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Margaret: I'm speaking with Helen Sinclair of Regina. Mrs.
Sinclair could you tell me anything about your mother and
father? Tell me about your mother and father, tell me what you
told me earlier.

Helen: (inaudible) and I stayed with my dad and mother for
till I was about ten years old and then I was adopted out in
the reserve the (?) Reserve. And, my two sisters and myself we
went to that school Muskowekwan Indian School, Muskowekwan
Boarding School in Lestock. We were in there for about five
years me and my sisters, and then we left school in 1926.

Margaret: What were your mom and dad, were the Metis?

Helen: They're Metis people.

Margaret: Your mom wasn't Treaty?

Helen: She might have been Treaty because she did some work
for Kamsack, Saskatchewan. She came from, I don't know my
father was.

Margaret: Is that Muskowekwan School a (?) for anyone to go to?

Helen: Them days yeah (inaudible) Metis people there. But you had to be adopted out so they have to send them into there. (inaudible).

Margaret: Somebody that's Treaty?

Helen: There was Treaty people in there.

Margaret: Oh yeah it was Treaty had to sign you into the school. So after you went to school there what for five years?

Helen: Yes.

Margaret: And then where did you go after?

Helen: Well, you know, we went out to the, we went and dig seneca root when we wer (inaudible), I was very young I was about sixteen. Then I worked on a farm in the fall. My other sisters did too and then after that when harvest is all over I went back to my grandparents on their farm. And then after I went and stayed with my two (inaudible). But there was four of us and we each had (inaudible), and we left at sixteen, 1927. Then we went to on farms, you know, we worked for farmers, it was kind of hard.

Margaret: You were sixteen at that time?

Helen: No, I was seventeen I think.

Margaret: So you didn't get a chance to go back and finish school?

Helen: No. My father wants (inaudible).

Margaret: Well how was it working for the farmers?

Helen: it was nice, I liked it, you know. (inaudible) we didn't get very much money I only got \$5. a month. And then (inaudible) get \$8. a month.

Margaret: Did you have to long hard hours?

Helen: Oh yes. (inaudible) early in the morning and go to bed maybe after twelve o'clock. (inaudible) there was no electricity (inaudible) and washing to do and ironing, and scrubbing the floors. Making bread and (inaudible).

Margaret: You cook meals for everyone?

Helen: Yes. (inaudible).

Margaret: You met him in Punnichy?

Helen: Yes. (inaudible).

Margaret: You remember your dates well. (laughs) You lived in Punnichy?

Helen: Yes I used to. You know, we always lived in a shack (inaudible) and used to go and do day work for the Indian Agent's wife and the Clerk's wife. (inaudible).

Margaret: What kind of work was (inaudible)?

Helen: Oh they used to give graves, like they used to dig lot of (inaudible) and (inaudible).

Margaret: Okay, go ahead and just tell me about, was it 1920?

Helen: Yeah.

Margaret: And you were sixteen years old did you say?

Helen: Yeah, I was in my teens, yeah eighteen something like that. Tell me when to start.

Margaret: Go ahead, just go ahead and start now. Well, okay, now you said that... So when you went to the dances where were the dances at? What towns?

Helen: Well they, when I left the school, boarding school, we used to go to school dances in private homes.

Margaret: Oh they were in private homes?

Helen: Private homes that the people who make dances. And my father used to play for the dances and weddings, weddings and dances. And then I went to work in the farm in (?) for a lady she was a white lady, she was very ill she had one baby boy. And I worked for her I don't know how long it was quite a long time in the spring, early in the spring. Because he had a horse and buggy and I told her, do you know how to dig seneca root? I asked. He said, no. I said, if you have lots in your farm out in your pasture, I said, I'll show you what they look like. You know, if we dug that seneca root we could sell it to the store and buy something out of it, I said. We could make little money for ourselves, I said. Buy some stuff from the store, woods or anything we wanted. So we started, I had, I asked my dad to make a digging roots, digging what's...

Margaret: Seneca roots. You asked him...

Helen: Diggers...

Margaret: Oh the diggers, yes.

