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SASKATCHEWAN  
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SASKATCHEWAN  
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INTERVIEWER: VICTORIA RACETTE  
INTERPRETER:  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- General account of his life

John: ...building. It had two stories up, and two bedrooms there, and there was a kitchen on the side of it, a lean-to on the side.

Victoria: Did you have any water?

John: No, there was no running water, we had a well.

Victoria: Did you have electricity of any kind?

John: Yes, we had electricity. At the start we didn't until they put the electrical...

Victoria: Did you have, what did you use for heat?

John: We had wood stoves, coal and wood.

Victoria: What kind of furniture did you have?

John: We had bought furniture mostly. There was maybe a third that was (?) out.

Victoria: Did your father own the land that you lived on?

John: We had our own property there, yeah.

Victoria: So you had a big yard then?

John: Yeah, six lots, yeah.

Victoria: What was your neighborhood like?

John: Well, south of us we had the St. Michael's School, and around us we had two French ones that stayed there plus mostly Metis.

Victoria: Have you ever heard of the term road allowance people?

John: Oh yes, we had some here. We called the place (name) between the reserve and the municipality there. That part there it was the same way as (name), it was all half-breeds that stayed there and mostly... some Indians, too.

Victoria: What did they do for a living do you know?

John: Well at that time there wasn't too much welfare, but I guess they got a little bit of it, and then odd jobs here and there then.

Victoria: What did they live in when they lived there?

John: Little log shacks.

Victoria: Did they build them themselves?

John: They built them themselves. Mostly the top was covered up with dirt, and some of them had tin over it, but they were comfortable.

Victoria: How long did they stay?

John: They stayed there maybe two or three years, possibly more.

Victoria: And then what do they do, did they move on afterwards?

John: Yes, they all... I think they were told to get off the road allowance.

Victoria: Who told them to?

John: I think it was the municipality at one time got them off there.

Victoria: That would be the Duck Lake Municipality?

John: Duck Lake, yeah, between the reserve and Duck Lake. And some of them moved into the reserve and some of them moved back to town.

Victoria: When you were growing up at home, did you and your brothers and sisters, did you have responsibilities, like was there jobs that you had to do?

John: Oh yeah, we all had our jobs. I had to cut wood and bring it in after school, and they had their other jobs towards the house.

Victoria: Did your family do special things together like camping, or hunting, berry picking?

John: Oh yes, we went berry picking and fishing. At that time with horses, though, we didn't have no cars.

Victoria: Was there anyone that did any storytelling back in those days?

John: Oh yes, there was lots of old people that told stories. Most of them knew how to tell lies, but they were good stories just the same, regardless.

Victoria: When you were young did you live around any of your relatives, like your aunts, or uncles, cousins?

John: Oh yeah, we had our aunts and uncles right around us.

Victoria: What about your grandparents?

John: Well, my grandfather stayed with us after the old lady passed away.

Victoria: Where did he come from, where was he born?

John: I think around Winnipeg, they came from Winnipeg there, (inaudible)

Victoria: He was (inaudible). That would be your mother's father then?

John: Yes, that's right.

Victoria: And did he ever tell you any stories about when he

came over?

John: Oh yeah, he used to tell us about the buffalo days. He was there during the buffalo hunt.

Victoria: Oh? Do you remember some of the things he told you about?

John: Oh well, he had told me different stories about buffalo hunting and the Riel Rebellion, and all that he'd tell us about.

Victoria: Did he take part in the Rebellion?

John: Oh yes, he was in the Rebellion too.

Victoria: Well what did he do at the Rebellion?

John: Oh, I wouldn't know about that.

Victoria: There was, you know, a lot of them were scouts, a lot of them were runners, you know, different things.

John: I guess he must have been scouting.

Victoria: So he was quite active then?

John: Oh yeah, he was quite active.

Victoria: Did he ever tell you any stories about what happened at the Rebellion?

John: Well, he did tell us stories but I just don't remember them.

Victoria: You just didn't pay attention.

John: Yeah, I didn't pay too much attention that time.

Victoria: Is there anyone that you looked up to, you know, while you were growing up like an elder person in your family, or a family friend -- someone that you thought a lot of?

John: Oh, I thought a lot of most of them, I guess.

Victoria: There was nobody in particular, eh?

John: No one in particular.

Victoria: Would you say that your family was very loyal, that they stuck together?

