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Victoria: March 27, 1984, and I'm interviewing Marie Heron at Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Could you tell us where you were born, Marie?

Marie: Yeah. Where?

Victoria: Yeah.

Marie: Lac La Biche.

Victoria: And that's in Alberta?

Marie: Alberta.

Victoria: And what type of houses did you live in when you were small?

Marie: Kind of big house, log house, and all, upstairs.

Victoria: They had two floors?

Marie: Yeah, two floors.

Victoria: And did you have running water?

Marie: No running water.

Victoria: Electricity?

Marie: No electricity.

Victoria: And did, the houses that you lived in, did they have floors in them?

Marie: What do you mean, have floors?

Victoria: See, lots of people when they had their houses, like when they were building their houses, some of them didn't have the floor, and sometimes they lived in their houses for three or four years without having a floor in them.

Marie: No. All floor.

Victoria: You had floors eh?

Marie: Yeah.

Victoria: And what kind of furniture did you have? Was it store bought or was it, did somebody in your family make it?

Marie: No, from the store. My mommy's bed, my bed, my brother's bed and stove, wood stove. Cook stove.

Victoria: So you burnt wood then for your heat, eh, to heat the house?

Marie: Yeah.

Victoria: And you lived in a big house, you said. Did it have a big yard or was it just a small one?

Marie: Well, I think half a mile square.

Victoria: Half a mile, eh. So there was no neighbours that lived close? Was it in town or...

Marie: No, but, like a farmer's, you know.

Victoria: On the outskirts sort of, like a farm.

Marie: Yeah.

Victoria: About how far would you say your nearest neighbour was?

Marie: Oh gee, not far.

Victoria: Say a half mile, something like that?

Marie: No.

Victoria: Not even that far, eh?

Marie: And one side Frenchmen's, one side my uncle. We used to play, and that's why we used to play with French kids.

Victoria: Did your dad own his own house?

Marie: Yeah.

Victoria: And what all did he do like at the house, I mean was it sort of a farm?

Marie: Oh yeah.

Victoria: Did you have cattle, and horses and that type of stuff?

Marie: Yeah, but first I remember three, I think, three cows and one little one, and horses, I don't know how many, about six horses, and pigs, I don't know how many pigs, chickens, I don't know how many chickens.

Victoria: Do you remember, you know, how long he had them? Was it for a very long time that he had all these animals and stuff?

Marie: No not... since I remember, you know, but I'm not very big like that. And after that my dad maybe kill them, maybe he sold it. Just three horses he keep and one cow. But you can't look after the...

Victoria: Did you have jobs to do when you were young, like, you know, came from a... First of all I'll ask you how large was your family, how big was family? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Marie: I don't know. I don't remember. I was small, you know, but lots of babies died, but I don't remember.

Victoria: The ones... you said your grandmother told you, or your mom, was it your mom that told you there was 22 babies?

Marie: Yeah.

Victoria: And some of them died when they were small, some of them are still living.

Marie: There's only one still living, two, me and my sister.

Victoria: Okay, when you were young was there only two of you?

Marie: No. Me and brother, and another sister, another sister -- four.

Victoria: Four, eh. When you were growing up did your mom and dad give you things to do, like, you had your own work to do? What kind of work did you have to do, like, when you were still at home?

Marie: Me? Crochet, clean up, you know, house, housework, and then after that my auntie showed me how to do beadwork. I start to beadwork and sometimes crochet, knitting.

Victoria: Did you ever tan hides and stuff when you were small?

Marie: No. Not me.

Victoria: Anybody in your family, did they do it?

Marie: My mom.

Victoria: Your mom. You watched her though?

Marie: No, but she don't want me to go and help her.

Victoria: Oh she didn't want you around. (laughs) What about your brother? What type of work did he have to do?

Marie: Well, after that but then my dad he moved to Fort Chip, and he do trapping rats, my dad do. My brother is still small at the time. After maybe 11, 10 years old he start trapping rats too, my brother, and after that he went to Aklavik, but I don't know what he do in Aklavik.

