgary. But both my mom and dad spoke that. That's all I knew, how to talk that language.

SD: Is that all you guys spoke at home?

SS: Uh-huh.

SD: Did you call it Michif?

SS: Yeah, Cree, whatever, French-Cree. It's between Native Cree and French. The words are two languages mixed together. I can even speak the Cree that they talk on the Red Pheasant Reserve.

SD: Really? Wow.

SS: Yeah, because I have yard sales in North Battleford, and they all talk to me in Cree.

SD: Do you know any traditional Métis Stories or songs?

SS: Métis songs, no, not really. Métis stories, mom used to tell us some stories before bed time.

SD: Okay. What kind of stories are those?

SS: She used to talk about Wiishakaychaak. I don't know what that was, a bird of some kind

SD: Wiishakaychaak?

SS: Wiishakaychaak they'd call them. Yeah, I can remember she was telling us this one story. Wiishakaychaak was out picking berries, and he was along the river and he looked and he saw all these berries hanging, eh? But it was just a shadow in the water. Of course, he was dumb. He didn't know. He'd dive in there, and come out again, and would sit on the edge of the bank again. "Look, here are all these berries hanging." He'd dive again. Finally, after I don't know how many times, he was sitting there relaxing in the sun. He looked up and here the berries were hanging above him. Yeah, she'd tell us stories like that.

SD: Did she have quite a few stories?

SS: Well, there were only three stories. But that was one of them that I could remember. She told us some other stories, but I don't want to...about him sliding on the rock.

SD: Oh yeah, and he got the scabs...

SS: Scab. Omikiy (witchew) (Cree), they call it. That was in Cree. I guess that scab fell off and he was eating

SD: Any Wiishakaychaak story you want to share?

SS: I don't know. Let me see, which one can I tell you that I know all the Cree words?

SD: If you forget a Cree word its fine. It doesn't matter.

SS: I wish I could remember that one about Omikiy (witchew). How it all happened at the beginning. Why he slid down on that rock. He heated up that rock anyway and then he slid down. When he slid down it would go (sizzle sounds). He'd burn. How did he say that? I can't even think of the word, but anyway, it's been a long time since I heard those stories. It's been like 50 years or more.

SD: And there were two or three that your mom told regularly?

SS: Yeah, I don't know if my dad ever told any stories. He was so busy. We had chickens and our horses, of course. But my mom was always in the house with us doing something. At bedtime she'd tell us a little bedtime story.

SD: And you said you did some singing?

SS: Yeah.

SD: And it was mostly country songs?

SS: Yeah, that was after I moved to Cando. Yeah, we did some. My dad would play the fiddle, and my brother the guitar, and I'd sing. And then we had this thing what they call an "Amateur Hour." Now, it's a talent show, and it was on CJNB in North Battleford, and I used to sing over the air.

SD: What years were...?

SS: That was probably when I was 18 years old. So that would be in the 1960s, '61, '62 somewhere in there

SD: What were some of your favourite songs?

SS: Kitty Wells. I did a lot of Kitty Wells songs back then.

SD: What are your best memories about living in a Métis road allowance community?

SS: Well, I don't know, it was just an easy-going life. There was no traffic and no airplanes. It was quiet. We had such a good life. We didn't have any electricity. We didn't have any

electronics like the kids have nowadays. My mom would sew during the day because all we had was a coal oil lamp at night time, and it wasn't very good. And my dad had a battery-operated radio, and you only turned it on when it was news time, and after that, he shut it off. My oldest brother would go out hunting for gopher tails. He'd cut gopher tails, and crows' feet to make money for himself. And I used to go out, I'd take a... I don't know if it was a five-gallon pail, but probably a pail of some kind, and I'd fill it full of water. I'd go up on a hill and take my little twine and make a little snare, and put it over the gopher holes, and I'd pour the water in there. Next thing you'd see some bubbles coming up, and here's a gopher coming up. I'd grab him and pull him out of the hole and would start running all over the hill. Those were my toys. Then we used to sleigh ride in the wintertime in the moonlight. We didn't have a sleigh. We used to use a cardboard box. We'd rip it up in half. It was me and my friend Victoria Polsfut. She was Victoria Racette then. And my brother Emile and his friend Bob, we'd all go sleigh riding. We'd go to school in a buggy in the summertime, and in a cutter in the wintertime with a little caboose on top of it. I could remember those days. My brother went out there early, about half an hour before school ended, and he'd start up the little stove so that we'd have heat. We used to go three miles to school. And in the summertime, we'd have a little buggy with one horse. Yeah, that's how we went to school in the summertime, and in the winter, we had two horses on the sleigh. But I only went up to grade four in Willowfield because after that the teacher quit. She moved away, so there were no more teachers. Then when I went to Cando, I started school when I was 15. I only took up to grade six or seven, and then I quit. And the rest of my schooling was through upgrading. I took grade ten.