John: Oh, pretty well, yeah, they stuck together.

Victoria: And what did your father do for a living?

John: Well, I didn't know him because he passed away when I

was four. He was out, he lived in the (inaudible) somewhere.

Victoria: So your grandfather that lived with you, what did he do for a living?

John: Well, they hauled freight from Winnipeg to Prince Albert, I don't know where, from Saskatoon, I suppose. (inaudible)

Victoria: Do you remember if there was anyone that, like your grandfather or anyone in the family that, you know, did they have their own game, wild game?

John: Oh yeah, we mostly have fresh meat all the time when I was staying with my grandfather. When I came back from the orphanage the first place we stayed was with my grandfather.

Victoria: You were at an orphanage?

John: Yeah, Prince Albert, in 1922, '23, even '24.

Victoria: Was there some jobs that he did, like selling fire wood, or any anything that would supplement the income?

John: Oh, he'd go out to the farmers. He'd work mostly on farms and labor.

Victoria: Did you own any livestock at that time?

John: No, not at that time. Yeah, we owned horses for our own use.

Victoria: Nothing other than that though, eh?

John: No, nothing other than that.

Victoria: Can you remember a time, you know, like when your grandfather was ever unemployed?

John: Oh well, he'd just take on jobs and he'd work maybe a few days or so, maybe a week, maybe he'd go out harvesting and (inaudible) when they're stooking and that. And then after that he'd be days unemployed again and then he'd find another job, and he'd work in the bush most of the winter, cutting cord wood or something.

Victoria: Did it cause any problems in the family, like when he was unemployed?

John: No, not really, no.

Victoria: So it wasn't for long periods of time then that he was unemployed, eh?

John: Actually we never suffered that much, because we had a pension, war veterans' allowance, we had that. (Inaudible) till I was 16 years old.

Victoria: Do you remember if there was very much employment for Metis people at that time?

John: Well, I don't think there was very much, other than making it themselves. They'd go ahead and cut wood and (inaudible) and so on.

Victoria: Was there quite a few of the Metis people that were employed though, that were working?

John: They all had their jobs, they all had jobs. They'd go out and work, farmers, and carpenter work and...

Victoria: Nothing really steady though?

John: Steady, no.

Victoria: Just more or less job to job type of thing?

John: Yeah, that's right.

Victoria: What was your first paying job?

John: My first paying job, oh, I was in the forces. Before that, well, we were working for next to nothing on farms, only 50 cents a day, or 65 cents a day. Harvesting, you'd get \$3 a day for the stooking. And after that I joined the forces, but then I came back and I bought a truck and I (inaudible).

Victoria: How old were you, though, when you had your first job?

John: First job on the farm? Fifteen years old. And then we went to school, and when harvesting we go ahead and do some harvesting, and then go back to school.

Victoria: When you were younger, before you were in the forces there, your jobs then were sort of seasonal?

John: Oh, I worked all season, yeah, I worked steady all summer. And then sometimes in wintertime I worked all summer too [sic].

Victoria: Was there, you know, periods when you didn't work at all?

John: I always made my own work. There was never periods when I didn't work. If I felt like working I just took the team and I'd go cut a load of wood and sell it in town or... I always had work.

Victoria: Was there ever Metis men or women even at that time that did that kind of work too? Did they all just about do the same type of work around?

John: Well, it's not everyone that had horses, but the other ones would go and cut cord wood. Then you'd buy the cord wood from... the one that had horses would buy the cord wood

from the ones that cut it and they'd deliver it in town and maybe split maybe half and half. But that's not very much because you get \$1.50 for a cord of wood, so the hauler would get 75 cents and the cutter would get about 75 cents a cord.

Victoria: Was there very many young people like yourself working, cutting wood and stuff like that, the same types of jobs you were doing?

John: Oh, there were a lot of them that didn't do that, you couldn't get them to go in the bush anyway. So they just hung around home and their families made their living for them. Wherever they got the money I don't know.

Victoria: What language was spoken in the home while you were growing up?

John: Most French, the French and English -- mostly English. But mother always spoke a lot of Cree. Cree and French mixed, yeah.

Victoria: What did you learn to speak first?

John: English -- I didn't know a word of French at that time -- or Cree.

Victoria: Did your parents often -- that would be just your mom, I guess, and your grandfather -- did they speak of themselves as being Metis?

John: Well, we knew we were Metis, I guess.