Victoria: Did your family do things together, like, did you ever all go hunting, and fishing, and camping together?

Marie: My dad.

Victoria: Just your dad, eh? He didn't take the family with him, eh?

Marie: No.

Victoria: Was there somebody in your family that like, say, not, maybe not you kids but your dad's relations or your mom's relations, did you ever have anybody in that family that told stories, you know, about the old days?

Marie: Told stories?

Victoria: Yeah, you know, storytelling.

Marie: No, I don't know.

Victoria: You don't remember?

(Another person speaks in an Indian language)

Marie: No I don't remember, but I'm not very big, I'm big at 15 years old, you know, but all my uncles and aunts gone far away.

Victoria: Oh, they all moved, eh?

Marie: Yeah, all moved.

Victoria: Was there one aunt or uncle especially that you remember more than the rest of them? Maybe one you liked better than all the rest, do you remember one?

Marie: Uncle?

Victoria: Yeah, uncle or aunt.

Marie: Yeah, one, my Auntie Agnes, died not too long ago; and my Uncle David, my dad's brother, and my mommy's sister.

Victoria: Were you very close to them?

Marie: Yeah. That's when she show me how to do beadwork.

Victoria: Oh, she was teaching you things while you were growing up. Was your family, did they really stick together, you know, when you were young and when you were at home, were they really, you know, really stick together, like was there strong family ties?

(Speaking to another person in the room) Like, I wanted to ask her, you know, was her family really close where they stuck together, you know, whether they stuck up for one another.

Husband: (Indian).

Marie: No, no, no. I don't know how many years. First I got married, we have to move, me and my husband, different...

Victoria: So what you're saying then is it didn't, you didn't stay together too long when they were young. I think so that her years at home probably would be so that you don't remember too much about the first part.

Marie: No.

Victoria: That's good. Do you remember your grandparents very well?

Marie: Uh-huh, I remember.

Victoria: Were you very close with them?

Marie: Oh yeah. I stay with them.

Victoria: How long did you live with them?

Marie: Oh gee, I don't know. Maybe six years old they come and get me, my granny, maybe (inaudible) small, and my granny I remember he packed me, he took me home. And sometimes my mom come and get me and going back.

Victoria: Oh, you went sort of back and forth like, eh?

Marie: Yeah, but sometimes two months my mom come and get me, go back.

Victoria: Did you enjoy those times with your grandparents?

Marie: (Inaudible) my granny and my grandpa I'm leaving I'm going back.

Victoria: I wouldn't doubt it. They were nice times. What did your dad do for a living?

Marie: Well, I told you first I remember was make little farm, and after that he sold it and we went to Chip. We going to Chip, we moved to Chip. And they trapped rats.

Victoria: So he was a farmer first and then he did trapping eh?

Marie: Yeah.

Victoria: When he was trapping was that a good living? Did he make a good living when he was trapping?

Marie: Well we eat good, dress up good.

Victoria: Good living at that time, eh?

Marie: There's three of us, no four.

Husband: My momma (inaudible).

Marie: (Indian).

Husband: Her mother used to make her own clothing for them.

Victoria: Oh, she made the clothing for them.

Marie: After I'm 10 years old my mommy cut material you have to make clothes for me, for my sisters...

Victoria: Did she have a sewing machine?

Marie: Yeah.

Victoria: Oh, she had a sewing machine, eh? Do you remember, did your dad... like he got his own meat, eh, his own wild meat? He hunted for his own?

Marie: Yeah, after we moved to Chip.

Victoria: What kinds of meat do you remember his bringing home?

Marie: Caribou meat, rabbit.

Victoria: How about fishing? Did he fish?

Marie: Not very much.

Victoria: Did he ever do anything like sell firewood, you know, to help bring money in for the family? Or do even, even fishing, or did he, you know, sort of do that for a living so that there was extra money?