SD: Are there any bad memories you'd like to share?

SS: No, not really. It was all good memories. I enjoyed that life. And in the summertime, my dad had a hay rack, and we'd load up our tent and our stove and our groceries, blankets, and we'd head out to the Battleford Fair. It took us two days to get there, and along the road we'd stop and camp by the river. And then we'd get to Battleford the next day and we'd pitch up our tent by the fairgrounds. In those days everything was cheap. I don't know if we got five dollars a day for the fair. That would get us in and on all our rides, and then these people would pitch up all their tents all in a row, and everybody'd be visiting until late at night. I could remember the Sangrets coming to visit us. Yeah, it was lots of fun. We didn't have to worry about crime. Not like it is now. You got to keep your doors locked. For the longest time, even after I got married and lived in Cando, I never locked the doors. I went to Battleford, did my shopping, and my doors were wide open, and I'd go home. Yes, it was nice life. I'd like to see the young generation live that life that I lived. They'd never make it.

SD: Too hard for them you think?

SS: It would be too hard for them to get water from a slough. We used to have to strain it with an old rag to do our washing. In the wintertime, we'd haul in snow and melt that and washed in the washtub and the scrub board. My mom made her own laundry soap. They

used to call it "la potasse." I don't know how she made it.

SD: So, you don't think the younger generation would manage that?

SS: Never. I can't see them doing it.

SD: But do you wish they could do that?

SS: Yeah, I wish they could. I told my kids about the life that I lived, and they said, "Oh my God, you lived like that, with no power?" I didn't know what power was until 1958.

SD: And yet, if you had to do it over?

SS: Yeah, I could survive. The only thing is I wouldn't be able to cut wood, to make fire, but if somebody could, I could live in a tent.

SD: How were the Métis treated in your community?

SS: They all got along. They were good.

SD: It was probably all Métis?

SS: Yeah, it was all Métis.

SD: Did your family encounter racism from the larger community?

SS: No, it was all just little groups of people, like the Ouelettes and the Pritchards, the ones that had the big families. I don't know if Ed Ouelette's kids are still alive. The oldest one is Louis. I think he's 80 some years old. And then the youngest is Linda, she lives in Prince George, BC. And George Pritchard's bunch, I think there are five left, and he had a family. I think about 13. He was the one that used to load up people in the truck, and he'd go way down south. They picked rocks. I can remember bringing stuff for them to eat, like the inside of a cow, the tripe and all that. I can remember them cleaning it. But we never ate it. We didn't have that kind of stuff. We just had deer meat, rabbit, prairie chicken, partridge, whatever. I guess as a treat every once in a while, my dad would bring home some meat when he went to town. I can't remember eating a pork chop in my life, until I got older and then they bought pigs. But in my younger days, there was no such thing as steaks and pork chops.

SD: When did people leave your road allowance community?

SS: I was born in '41, and I spent all my time around the Willowfield area, and then I left there when I was 15. After that, we never did go back. We stayed in Cando. I don't know where everybody else went. Ed Ouelette and them moved to Cando, too. Then the Pritchards stayed in Baljennie.

SD: So around what year did the people start to move?

SS: Well, we moved to Cando in 1956.

SD: And the other families were leaving around then as well?

SS: Ed Ouelette's family moved then, and there was my mom's sister Alvina Day. She moved her family there too from Baljennie. And then the Parkers moved to Cando, too.

SD: So, you mentioned that your grandparents were originally from Val Marie?

SS: Yep, that's where my mom and my grandma and my grandpa came from. Well, the Trotters came from the Red River colony in Manitoba. And the Lemires came from the States. I have papers fighting for land in Turtle Mountain, North Dakota. See, my mom was

fighting for that land, money from that land 'till she died, and I am trying. And I'm getting up there in age, too.

SD: From the Lemire side?

SS: Yeah, that's on the Lemire side. That would be probably my great-great-grandmother, Frances Lemire, who had that land.

SD: Down somewhere by Turtle Mountain?

SS: Turtle Mountain, Belcourt, and Dunseith, North Dakota. My mom and my aunt, and my cousins went down there. They went and saw that land, and they said there is a restaurant, Trottier's Restaurant/Cafe.