Victoria: There's, you know, a lot of the families back then, either they just grew up being aware of it, that they were Metis and, you know, it didn't make any difference to them; or a lot of them didn't want to be.

John: Well, we weren't like that. We were Metis and that was that.

Victoria: See a lot of people just took it for granted what they were is what they were, you know, and it was never even discussed in the homes or anything. So they were just more or less Metis and that was it, eh. So you were aware of it at a very young age then?

John: (Inaudible) probably when I was at the orphanage at that time. I was young, I didn't know because I didn't look like one, you know. I'm not dark, I was always fair, so.

Victoria: Why were you in an orphanage?

John: Well, see, when I was 6 my mother... well, at that time it was pretty hard for them to make a living for us. And we were getting our pension at that time too, so naturally the orphanage got a portion of that money. So actually we were paying into it from our...

Victoria: Was it sort of a place just to go to school, or to...

John: No, we stayed there, we were looked after there till the time that Mother was settled down. Then we come back and we stayed with our grandfather.

Victoria: Was she working at the time?

John: Oh yeah, she was working, she always did work.

Victoria: What was she doing at the time?

John: Well, she worked different places. She cleaned up, and she was at the hotel, the old King's Hotel that they knocked down years ago, and...

Victoria: In North Battleford, in the old Battleford?

John: In Battleford there. Well, she was getting her pension at that time too, you know, so we lived pretty well on the pension, war pension that was.

Victoria: Were your uncles and aunts, were they still around here at that time, you know, were they close around living where you were?

John: Oh, they weren't too far. At that time we didn't go too far, either in Battleford or else here in Duck Lake.

Victoria: What types of jobs did the have?

John: Well, the ones in Battleford, well, Valentines, they farmed mostly. And the ones here, they worked just like we did, going out cutting wood and hauling it, and farm work and so on, farm labor.

Victoria: Do you ever remember them telling any stories about Metis history?

John: At one time they... just about every night somebody told stories.

Victoria: You don't remember anything about...

John: No, not very well, no. When I was young I didn't... Well, I really liked to listen to them, but it went in one ear and then you forget, eh.

Victoria: When you were young did they get together for any social events like weddings, or just...

John: Oh yeah, we went to a lot of dances, house parties, oh, a lot of house parties.

Victoria: What did they do at them at that time?



John: Pardon?

Victoria: What did they do, you know, when they had...

John: House parties? Well, there was only a fiddle -- there wasn't a guitar or anything else -- but a bunch of kids, we'd be in the corner or something pounding on a little pot or something, (Inaudible) another one he's playing the fiddle (inaudible)

Victoria: Was there any singing that...

John: Oh yeah, there was singing after the guitars start coming in.

Victoria: Did they sing songs like in French or in Cree about different things?

John: Well, they sing mostly in French. Some of them sang those Cree songs in Cree, yeah.

Victoria: Do you remember what any of the songs were about?

John: I had a hard time to speak French so I couldn't make out what they were saying.

Victoria: What was Christmas time like for your family?

John: Well at that time we didn't, Christmas wasn't so much, but we celebrated New Year's.

Victoria: And what was that like?

John: Well, New Year's we'd go from one house to another and have a little drink here and there, and a piece of cake, and carry on practically all day.

Victoria: So it was, so New Year's was the big day for your family?

John: Oh yeah, Christmas we'd go to church, midnight mass, and have a few candies and so on. Gather and get somebody to tell a few stories. That was about it. Them days we didn't have no radios. That's quite a while ago, when we didn't have radios -- we had a big gramophone though.

Victoria: What type of a gramophone was it back then?

John: It was a big one. It stood up and we had to wind it.

Victoria: The crank on the side?

John: The crank on one side, we wound it up and put records on.

Victoria: So it was the kind where you had to tip the head over onto the record?

John: Yeah, that's the one.

Victoria: Did your father, I mean your grandfather or your mother, did they wear any traditional Metis clothing that you can remember?

John: No.

Victoria: Your grandfather didn't own a sash, what they call a sash?

John: Oh yeah, he did. In fact I have a picture, I believe, here with his sash with grandma.

Victoria: But what about the moccasins?

John: Oh yeah, he wore moccasins, the short ones.

Victoria: Did your mom do any bead work or anything like that?

John: No.

Victoria: No. Hide tanning?

John: No, just crochet and make flowers on clothes and so on, whatever you call that, embroidery.