Marie: Not fishing. Oh I know he went trapping (inaudible); but in the summertime my dad, he used to work and wintertime trapping. In the summertime go back in there. (Interruption. Man's voice, Indian language) He used to work in the sawmill.

Victoria: Oh, he worked in the sawmill.

Marie: Every summer.

Victoria: Where was that at, the sawmill? Where did he work in the sawmill?

Marie: I don't know.

(Other voices in discussion) It was on Athabasca River.

Victoria: When you were growing up did your parents have a big garden?

Marie: Oh, it's not very big but big enough.

Victoria: What kind of things did they grow in it, what kind of vegetables?

Marie: Potatoes, carrots, peas and beets, turnips, and cabbage...

Victoria: So they had just about everything. How did you keep them? How were they able to keep them in the winter time?

Marie: And some we'd can it in a jar, some we keep it in the cellar.

Victoria: Oh, you had a cellar. What was the cellar like, what...

Marie: Oh, it's a big cellar.

Victoria: How did they make a cellar though?

Marie: Well you dig it.

Victoria: Where was it though? Was it outside or...

Marie: No, no inside the house. Inside the house. They make big cellar and all around...

Victoria: Was it under the boards in the house?

Marie: Yeah. Not like now, it's the basement, but before just a cellar.

Victoria: Do you remember what any of your aunts or uncles and that did for a living? Were they working most of the time too?

Marie: Oh gee, I don't know. But my auntie used to make everything slippers, mitts, and gloves, beadwork -- she sold it.

Victoria: She sold it, eh. The men, you don't remember what any of the men did for a living at that time?

Marie: And,,, did trapping.

Victoria: Trapping mostly, eh. Do you ever remember at any time when you were younger that your dad didn't have any work at all?

Marie: Yeah, he used to work.

Husband: (Indian language) You know, probably during the war.

Marie: Yeah, well every summer my daddy used to work, I don't know where, sometimes Regina.

Victoria: What I'm saying is, was there a time when he didn't work at all, and if he didn't work, did the family have a rough time, you know, was it bad for them? Like, even during the war, was there a time when it was pretty hard to make a living?

Marie: No, not bad.

Victoria: So you always managed to have a good living then, eh?

Marie: But my dad did trapping in the springtime, he's trapping the rats. And after that he make money and he'd buy lots of groceries for all summer. Next winter he start trapping.

Victoria: What language did you speak in the home when you were small and when you were growing up?

Marie: French and Cree.

Victoria: French and Cree, eh. And which did you learn to talk first?

Marie: Well, my dad... I don't know, my mommy used to talk French for inside the house what (Indian). She used to talk like that.

Victoria: To name things...

Marie: Yeah, Cree, Cree and French. More in French.

Unidentified Speaker: It's like my grandmother would mix her Cree and her French, like, you know, when she was talking to them.

Victoria: But did she start talking that way first or did she talk English first?

Unidentified Speaker: No my grandmother didn't speak English. My mother?

Victoria: Yeah.

Unidentified Speaker: Oh my mother spoke Cree I guess.

Marie: I used to talk French when I was a kid, you know. After my dad he moved to Chip nobody talked French, I was 11 not 12 years old, and nobody spoke French, Chipewyan and Cree. My language, Cree. And I start to play with the Chipewyan Indian kids and two months after I talked Chipewyan.

Victoria: Oh, so you can talk Chipewyan too, eh?

Marie: Yeah.

Victoria: That's good. Did your parents talk about themselves as being Metis, or half-breed I think is mostly what we called them, you know, people called themselves then? Did they always say that they were half-breeds or Metis people?

Husband: (Indian language)

Marie: Yeah I know. And my granny used to tell me I'm a Cree Indian and a Sauteaux Indian and French.

Victoria: So they were proud, like, they were always proud of their nationality, what kind of people they were, eh? Was there very many Metis people in the community where you lived?