SD: So, you're thinking your mom had some title to that land?

SS: Oh yes, I got all the papers. I got stacks of paper on that land. My mom used to get cheques once in a while. The biggest cheque she ever got was .74 cents, I think. That was after the taxes were all paid, and yet, they were drilling oil on that land. Yeah, I got those papers right there in my living room and I am working on them.

SD: Was your family involved in the 1885 resistance?

SS: Oh, probably my great-great-grandparents, Basil Trottier probably.

SD: You think he might have been involved in what happened in Batoche?

SS: I think so yeah.

SD: What makes you say that?

SS: I don't know. I used to hear my mom talk about things like that.

SD: What would your mom say?

SS: I forget what all she said, but I know that Sam Pritchard was in to all that stuff. I remember mom talking about John and Sam Pritchard. Sam Pritchard was married to my mom's aunt, and they were talking about that rebellion at Frog Lake, and at Fort Battleford, and at Batoche. She said that Basil Trottier never did come this way, but that John-Baptiste came this way. He lived out south of Swift Current, and when all this stuff was happening, he was living out in around Dundurn. What was the name of that place?

SD: Round Prairie?

SS: Round Prairie, yeah. He was there, and then when all this stuff was happening, he moved back to Val Marie. Yeah, my mom used to live in Round Prairie too.

SD: If they were involved in 1885, what happened to your family after the resistance? It sounds like they lived in Round Prairie and then after they moved down to...

SS: Well, they moved to Willowfield then. That was before my time. And some of them moved out to Midnight Lake. That would be Andrew Trottier's family.

SD: From Val Marie?

SS: Well, I don't know from where. I think Basil and John-Baptiste were in the Red River colony, and then John-Baptiste and John Murray Trottier moved west, and they moved to Val Marie. The Trottiers are a big family.

SD: So from what you understand, they went from Red River to Round Prairie to Val Marie?

SS: No, from the Red River colony to Val Marie, and then they moved out to Round Prairie.

SD: Round Prairie from Val Marie and then back to Val Marie after?

SS: Yeah, back and forth. They went back and forth. My mom said that in her younger days, they were in Val Marie during the summer, and in the fall, they'd move back to Turtleford. It was just a steady go every year.

SD: Val Marie is way down South.

SS: I know. I don't know why they went down there, and yet, this one time they got caught in Dundurn. They spent the winter there in tents. That's where it snowed, so they stayed.

SD: Wow, that's with your mom?

SS: Yeah, that's with my mom.

SD: Your mom experienced that as a child?

SS: Yeah, as a young girl. They spent the winter in a tent there.

SD: So, your mom said that their family would make the trip from Val Marie to...?

SS: That was just about every year, I think. They went every spring. They moved to Val Marie and Lac Pelletier. I don't know what they did there. And in the fall, they'd pack up and they'd start moving north, because every winter was spent out in Turtleford. I don't know why there. But that's where they'd be heading to.

SD: Interesting.

SS: It is! She used to often talk about that, and then she'd talk about that one winter they got stranded by Dundurn, and that's where they spent the winter.

SD: Well, it sounds like they went through Dundurn every year maybe?

SS: Every year probably. That must have been their route.

SD: They must have had some family there?

SS: I don't know what they had there. They were scattered all over. Everybody just flocked wherever they could. I know they spent it in tents all summer long. There was no such a thing as a house in those days, just in the wintertime.

SD: What kind of tent was this? How would you describe it?

SS: Those big white canvas tents, and not the tents that we have nowadays. They were the old-fashioned tents.

SD: Was it a homemade tent?

SS: Yeah, my mom used to make them.

SD: Out of canvas?

SS: Yeah, canvas, and they were warm in the summertime. You'd pitch up a tent in the summertime, and it would keep the heat inside from the sun. And at night, you'd have to roll up the sides to let in some air. They were so hot.

SD: And you just used whatever wood poles you could...?

SS: Yeah, dad used to cut some poles. There were two poles on each side, and then one across the top, and the tent would go over top, and they would have pegs on the outside, like big posts to hold the tent up. And they used to have an old round tub with a hole cut in it or sometimes on of these broilers with a hole cut in it, and stove pipes up the middle. That's where the heat came from

SD: A little wood stove. Did anyone or does anyone serve in the military?

SS: My mother's brother, Harry Trottier served in the Second World War. My dad did go too, but he only ended up as far as Regina, but they wouldn't take him because he was flatfooted or they said something that he had something wrong with his feet. But my uncle Harry Trottier did go to France, and all through there during the Second World War. I have pictures of him when he was in the war.