Helen: We had diggers to dig our seneca root. (inaudible) horse, hen I and her and the baby went to this pasture and there was all kinds of seneca roots all over as far as you can see. When we dug them and we go each out when she'd go in the morning so I'd stay home with the baby in the mornings and

doing the housework and get some supper ready and things like that for the men that was working out on the land, and then she'd come home with her seneca root and she used to put them in a bag and then I would, she was collecting them in a bag and she let me go in the afternoon. But I didn't go in the afternoon by myself I used to get (inaudible) and I would go. And I would dig, I used to dig lots of that seneca root. You had two big sacks we went and sell. We went to this one store it was, a store that you buy anything, don't know what you call that.

Margaret: The General Store?

Helen: Yeah General Store, yeah. And we'd sell these seneca roots the way them (inaudible). And then we decide we going to buy new material for her, for ourselves to go to the dance, there was a dance in town, and I was only seventeen then. And then she says, I can't make a dress for myself, she said. Well I make one for you, I said, and I said, I'll make my own. She said, what nice material and it was cheap twenty-four, you know, ever pretty. It was kind of a dark brown and big flowers, nice big flowers and red flowers, it was all nice. And I bought nice red, light red and they called it (?). C-R-E-P-E, crepe D-E-S-T and then I buy slippers and stockings. We (inaudible) for other little things too we bought like we need, buy some makeup for ourselves. And we went to the dance, and we went upstairs in that hall where they were dancing. Boy they used to going to have a good time up there dance. I didn't even know the guys that took me for dances, they were white guys, they were all white people.

Margaret: All white people.

Helen: Yeah. They used to have big crowd. And then I, before that when we were at home with my father, my father was alone and my four of my sisters, three of my sisters and myself stood with him that (?). And then in the springtime I went and worked. We didn't go and work but we went and picked seneca roots. And we made money, buy groceries and things that we need to wear, you know. And after when the winter came, well we all pile, we went home to the old homestead where my grandparents lived. And we made up our minds we going to go away to work. And my sister, my sisters and the two (inaudible) stayed with my father. And Victoria and Clairra, and then I and my sister Elizabeth went, but the oldest girl was already married she was in (?). I swear we used to go to dances, to barn dances boy we used to have a good time. I was still very young then. And after that when we went home to the old homestead and then we went to Lestock, and I went to Punnichy from there and I, boys jogging, you know, in Punnichy. (inaudible). I stayed there for a long long time and I that's where I met my husband. And then I work for the, I retired, not retired but she was a nurse in the General Hospital from Winnipeg, she had two little boys and I looked after them, I done her housework. She paid me \$7.50 every two weeks that's the biggest wages I got in a month.

Margaret: That was a lot back then?

Helen: Oh lots of money then. And we used to go to a show and I used to go with my boyfriend and my sisters went to the show. And we used to, I and my friend, Sara was her name this younger lady's daughter, I and her used to go to Chinese (?) it was a nice place and we eat all we wanted to eat, there was steak and all the vegetables and everything, you know, and used to (inaudible) and go to some kind of pudding and ice cream if we want some, and it cost us twenty-five cents for that meal, tea or coffee, all that for twenty-five cents a piece. And we only spent fifty cents between I and her. Those were the times where they never come back, and by (?) fifty cent piece on the road when I went to Lestock, I used to go and visit my parents over there and my mother used to, but they parted for twenty years before my father passed away. Until he was bringing me home, I was already married, he was bringing me home to Punnichy and he happened to see, we were driving, he happened to see fifty cent piece. Oh, he says, there's fifty cents here, he said. Now I just, so what did he buy out of that he bought a box of matches, now you keep track of that fifty cents. Box of matches for 10 cents, big box of matches; and he bought a loaf of bread out of that for 5 cents; and he bought a pound of butter out of that, how much is that?

Margaret: Fifteen cents. How much was the butter?

Helen: The butter was 25 cents a pound.

Margaret: How much did he buy, one pound?

Helen: One pound.

Margaret: So that would be 35 cents, or 40 cents all together.

Helen: And he bought something else, I don't remember what it was. It was something else he bought, I don't remember I'll have to ask my sister see if she remembers. And all that he bought all those things for, maybe two loafs of bread, I don't remember, but he bought all those things for 50 cents. Now what can you buy today for that 50 cents?

Margaret: Not even a loaf of bread. (laughs)

Helen: No. \$1.20 or something.