Marie: No.

Victoria: Not many, eh.

Marie: And some half-breeds, you know, half-breeds, mostly

half-breeds and French, Frenchmen.

Victoria: Mostly French...

Marie: And half-breeds. I don't know about that there, those Treaty Indians, you know, Treaty Indians, just the half-breeds and the Frenchmen.

Victoria: Did they always say that they were half-breeds, like did they tell people that, or did they just not say what they were at all?

Marie: No, we don't talk. I didn't hear them talk about what kind of half-breeds and...

Victoria: They just never talked about it, eh? I suppose they just knew everybody was the same kind around them so they just...

Marie: Yeah, all just the same, Indians like.

Victoria: Do you remember if your dad and your mom wore traditional Metis clothing? Do you know what that is? Like, the men wore them sashes, you know, they were bright, sort of bright colored sashes. They had a big wide belt around their waists.

Marie: No.

Victoria: They didn't?

Marie: No. Not even my grandpa.

Victoria: Never wore them, eh?

Marie: No.

Victoria: How about them too? Like, there was Cree Indian on your side too, did they wear any kind of traditional Indian clothing that you can remember?

Marie: No, like another people.

Victoria: Just ordinary average clothing. How about moccasins though, did they wear moccasins?

Marie: Moccasins, yeah.

Victoria: The high kind? Did they wear them big high ones?

Marie: Yeah, but that time wraparound moccasins people used to use.

Victoria: That's the wraparounds.

Marie: Yeah. You had some quills, some beads, some...

Victoria: They used the quills, eh, to make them? Those are nice. Did your, you know, in your community where you were living there, did they have big dances and that type of stuff?

Marie: Yeah. It's my daddy's place. He used to dance, make dance, Frenchmens, you know, with the half-breeds, eh. But my daddy's got a big house, not very big but big enough for dancing.

Victoria: So they all went there, eh. Did they do very much jigging?

Marie: Oh yeah. My mom, my dad, all people.

Victoria: So that was just, that was really always a part of their dancing. When they had a dance everybody would get up and jig, eh?

Marie: Uh-huh.

Victoria: How about you, did you learn?

Marie: No.

Victoria: No?

Marie: No. Only square dance and waltz, two step, one step, polka. (laughs)

Victoria: And how about fiddle players, did very many...

Marie: My brother used [to be] a good fiddle player.

Victoria: How about anybody else in your family, did they learn?

Marie: My uncle, (name), not (name), Colin and Lawrence. Lots of half-breeds are good fiddlers at Lac La Biche not Chipewyan.

Victoria: How about... did they sing songs like in French like Metis songs about anything? A lot of the people sort of sometimes made up their own songs about things that they did. Do you know of anybody that used to do that?

Was there any white people that lived in that settlement there at Lac La Biche? Was there, you know, were there white people mixed in with the breeds too?

Marie: Oh yeah.

Victoria: How did they get along with them?

Marie: Well, (inaudible).

Husband: They got along good today.

Marie: Frenchmens.

Victoria: So they all sort of just... happy together, eh? Do you know if there was anybody, like the older people in your community or in your family, that they used Indian medicine?

Marie: Well some, yeah. Somebody made it -- not me.
(laughs)

Victoria: But do you know of anybody that, like in your family, like even some of the things that they used, you know...

Unidentified Speaker: Excuse me, there is two different kinds of Indian medicine. Some is just to heal themselves and the other one is to kind of curse.

Victoria: Yeah, yeah, I'm glad you said that.

Unidentified Speaker: Which one are you referring to?

Victoria: Either one. Either one, it doesn't matter. Any type of Indian medicine.

Marie: My mother used to make Indian medicine, but that was to heal herself.

Victoria: Do you remember what she used? Did you ever watch her?

Marie: Well, somebody told me. I don't remember. (laughs)

Victoria: I know they used to go and use a lot of, picked lots of the wild things in the bushes, you know, and used that.