SD: And he made it back?

SS: Yeah, he made it back.

SD: Was anyone in your family involved with the Métis Society?

SS: Well, yes and no, but not during the younger time in my life. When I was older, I can remember when my dad lived out in Cando, the Métis Society would come there. They'd vote and whatever. They'd get free lumber, plywood, or wall paneling to fix a house, and that was about it. But I was involved with the Métis Women for ten years. And I sat on the Friendship Centre board for seven years. But I don't bother anymore. I don't even know if there is a Métis Society here in Lloydminster to tell you the truth. I've never come across anybody.

SD: Do you have a Métis card?

SS: No, I don't, but I should get one, I guess. I got one from Cando years and years ago, but I don't know what happened to it. They said it was no good. In fact, I will find you a card of my mother's. It's very old.

SD: Oh wow. The North American Indian Nation Government. This identification card indicates that Mrs. Elizabeth Trottier is a member of the Baljennie Band/Tribe, Cree. I wonder what HB means? Born November 10th, 1912. The county which you reside, Baljennie district in the province of Saskatchewan, Canada. Headquarters office, Loretteville, Quebec.

SS: There's a bunch of writing on the back too. I don't know what it's all about.

SD: Wow. November 3rd, 1954, she got this card. North American Indian Nation Government card. Did she consider herself First Nation or Métis?

SS: She never did get her treaty rights. See this land they got in the States in Turtle Mountain, North Dakota that's Chip-Cree Indians down there. And that's where my great-grandparents were. But we don't have any treaty rights. In the States you're either white or you're Native. There is no such a thing as Métis, and this is what I'm fighting the States with. They want my treaty number and I don't have one. So, I keep telling them I'm not Native. I'm Métis. My mom passed way back in '74.

SD: Okay, and she just got that card?

SS: Yeah, George Pritchard got all these cards for them years ago. I don't know if they were trying to get treaty rights, or what they were trying to do. But we never got anything.

SD: Do you have anything else to share about the way you grew up living in a road allowance community?

SS: I don't know, playing with my dog, and always travelling with my mom and dad and a team of horses. We got out towards Spinney Hill. Load up all our stuff. It was so nice you

know? Just to go pitch up a tent somewhere, and sleep in there. You could park anywhere back in those days. You could camp, anywhere, but now you got to think before you even pull over to have a nap in your vehicle. But it was nice living. I mean we were poor, you know? I don't remember having candy unless my mom made it. She used to make fudge, and once in a while when my dad went to Cando to get groceries; he would bring apples and oranges and bananas, and that was just a treat. But we really enjoyed it. I don't remember having a chocolate bar until we moved to Cando. Going to the show there, I'd pay a dollar to go to the show, and that would pay my way in plus popcorn and pop and a chocolate bar. So that's the only thing I can remember. When we lived out in Willowfield, it was a good life. We enjoyed it, but to this day, I can't eat wild meat. I can't do it. I would just love to eat rababoo and duck, but I can't do it.

SD: It goes right through you?

SS: It goes right through me.

SD: I wonder why that is.

SS: I guess I ate so much of it, probably. My stomach is weak now, I guess. I can remember my oldest brother, too. He used to catch gophers, and he would singe the hair off them. He washed them all up, and cut them up, and boiled them for a little while. Then we would fry and eat them, and my oldest brother and I used to eat gophers. He used to do the cooking for me. Now you can't eat any of that stuff because of all the poison they've got out in the fields. Every summer and in the fall, I used to help my mom. We'd get a tub full of mud and water. I would pick the grass for her, and she mixed the water and mud together. We would put the grass in there and roll it up and slap it up against the house. And she'd get some water and wash it down until it was nice and smooth. That was on the outside. We used to fix all the little holes for winter. And inside, she would do the same, and she would get this white calcimine. She'd mix it with water and wash the walls with that. It was just like paint. I can remember when I was a little girl; we had this dirt roof on our house. It was lumber and then the dirt was on top. Our goat got up there, and he was eating the grass off the roof. We had a goat too.

SD: You mentioned someone had a saw mill.

SS: Yeah, my dad's brother, Pat Trottier.

SD: Boy, he must have been busy cutting lumber for everyone up in that area?

SS: Yeah. Pat Trotchie was living here. We had to go through the trees there and we lived there. There were the Ouelettes and then the Pritchards. That was Ed Pritchard, not George Pritchard.