Margaret: \$1.20 or something. So then you were younger, when you were around sixteen or seventeen you went to a lot of dances.

Helen: Oh yeah we had good times. We had good times and places, I went to places and met a few... Lots of my school mates the girls have died since then, there's only a few of us old school girls that's still living now. There's only about eighteen of us left now.

Margaret: Well did you have any pictures of anyone when you

were younger?

Helen: Pardon.

Margaret: Do you have pictures of the girls you went to school with when you were younger?

Helen: No.

Margaret: No.

Helen: No, they never gave us any pictures. But they did take pictures. But the one that had them pictures of our school days she had them pictures but she passed away, I don't know who had them now. But you had long hair, we had braids. And then I was (inaudible) my hair when sometime that, you know, cut our hair very short.

Margaret: Who was going to cut it?

Helen: Pardon.

Margaret: Where were you going to get it cut at? Who was going to cut your hair?

Helen: Oh there was somebody there that done that.

Margaret: Oh. Just to get it trimmed you mean not to get it all cut off.

Helen: Short, short, yeah short all of them. They took all our braids, I had long long hair. And then in 1924 when I was at the school there was thirteen of us girls and three boys went though an operation they took our tonsils out, right in school we didn't go to no hospital.

Margaret: Right in school?

Helen: Right in school, they gave us that ether to sniff and oh boy I woke up with a sore throat and blood. My two sisters too, the ones that passed away they had their tonsils out. There was a whole, there was a bunch of us girls, thirteen girls and three boys.

Margaret: Well, did they always take everyone's tonsils out, or...

Helen: Well, these thirteen girls had their tonsils out there, one just about died she had to be looked after by a nurse from Edmonton.

Margaret: Well why did they take your tonsils out, were they bothering you?

Helen: I don't know. The doctor came and examined all the girls and boys that had big tonsils and they took them all out. All these, I mean these thirteen girls and boys.

Margaret: And then you got...

Helen: We didn't know.

Margaret: You were sick after that eh?

Helen: Oh yes.

Margaret: Well didn't they have to have the parent's, your mom and dad's permission?

Helen: No they didn't do anything I guess. I never knew where my parents were. We seldom seen our parents, very seldom. My mother used to be in Alberta and my father would be up north, he used to go all over. Never couldn't keep track of them. And the priest used to take us to the sports, old man sports they used to have good times over there in the olden days. Good sports and race horses, and oh everything like that, dances at night on the grounds. Go to old man's and Gordon Reserve, and Lestock, and Daystar's and Raymore, Symons, (?), all over it was. We were able to get there. The priest used to take us Old Man's mostly that's for every year we'd be going.

Margaret: And he let you go to the dances and everything eh?

Helen: No, no. We used to come home before sundown. We used to have an old cart, great big cart, what was the name of it? I'd know if I seen a picture. They had a top down.

Margaret: It was a convertible was it?

Helen: Yeah. And it was the tops down and the priest used to drive and the girls would be sitting in the front, one sister took us to look after us, you know. She come with us, one would come with us (inaudible). So that was nice, nice times we had.

Margaret: Did your mom or dad or anyone ever have cars when you were young?

Helen: Pardon.

Margaret: Was there anyone else in your family that ever had a car? Or did they always just have a team?

Helen: No, no they had, when we were little children we used to live here and there, here around here at the Fort or Lestock, it had a store there they still call it Lestock. And we used to go there, oh we used to go there and then the, we had, we lived in a tent from neighbors across this bare old barn yard (inaudible). They had a big government house, they were in the reserve and we had our tent way across from there. And when we'd hear a car coming very, very seldom we'd see cars. (inaudible) and go and see this car. We'd get all excited my sisters and myself, and my dd and... Very seldom

we'd hear a car. We thought it was so nice to see something like that.

Margaret: Well, who else, who owned the cars just the neighbors around?

Helen: No, no somebody that went through there had a car.

Margaret: Oh that was just passing through town.