Victoria: Was there anybody in your family that did beadwork or anything?

John: No, there's none.

Victoria: Did your parents do any jigging?

John: No. There was some in the family that jigged.

Victoria: Did you learn how?

John: No, I didn't learn how.

Victoria: Was it part of the local dances, though, that you went to?

John: Yeah, local dances, yeah.

Victoria: There was a lot of it done there, eh?

John: Oh, there was lots, about every week.

Victoria: What other type of dances did they do?

John: Well, the old time square dances, and hook dance, and years ago there was all kinds of different dances -- handkerchief dance. Once in a while a girl would go ahead and give you a pair of gloves or something and the next time you go around and have to give her a pair of stockings. As long as you kissed her you got a kiss out of her.

Victoria: When she gave you a present then you had to give her a kiss?

John: Yeah, you had to give her a kiss. Of course the next time you return the gift, eh...

Victoria: So that you get another kiss. That was the whole thing of it. Was there white people that lived in your area?

John: Oh yeah, there was a lot. Well like Bozes (?) here, Andersons, Pritchards, they're all white people. In fact Duck Lake, it was mostly all white people at one time, and Metis. Then the French apparently came in here years afterward, years after that (inaudible).

Victoria: How about in Battleford when you lived there, was it...

John: I was young then.

Victoria: You wouldn't remember what... How old were you when you moved to Duck Lake?

John: About 9 years old. I left Battleford when I was 6 to go to the orphanage in Prince Albert.

Victoria: So when you came back then you came to...

John: I was about 9 years old, say about 3 years in the orphanage.

Victoria: But all in all in Duck Lake here, did your family get along well with the non-natives?

John: Oh yeah, we got along fine. Well, most of the English people here were with us so much that they thought they were (inaudible) too.

Victoria: Do you know of anyone in your family or (inaudible), or your grandfathers, grandmothers, did they ever use Indian medicine?

John: Mother used to make some, what they call baume in French, (inaudible) yeah. It was good used for colds and that, used to boil it and we drank it.

Victoria: Did you ever use a sweat lodge?

John: No, never.

Victoria: Did you ever see one?

John: Yeah, I did. I seen one in (inaudible) when I was up there.

Victoria: (Inaudible)

John: (Inaudible) yeah, I was fishing up there years ago, in 1938.

Victoria: Where was that? Was it on the reserve?

John: It was on the reserve, yeah. We were making hay along side the lake at the time and just next to us they had this here little lodge here where they had the Sundance there. And after the Sundance, well, we went and looked at these little lodges. Add they had (inaudible) and they had a lot of clothes hanging, cloths hanging on the trees and everything. I says to my uncle, Uncle Mike, I says, "Darn it, that's a waste of cloth. If I had that there cloth on there your wife could go ahead and make some dress." So I gathered it up and I put it in a big bag and I brought it back home. And it was quite a while after that when this here Indian chief come over. Well John," he says, "(Cree)" -- he says that in Cree -- "You stole that from the Sundance." I says, "Yes I stole it from the Sundance." He says, "Good." He says, "It'd only rot there anyways."

Victoria: He didn't know you were (inaudible). Do you recall at any time when they had a real serious illness, you know, would have been...

John: I don't recall it but when I was just a baby they had the flu that time. And a lot of them had passed away but we were quite fortunate in our family, none of us caught it. Maybe we did but we didn't get too sick over it.

Victoria: What about tuberculosis, was it a very common thing?

John: Yeah, it was a very common thing at that time, years ago. In fact my sister, Marian, had a touch of it. In fact I did too. During the war they noticed that I had a spot but...

Victoria: What did they do for it? Like, you weren't at home then at the time, were you?

John: My sister, her, was in the hospital and I guess she got one lung taken out or something like that.

Victoria: What year would that have been?

John: Oh, that's in '34 or '36, in the '30s anyways.

Victoria: Where would she have went to the hospital at?

John: Oh, she went to P.A., sanitorium there.

Victoria: There was a sanitorium there?

John: Yeah.

Victoria: And you were in the service at the time, were you?

John: I was in the service. When I came back I landed in the T.B. ward. Then I had to report two years after that in Prince Albert.

Victoria: Did you think... When you came home from the service, did you come right back here to Duck Lake?

John: Yeah, I moved back here.

Victoria: So you never lived in a larger city?

John: No.