SD: So Pat Trotchie, who owned the saw mill, lived near you guys?

SS: Yeah, not even a quarter of a mile.

SD: For as long as you were there?

SS: Yeah, as long as we were there.

SD: That must have been how he made his living, eh?

SS: Yeah. He cut the trees. They cut the trees, and I could remember my dad helping him

cut, and slicing the trees up. Making lumber for the houses. But we didn't have lumber on the sides. It was just on the roof. I remember logs were on the sides and mud, and then we had the outhouse, which was lots of fun. I don't know why my dad never put a door on ours. Now, we do crossword puzzles here. We didn't do them back in those days.

SD: No.

SS: Do what you had to do and get back in the house where it was warm. I can remember, too when I was twelve years old out in Cando. My mom ended up in a hospital for three weeks in North Battleford, and my little brother, Paul was four. He is my youngest brother. I could remember skinning a rabbit and making bannock. I was cooking and my dad was outside. He couldn't cook inside. He had to look after the horses and cut wood. He was always cutting wood for the house. And I could remember looking after my little brother for three weeks.

SD: How old were you?

SS: I was twelve and he was four.

SD: So, you knew how to do enough?

SS: Oh yes, I could remember washing clothes on a wash board. First, we used to go get water from the slough. Warm it up outside. Mom would make a little fire outside and would put a big tub of water out there. Wash clothes. We'd hang them out on the line. I didn't mind during the summertime, but during the wintertime, I didn't like it. You hang clothes out. You bring them in. They were just hard, frozen solid. I used to do that when I was twelve years old. Wash clothes. Now, I have no strength in my hands to wring out anything, but I used to do all that stuff.

SD: Yeah. You said you liked that?

SS: Oh yes. I enjoyed that. I wish I could have some of that. My friend, Muriel and I always say, "Gee, we should just go camp somewhere. You know with no power and that. Put up a tent and just stay there." "Yeah," I said, "it would be nice." But she's getting so crippled up, too. And she's on dialysis now. She can't leave. Yeah, it would be a good life just to go. I've often said to myself, "I just wonder what it would be like just to sleep in a tent in the wintertime."

SD: Canvas tent?

SS: Yeah, a canvas tent, like my mother did. Yeah, I've often thought of that. What it would be like, you know? What kind of beds they had? I don't imagine they had any air mattresses. It was probably straw. I think that's what it would be. And then feathered ticks. That's what they made out of feathers. I know my mom used to make pillows with duck feathers. In fact, I've got an antique sewing machine downstairs right now. I'm gonna put it up for sale, I think.

SD: Was that yours?

SS: It was my oldest brother's mother-in-law, a Fleury from Sundre, Alberta. And then my brother had it, and then he passed away back in 2006. So I got the sewing machine. I wanted the fiddle after my brother passed away, but the kids wouldn't give it to me. It's my

dad's fiddle, eh?

SD: Do you know where it ended up?

SS: It's in Calgary somewhere. It would be nice to have it, just to hang on a wall. As you can see, I'm into music. There's a fiddle hanging there. I've got another one laying there.

SD: What do you remember about families from Willowfield who ended up going to Green Lake? Do you remember how many families and around what year that was?

SS: Two families for sure. They were Ed Ouelette's family and George Pritchard's family. I was just twelve years old. I can't remember that much, but I remember them packing up into big trucks and then moving. And I think they spent the winter there. And the next summer, they were back because they said they weren't treated right. What the government had promised them never came true, for land and that. I guess the people in Green Lake didn't want them. They were run off of there. So, they came back.

SD: You remember hearing stories about this from your dad?

SS: Well, it was Mrs. Ed Ouelette that told my mom. She was telling mom about different things that were happening up there. They said the kids were being mean. Everybody was mean to their kids. Like they were just young girls then, you know? Those young guys up there were after their girls. So they packed up their girls and came home.

SD: Your dad chose not to go to Green Lake?

SS: Yeah. He said, "No, I'm not going. I'm gonna stay here." He said, "I belong here in Willowfield and that's where I'm gonna stay."

SD: And he was offered something to go up there?

SS: Yeah, they were offered land, and I think it was cattle, too that the government was gonna give them. Give them a piece of land up there and some cattle to get them to go. And then like I said the Green Lake people didn't want them there. They sent them home.

SD: And how did they get to Green Lake?

SS: George Pritchard had a big three-ton truck and they were loaded up, whole families.

SD: Okay. Thank you.

SS: Yeah. Okay.