Helen: But no neighbors, the neighbors had their team they didn't have a car. They use horse and buggies and wagons and what have you. And then the, we came to, my dad used to come and sell a load of hay to Regina, Regina was a very small city then, very small place. And we used to all load, get into the hayrack on top of the hay, my mother and dad and my sisters and no boys in our family, we would come to Regina and set the tent way out in the prairie just out in the prairie there's not even any buildings just a little center there was building, you know, business places. And when my dad would go and sell this hay they had (?), you know, all over and they feed the cattle and then he'd go and sell his hay. And when the hayrack was, my father would take it down and he would put some boards on, we'd all sit in that wagon and we used to go in that subway on Broad Street and we used to, oh I used to like to listen to the horses hoofs, you know, going through under there. And I'm sure there was kind of already (?), what you call these brakes, that was on that ground instead of cement.

Margaret: Yeah, I know what you mean. Brick cement instead of...

Helen: Yeah, the horses, yeah, nobody was there my father would go and tie the horses at the Market Square, I think they called it, is it? That's where the priest (inaudible) today. Then we'd go back to the tent, and we had lots to eat then, nice things to eat they were cheap then. You could buy sausages and meat very very cheap and you get lots of it. And what they used to dry some meat put the (inaudible). We had no butter, we never had butter, you know. (inaudible). No we never had no sweets. Well at Christmas and New Year's we had sweets, but most of the girls go home for the holidays (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: Oh once I remember I went to my parent's and that's (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: Oh we had a good time, nice things to eat for Christmas. (inaudible) oranges, apples, peanuts, candy we used to get lots.

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: (inaudible).

Margaret: Did you have a Christmas tree?

Helen: Oh yeah there was a Christmas tree, but not the other priests just that one priest (inaudible).

Margaret: Why did the younger ones have a Christmas tree?

Helen: No I don't remember, no.

Margaret: What language was spoken at the school?

Helen: We suppose to speak English, but most of the time the girls spoke Saulteaux language. (inaudible) and the sisters and the priest were all French. And I was interested in trying to learn French too (inaudible). Spoke in English, broken English too and speak (inaudible) I learnt lots of this reading and things that since I went to school and white people I worked with (inaudible) and things like that, you know.

Margaret: What language was spoken at home?

Helen: Oh yeah my dad and mother spoke (?).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: No. (inaudible) Saulteaux or Cree.

Margaret: How were the nuns and the priests (inaudible)?

Helen: Well not too bad, well some of the couldn't speak English. (inaudible) she was French. (inaudible) and they didn't understand (inaudible).

Margaret: Well how did you (inaudible)?

Helen: Well I felt awkward about, I came back about (inaudible).

Margaret: What did you, as you were growing up did you (inaudible)?

Helen: Oh yeah we had (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: (inaudible).

Margaret: How was the clothing?

Helen: They were nice. They were nice (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: Oh yeah, lots of them. (inaudible)

(BRIAN THIS SIDE IS IS TO LOW FOR ME TO HEAR)

Helen: (inaudible) the other one was in Treaty (inaudible).

Margaret: Did you ever have to go on the reserve for (inaudible)?

Helen: (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: She lived there right in the resere there. (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: (inaudible) she was sickly person she had gallstones and she had (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: (inaudible). But my daughter (inaudible) she married a white man (inaudible).

(BRIAN I WILL TYPE WHATEVER SENTENCES I CAN MAKE OUT OTHERWISE I LEAVE IT TO YOU, IF YOU ARE ABLE TO MAKE ANY OF IT OUT.)

Helen: ...nice clothes, shoes anything she want (inaudible). ...is her uncle that used to come (inaudible). Since he came back to (inaudible).

Margaret: Did (inaudible) a lot of people there (inaudible)?

Helen: Oh my yes. (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: Stories?

Margaret: What about (inaudible)?

Helen: I used to tell him little stories when he was young about, the only thing I used to learn (inaudible) was about a fairytale about Wesakachuk. (inaudible). And I said when you have children they are now going to (inaudible) want to put them with the white children and lean to speak English. And that's why they speak with the English (inaudible). (inaudible) his wife died, and his little girl died three months after and that was his whole family. (inaudible) he still drinks like today. (inaudible). This one that drinks he stays and he goes to sleep way early and he's (inaudible). He had T.B. he was in santiorium for over two years, he just about died from that. And then after he got out he went (inaudible)

he didn't take care of himself (inaudible) but he survived.

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: I'll tell you about Jimmy a little story I used to tell him about Wesakachuck, that's the old Cree (inaudible) that means (inaudible).

Margaret: What's it about?