Victoria: When you were going to school, was there any of the white kids that you went to school with, did they ever, you know, call you names, referring to you as being a Metis person?

John: Oh, well, at times some kids did, but we'd give them a lickin' and then they'd quit.

Victoria: Did you ever know of anyone that you worked with, a Metis person, and there was a white person doing the same type of job as them and the Metis person was paid less for the same work?

John: No, that I don't know.

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

John: No.

Victoria: So the towns where you lived before with your family while you were growing up, did they always treat your family fairly?

John: Oh yes, the town always looked after us pretty good.

Victoria: So you don't feel uncomfortable at all when you're in stores, or in the city?

John: Oh no, not a bit. Not a bit.

Victoria: Have you ever had any problems with government agencies, like the welfare offices, or police, or businesses?

John: Never had any trouble.

Victoria: You don't know of any instances where the town has ever tried to force Metis people to move away, or out in the country some place?

John: Not this town. It's been a Metis town ever since it's been Duck Lake.

Victoria: There's quite a few native people that live here.

John: Yeah, always.

Victoria: Do you think that the church played an important role in your parent's life?

John: Well, they were always Catholic. And we were never a family that went to church too much, but we did go occasionally, now and then. Like they always say, my grandchildren always told me, "Grandpa, somebody must have died. You went to church today." So they know I always go to funerals.

Victoria: Did the priest ever visit your home when you were...

John: Oh yeah, this young priest here and the one before that has. But we had a priest that was named Father Touchette, he'd come regular. He would just drop in and come and see us. In fact there was one time we were watching T.V., me and him, and there was some nice looking girls that were dancing on T.V., and Mr. (name) come in and says, "Gosh," he says, "gee, there's some nice looking girls there. Gosh they got nice legs." And they didn't see us, we were in the dark. So father just says here, "Now there! There! What'd you say?" (laughs)

Victoria: When you were young, though, did the priest ever come to visit at your home?

John: Oh yeah, we had priests. Fathor Moran, he wasn't one for that. He didn't go around, but we did have other priests that would come around. Mostly to collect money though.

Victoria: I was just going to ask you what did they talk about at that time? Was it about problems that the families had?

John: Well, they'd come and bless the house, like, and bless you.

Wife: And you had to pay your annual dues?

John: You had to pay your annual dues.

Victoria: You said you didn't attend church that often so you don't think your commitment to the church got any weaker?

John: No, about the same.

Victoria: Do you think that the church had more influence over the people in the old days than it does today?

John: Well, I just wonder. I think most of the people wae more church-going than they are today, though. They had more time for church, but today it just seems like they don't have much time for that.

Victoria: Do you think that the church has generally helped Metis people face any problems that they might have?

John: I don't think so, eh. If they had problems they hacked it out on their own and that was about it.

Victoria: So you don't think that the church was really that involved in their personal problems?

John: Well, unless you're staying with a girl and they'd want you to marry her or something like that, years ago. Today it's not like that -- they change from one to another, so they don't have to go ahead and pay for a divorce.

Victoria: Do you remember, you know, when you were going to school, the things were you taught at school?

John: Well, nothing more than... Well, we used have singsongs and so on and so forth, and plays, and other than that what we learned...

Victoria: The usual school work?

John: School work.

Victoria: What were your schools like where you went?

John: Well, I went to the big school here. That was at (name). It was up to grade twelve at that time. And we had nuns at that time.

Victoria: So you were taught by nuns, eh. Was it one big room or did they have different rooms for different...

John: Oh no, we had several rooms for different grades. Maybe grade one and grade two would be in one big class; then the grade eleven and twelve, just about two grades in each one. Then we had French also -- that was maybe an hour, half hour, we were taught French as well.

Victoria: Did you like school?

John: Yeah, I liked school. I didn't mind it.

Victoria: So you felt that you belonged at the the school, eh?

John: Oh yeah, sure.

Victoria: You didn't feel uncomfortable at all?

John: Oh no.

Victoria: Did they ever teach any type of Metis or Indian history at school?

John: No. Not other than just history, you know, history books.

Victoria: Did your parents, your mom and your grandparents, did they encourage you to go to school?

John: They, we went to school because we had to at the time, you know. But we were never discouraged not to go.

Victoria: Did you get along good with the white kids at school?

John: Oh yeah.

Victoria: So then what would you say your experience in school was? Was it positive or negative?

