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Sharon: Okay, I'm talking today with Marie Major of Regina.
Mrs. Major, could you tell me something about your parents.

Marie: Well, we lived in Lebret.

Sharon: What were their names?

Marie: Joseph Pelletier and mother was Justine Demarais.

Sharon: What did your father do?

Marie: What did he do?

Sharon: Yeah.

Marie: Oh, he worked on farms and sometimes he worked on the railroad tracks. That's all I can remember.

Sharon: And your mother? What about your mother, what did she do?

Marie: Oh, she used to work part-time on picking cucumbers in Cumu(?) park. That's the only job she had.

Sharon: What were your parents? Were they Metis? Were they Indian? What were they?

Marie: Metis.

Sharon: What was their background? Were they French from French people?

Marie: Well, the Demarais used to talk French. I don't know if they were French or what.

Sharon: Okay. Where were you born?

Marie: Where I was born? Up north. (laughs) I don't know the place because they moved back to Lebret when I was just a baby. How am I going to remember that?

Sharon: So you must've been born at home?

Marie: Yeah.

Sharon: What year was that that you were born?

Marie: 1909.

Sharon: And you were living, or you moved to Lebret after, later on?

Marie: I was always in Lebret and then I moved.

Sharon: How many were there in your family?

Marie: My family or...?

Sharon: Your brothers and your sisters?

Marie: How many did I say? (Inaudible)

Sharon: And your family, what kind of a home did they live

in? Did they have their own house? Your...?

Marie: Like, my family? Oh, we lived in a little log shack.

Sharon: Did your dad make it?

Marie: Pardon?

Sharon: Your dad, did he make it himself?

Marie: Oh yeah, they build their own shack.

Sharon: Where was this shack.

Marie: Oh, someplace around Lebret there, I don't remember what section.

Sharon: Was it in town?

Marie: What?

Sharon: Was it in town?

Marie: No, just rented I guess, I don't know.

Sharon: You don't know who owned the land that it was on?

Marie: Huh?

Sharon: Who owned the land that the shack was on?

Marie: The land, I don't know who owned it.

Sharon: What kind of furniture did you have?

Marie: Oh, Lord, I don't know. Just beds, cupboards too.

Sharon: Were the cupboards and beds, were they homemade? Or were they bought?

Marie: No, they were iron beds. I don't know if they were...

Sharon: Okay, did you have to haul your own water or was there running water?

Marie: Oh no, there wasn't such a thing as running water. Even when I move up here I had to haul my own water and until I move up here. In the winter I had to shovel my snow out my doorstep to go to town. That was a tough life, boy.

Sharon: Was there any electricity?

Marie: Huh?

Sharon: Electricity?

Marie: Coal oil lamps.

Sharon: And what did you have for heat, like in the wintertime?

Marie: What?

Sharon: What did you have for heat, how did you keep yourself warm in the wintertime?

Marie: Stove and wood.

Sharon: A wood stove? Who had to get the wood? Your father?

Marie: I had to buy it from the guy up from the hilltops.

Sharon: What was your father doing when you were growing up when you were living in the shack. What kind of work?

Daughter: She's talking about when she was on her own. After she, like (inaudible). She didn't quite hear you when you asked her about her dad and that. You have to talk a little bit louder. Which question...?

Sharon: About the middle part there, about how did their family make their living.

Daughter: Well, he worked out for farmers and that, eh. Down there.

Sharon: How did, like when you were a little girl living at home with your mom and your dad, how did they travel around?

Marie: Wagon and horses.

Sharon: Okay. Now, did your mom have a garden?

Marie: Sometimes they made a garden.

Sharon: Did they have any kind of farm animals like a cow or...?

Marie: She had a cow, yes.

Sharon: For milk?

Marie: Just for our own use.

Sharon: Okay. How did, where did she go to get the food. Like, to feed you?

Daughter: Where did she go to buy the food to feed you?

Marie: Oh, they had to go to, oh, they had a store maybe, I don't know. But they used to go to Fort Qu'Appelle.

Sharon: That's where the store was, in Fort Qu'Appelle?

Marie: I guess so, that's where they went shopping.

Sharon: Okay. Have you gone to school?

Marie: Huh?

Sharon: Did you go to school?

Marie: Yeah.

Sharon: Where?

Marie: Lebret.

Sharon: A public school or the residential school?

Marie: The public school.

Sharon: Okay. Did they teach you anything about your history, about Metis history? Did you know anything about, like, Riel or any of those? Who taught you in school?

Marie: Huh?

Sharon: Who taught you?

Marie: The Sisters.

Sharon: What language did you speak, did you have to speak at school?

Marie: English.

Sharon: And what language did you speak when you were at home?

Marie: Oh, sometimes we'd talk Cree but when we went to school all we talked was English because all the other kids we played with, that's all they were taught and we learned to talk from there in English.

Sharon: How were the Sisters? Were they strict?

Marie: Oh, some of them were.