Helen: Oh I don't want to say it. (inaudible) it's a long story because made a dance and he invited all (inaudible) come to the dance and they made a big big fire. And he told (inaudible) not to open their eyes and to go around that fire. And then as they, and he (inaudible) and they found out that he was doing that (inaudible). ANd he threw these ducks in that fire to cook, and then they started to (inaudible) and he went to sleep and he told (inaudible). Today he said, when, he said that, he says, he wants them ducks soon as they cook here take them away (inaudible) ducks all burnt and nothing left. (inaudible).

Margaret: How did you, as you were (inaudible)?

Helen: All these years I've been that.

Margaret: But when you were a child were you...

Helen: Yeah I was sickly.

Margaret: Well, were you able to get any medical help?

Helen: I don't, I spent so much money on it I don't know (inaudible), but before that I didn't take too much education. (inaudible) in 1968 I bought those and I had operation, then I had stroke in 1978 (inaudible). And I started to shakes very bad, see the doctor and they gave me pills been taking them since 1977. And they are making me sick, they only make feel good when (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible) children are grown up.

Helen: Yeah I don't worry about them, because I pray every night and every morning I pray for my family, sick people, pray for everybody.

Margaret: So you were brought up as a Catholic?

Helen: Yes, but my husband and children were Anglican. (inaudible) he didn't say that to me, but (inaudible). So when he passed away then I went down to the priest I aske him if he (inaudible). And these preachers that moves around preaching they want to (inaudible). I was back there in the Roman Catholic Church once and that's no more.

Margaret: So you weren't baptized?

Helen: No I didn't want (inaudible).

Margaret: How do you feel about the kind of life that you had was it hard compared to others?

Helen: Pardon.

Margaret: How was your life compared to others lives, was it good? Did you have a good life compared to others?

Helen: Well no not, (inaudible) I was always always sick. (inaudible) I had nervous breakdown five times (inaudible). We used to work around in Regina house cleaning and doing jobs for the white people, and then I got sick (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: No. (inaudible) she remembers all the old (inaudible) how hard it was (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: Yeah I don't understand anything about (inaudible). He's on his own and he looks after his family very good, you know, (inaudible) they have everything they want transportation, anything.

Margaret: How did he get (inaudible)?

Helen: Pardon.

Margaret: How did he get (inaudible)?

Helen: I don't know I guess he used to do about (inaudible).

Margaret: Did he ever talk about anything (inaudible) did he every tell you that's what he wanted to do?

Helen: No. No (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: Pardon.

Margaret: Why do you think he went into that?

Helen: Oh I guess that's the kind of job he wanted to do. He didn't want to be a hard laborer, hard worker like his dad. And he used to work hard too before he went to school, he went back to school (inaudible), he had a family and he went to school. And then he got this job as a (?) worker, then he (inaudible). Well I live like a bigshot now (inaudible) I miss the children when they were at home I (inaudible) and I just missed my husband so much (inaudible).

Margaret: (inaudible)?

Helen: Well yeah, Marleen is (inaudible) and she stayed in Regina. One doctor she works at the nursing home and (inaudible). And the other one is married and she lives in (?) Alberta, (inaudible). That one is married to a white man. The other one (inaudible). There's lots of white people that's very good to me in Regina. There's a (inaudible) she was a nurse and she's retired now, I think now for three years (inaudible). She comes and see me, she does shortening for me, everything I want her to do, medicine she'll go and get it for me, she's awfully good to me. (inaudible). You go to other people to interview them? (inaudible) medicine once (inaudible). But today when you take pills you have to take them all like lifetime too and they're killing me, I don't like the pills I take. But I took my pills now I don't has happened to my (inaudible). They used to help me at first but now they're starting to (inaudible).

Margaret: Well what did they do (inaudible)?

Helen: Indians and half breeds oh they doctored themselves with herbs.

Margaret: Was it better?

Helen: That way (inaudible) all those people are dying off now. (inaudible) my mother was a good Indian doctor.

Margaret: (Inaudible)?

Helen: Not really.

Margaret: Did a lot of people come to her for help?

Helen: Yeah, lots of people came.

Margaret: How would she have treated them?

Helen: I guess she treated them with herbs, you know.

(END OF SIDE B)

(END OF TAPE)