John: Well, it was positive. I could have gone a little further, I imagine, higher grade, but at that time it was a little tough on us, and after a certain age, well, there was no more money to be made. There wasn't any pension coming in so we had to go out to work.

Victoria: So eventually you had to leave home to go to work, eh?

John: Oh yes.

Victoria: Do you remember what political party your grandparents or your mom voted for?

John: Oh yeah, years ago they were all Liberal. Mostly all Liberals.

Victoria: Were they ever involved in any type of party politics?

John: No. Not that I know of.

Victoria: They just voted, eh?

John: Yeah, they just voted.

Victoria: Was there a voting poll at that time, did you have to go to a voting poll?

John: Well I imagine they did. I was too young to go. You couldn't go until you were around 21 at that time.

Victoria: Do you remember them having a certain place where you had to vote?

John: Oh yeah.

Victoria: Did any politicians ever visit the home, at your home, when you were growing up?

John: Not that I know of.

Victoria: Do know if the church was ever involved in any kind of politics?

John: I think so, I think they were all Liberal at that time.



Victoria: So you figure that...

John: I think they had lots to do with it, eh?.

Wife: If you were Liberal you were Catholic, and if you were Protestant you were Progressive Conservative.

John: Yeah, Conservative at that time.

Victoria: I wonder, do you remember what the Metis people, just Metis people in general, thought of politics? Was it a big thing for them?

John: Well it was a big thing because I used to see fights years ago (inaudible). We'd go out on the front street just to look at the fights. There were Liberals and there were Conservatives and they were always fighting.

Victoria: So they really, it was really a big thing then, eh?

John: Big thing, oh yeah, they have to close down everything.

Victoria: Do you vote the same way that your parents did, your grandparents?

John: Never.

Victoria: Have you ever taken any active roles in party politics in the elections?

John: Well, I was a CCF and then I was NDP, and I was a pretty strong NDP but I actually never...

Victoria: You never really got that involved in the politics, or in the elections I should say. So you never did any campaigning of any kind?

John: No.

Victoria: Do any of your friends ever get really involved in campaigning?

John: I don't think there's too many, no, I don't think so.

Victoria: Do you think that the Metis people, you know, voted for a party that did better for Metis people? Was there a party that, you know, more or less spoke for the Metis people?

John: I think the NDP did. That's my opinion. But all parties they have to work like hell now because if they're not, if they're no good they just get out in the next four years. That's about the size of it. So they got to be doing something with us. The last party here that come in, I don't know, they're kicking everybody out of jobs and so on and so forth. I don't know what the hell's going to happen.

Victoria: So all in all, you figure then that they would have voted then for the party that they thought would do the best for them, eh?

John: Oh definitely. Oh, they're getting more educated now and everything so... At one time most of them didn't know how to write or read or anything like that. They just put a cross and that was it. Somebody come around and, "Put your cross here," that's what they'd do.

Victoria: Were you ever involved in the old Saskatchewan Metis Society? That would be during the '30s and '40s.

John: The '30s and '40s, no.

Victoria: You haven't heard of one being...

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Victoria: You haven't heard of one being organized at that time?

John: No, not at that time. It was organized here quite a while ago, but it wasn't the '30s and '40s. (Inaudible).

Victoria: These would be... the organizers of this Metis society -- was then called the Saskatchewan Metis Society -- would be Joe LaRoque, and Joe Ross, Tom Major, Joe McKenzie and Soloman Pritchard?

John: No.

Victoria: They would have been the older people that sort of organized and they did quite a bit of travelling.

John: Oh, I went to the Regina convention and it was around that time. (Inaudible).

Victoria: Would it be Joe Amyotte?

John: Joe Amyotte, yeah. That's when I went to Regina.

Victoria: That would have been a fair time ago too. It's got to be 16, 17 years ago.

John: That's when they were just start to organize properly. In fact they just started then.

Victoria: Probably about 20 years ago now. And Joe Amyotte was the president then, was he?

John: Yeah. I was the secretary of the Metis Society at that time.

Victoria: For this local?

John: For this local.

Victoria: How long has your Metis Society been going here?

John: Ever since. Ever since then, yeah. (Inaudible).

Victoria: Like 20 years since this local was started, eh. You have a fairly active local here?

John: Oh, I imagine so. There's enough around, and there's lots of members but I don't know if they're too active.

Victoria: There's a good turnout at the meetings?

John: I don't know.