Sharon: Some of them. What did you, do you remember what you did in your spare time? Were there dances or...?

Marie: Yes. There used to be dances.

Sharon: What kind of dances?

Marie: Oh, they have square dances and like that. (laughs)

Sharon: Where did they have them?

Marie: In some people would make a party at their house.

Sharon: And who went to these dances?

Marie: What?

Sharon: Who all, what people went to these dances? Was it just Metis people?

Marie: Oh, everybody went.

Sharon: Now did they have any like special kind of songs that they used to sing?

Marie: Not that I knew.

Sharon: Did they dress in any special, like did Metis people dress in any special way that you know of?

Marie: No.

Sharon: The same, just the same as everyone else?

Marie: Yeah.

Sharon: Did you ever hear anything about buffalo hunts or anything like that? You never heard any of the stories about the old days?

Marie: No.

Sharon: Okay. What religion are you?

Marie: What?

Sharon: Religion?

Marie: Catholic, Roman Catholic.

Sharon: In those days were you a strong Catholic?

Marie: I used to go to church all the time.

Sharon: Was everybody the same like that?

Marie: Yeah.

Sharon: And did the priest or the Father, did they have a lot of influence over people?

Daughter: Did they make sure that you went to church regular on Sunday, the priest and that?

Marie: Yeah.

Sharon: They were important people then? Yeah. Okay. Do you remember if there was any Metis people that tried to hide the fact that they were Metis?

Marie: Hide what?

Daughter: Do you know of anybody that try and deny that they were not Metis? Like you know, say oh well, no, I'm not, you know. Did you hear of anybody ever saying that they weren't one when you knew they were one? A Metis?

Marie: No.

Sharon: Did they keep in close touch with their relatives, like their Indian relatives? Was everybody close?

Marie: Yes.

Sharon: All got along good? Did the Metis people, did they all like stick together or stay together? Stay in the same area, the Metis people? Or was everybody...?

Daughter: Did the Metis people all live together or was there white mixed in or Indian or what?

Marie: Oh, there was mixed.

Sharon: Okay. When people were working, were they all paid the same wages?

Marie: I guess so, I don't know. I don't know what they got.

Sharon: Were, like, when you were younger, were Metis people encouraged to marry other Metis?

Daughter: When you were a young girl, were you ever told that you coldn't marry a white guy or anybody else? That you had to stick to your own nationality?

Marie: No.

Sharon: No, you could just marry anyone you wanted to? Okay. Did you get along good with, like, with the white farmers? With all the white neighbors?

Marie: Yeah.

Sharon: Traded, talked to each other. Was there a doctor nearby?

Marie: No. The only doctor there was one in the Fort.

Sharon: So if you got sick, you had to go to the Fort?

Marie: Pardon?

Sharon: If you got sick you had to go to the Fort and did you have to...?

Marie: But I was never sick, I don't know.

Sharon: Did they have to get paid right away? Like, did you have to have money before you could see the doctor?

Marie: I guess so.

Sharon: Okay. Do you remember World War I? No? What about the Depression? Do you remember the Depression?

Daughter: The Depression?

Marie: What's that?

Daughter: You know in the dirty '30s, the Depression, you know, what went on when you guys had hardly food and there was what, two farms and stuff like that. Do you remember that? You should.

Marie: In the '30s, I hardly remember.

Sharon: You would have been about, around, in your early twenties during then. Because that was in 1932 to 1939.

Marie: The Depression.

Sharon: Did you ever hear anything about the Saskatchewan Metis Society?

Marie: Well, I heard some of it.

Sharon: Was anyone in your family an active member?

Marie: My husband was a member.

Sharon: Did it affect you in any way? Did they help you?

Marie: I think they helped, yes.

Sharon: But not you directly?

Marie: Huh?

Sharon: They didn't help you in any direct way?

Marie: I don't know.

Sharon: Okay. Do you remember World War II?

Marie: Yes.

Sharon: Okay, was anyone in your family in the War?

Marie: I had three brothers there.

Sharon: Okay, did the War affect the way your family was living? What exact, when your brothers went to War, how did it affect your family?

Marie: Well, my mother really took it hard when they went to war.

Sharon: She didn't want them to go?

Marie: Yeah, but they went and joined and in a couple of weeks they were sent overseas.

Sharon: How did, like, your mother and you, the rest that were left at home, how did you make your living?

Marie: Well, I was already married eh so there was only my mother and my sister (inaudible).

Sharon: And what were they living on?

Marie: Relief I guess. I can't remember. That's all they had to live on is relief.

Sharon: Were you working at this time?

Marie: Eh?

Sharon: Were you working? Was your husband working?

Marie: He was in the army too at that time.

Sharon: Oh, I see. Were there a lot of jobs around?

Marie: Not very much.

Sharon: And what did you do during your free time?

Marie: Nothing.

Sharon: Just stayed at home?

Marie: Stay home.

Sharon: Okay.

Marie: Watch my kids.

(END OF SIDE A)

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