Victoria: When you look back on your life, you know, things that have happened in it, how would you describe it? What would you say your life has been like?

John: Oh, it's been fair. Fair as I made it myself. I had to make it myself. Of course you have to work, make your own work when you're out of work.

Victoria: Was you, would you say it was difficult though, or interesting, satisfying?

John: Oh, there's a lot of hard work, because... first I start trucking and then I saved up enough money, then I bought a gravel truck after the war, and then bought some cattle and bought farm land. Now I got quite a few head of cattle and about 100 acres now.

Victoria: So your life has been a lot better than what your father's would have been, or your grandfather's, eh?

John: Oh yes, because they had nothing.

Victoria: What are some of the things that you would say that mattered most in your life? Would it be your family, or was religion an important part, education?

John: Oh well, I guess the family, I would say the family is the important part. As far as religion, I was never one for religion. I went to church when I had to go, I guess.

Victoria: And education, would you have liked to have gotten more education?

John: Oh yes, I would like to have more education. That's one thing I would like, but at that time when you're young you don't think that.

Victoria: What do you think are this community's most important needs or problems? Do they have quite a few problems?

John: At one time it was housing, but I think there is enough houses now. They're getting a fair amount of help as far as I... and the ones that just couldn't make it they're gone elsewhere, and the ones that worked, well, they're still here.

Victoria: Is there enough employment in the town?

John: For the ones that are here. (Inaudible) ones, they get a grant just about every year and they put maybe 12, 13 to work down there every summer.

Victoria: So it's the town that applies?

John: I believe so. Maybe a lot of it comes with the Metis deal, too.

Victoria: The local?

Wife: It's a combine deal.

John: Yeah, it's a combine deal.

Victoria: Oh, they combine the local and the town, eh?

John: Yeah.

Victoria: Do you think that life would have been different for you if you would have been born a white person, or maybe a treaty Indian?

John: Well, a treaty Indian, yes. Financially we could have got more help.

Victoria: How do they manage to get more help?

John: I don't know, everyone seems to be getting different

welfare or some damn thing, or pensions. I don't know what they're all getting but they're getting different grants. That's what I think anyways.

Victoria: So you think that they're better off than a Metis person is?

John: Oh yes, they're better off. In fact, well, they still have land where they're all seeding now. Maybe not them but they're renting it out, but they're getting a good share.

Victoria: If you had a chance to be born again, start your life completely over again, would you choose to be a man or a woman?

John: I'd like to stay as I am. I wouldn't want to be a woman.

Victoria: Why not?

John: Oh, if I would be a woman that would be all right, but I'd still prefer to be a man. (laughs)

Victoria: What would you do different?

John: Well, in the first place I don't like housework.

Victoria: But what would you do different if you could be born again? And if you had a chance to change your life, would you change it or would you...

John: No, it's all right. I think it's been okay.

Victoria: You would still want to be this...

John: I like it as it is.

Victoria: How do you see the future? Do you think there's going to be any improvement, or is it going to get worse?

John: It seems to be getting worse now, this last year here anyways. In fact the last 3 or 4 months it's really been getting worse.

Victoria: Like what...

John: Well, they're not (inaudible). For instance now they sold all the machinery from up north, and they should create jobs for the northerners, and now I don't know what's going to happen. They're all with contractors I guess now. They'll be underbidding themselves and they won't be able to hire anybody, other than their own few that's got the jobs.

Victoria: How about the war, do you see war in the near future?

John: No, I think there'll be war for a while because they have too much atomic bombs and so on and so forth, (inaudible).

Victoria: What do you think is going to be this community's future? Do you think there's going to be any changes?

John: I don't think, not too much changes. It's about had it. It's old as it is and it's (inaudible). It's all the same as it was.

Victoria: Do you think the future is going to be better for your children, or your grandchildren?

John: I don't think so, I think it might even get worse if it continues like this.

Victoria: Do you think native people are going to be better off in the future if they live in the north, or maybe in the cities, or just out in the country?

John: Well, most of them have to go to the cities, because maybe there's a little more work there. And out in the country it's pretty hard now to make a go of it. Because if you want to start off, it costs you a bunch of money to buy cattle to start off with and land, well, you can't buy it anymore, it's so expensive. So a person just about has to stay in a small town whether they're giving out grants or what. Now the city, well, there's more work in the city than out in the country.

Victoria: Okay, thank you very much for the interview.

(END OF SIDE B)

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