Marie: Some I make... in the paper, you know, what he told me to make, still I know how to make that, but I didn't...

Husband: She never wrote it.

Victoria: You just know how to do it out of your head, like.

Husband: Now she doesn't remember anymore what all she was told.

Marie: Some I know.

Victoria: What did you use though?

Marie: Well I don't know, but...(Indian) And some from drug store medicine makes the Indian medicine.

Victoria: So you're using the white man's way.

Marie: Yeah.

Unidentified Speaker: With the help of the white man. (All laugh)

Victoria: Did you ever see a sweat lodge, or use one?

Marie: No, never. I never see before but I see now.

Victoria: You have, eh? What were they like? What are they like?

Marie: Well I didn't go inside but...

Victoria: What did they look, even on the outside?

Marie: Just like little tents.

Husband: Like an igloo.

Victoria: Where did you ever see one?

Husband: On the reserve.

Victoria: Oh, out here on the reserve, eh. What reserve is that that's by here?

Marie: Beardy.

Victoria: Yeah, that's out by Duck Lake, eh? West of Duck Lake, yeah. Beardy.

Do you remember if there was any, like, real serious, serious sicknesses when you were growing up where quite a few people died at once?

Marie: Well, I heard of T.B. People really have T.B. died. That's what I heard and what it did, you know, but no doctors...

Victoria: Did they die at home? Did you hear, would they go to hospitals or did they take them away from...?

Marie: What's the hospital? Athabaska Landing but not (inaudible).

Victoria: Not close anywhere.

Victoria: Do you know if sometimes that they used that type of Indian medicine to help cure the people that were sick?

Marie: Uh-huh.

Victoria: They did, eh, at that time?

Marie: My mom, not me.

Victoria: And you said your mom taught you how to use this little Indian medicine for yourself, eh?

Marie: Well (inaudible) auntie and they come from outside maybe... (several converse in Indian language).

Unidentified Speaker: What she said was that her aunt used to go over to United States and then come back.

Marie: And people with the (inaudible)...

Unidentified Speaker: And the people would tell her, you know, I guess how to use this medicine.

Victoria: And she'd bring it back.

Marie: That's where my mommy knows about the Indian medicine.

Victoria: And you used it a little bit. Do you sometimes still use it now?

Marie: Oh yeah, sometimes.

Victoria: What was it like for you, like, you said you grew up in a small settlement and then when you moved to the city, to a bigger place, did you like it or did it bother you?

(Discussion in Indian language)

Unidentified Speaker: Well, you mean from Lac La Biche to Fort Chip?

Victoria: Well like she came to... after she... you know, moving into a city after being in small communities, was she happy or did she like it here, or...?

Unidentified Speaker: You mean when she moved from Uranium to here?

Victoria: Well yeah, even from Uranium to here, you know, is still...

Marie: Well I like it here...

Victoria: You like the city, living in a big city?

Marie: No, not a big city, smaller.

Victoria: Oh, I see, but this is small yet, so you wouldn't like to move into a big place eh? You wouldn't like to go and live in Saskatoon though?

Marie: No. But I don't care, but my old man he don't like to leave.

Victoria: Oh it's not a good place for anybody.

Marie: Ah it's too big. Big city.

Victoria: How about in Rosthern here, do they have very many Metis people here?

Marie: I don't know, but...

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Victoria: Do you know if your mom and dad ever voted? Did they have voting polls in those days?

Marie: Yeah, sometimes.

Victoria: They sometimes would. Do you remember what kind of party they voted for?

Marie: No.

Victoria: Did your family go to church often?

Marie: Used to be but I don't think any more.

Victoria: How about your mom and dad?

Marie: No, my boys yeah, dad. Yeah my dad...

Victoria: Was there a church in Lac La Biche when you lived there?

Marie: Yeah, but about 30 miles.

Victoria: Oh gee, that was a long way. But did a priest ever come to your place or to your home and...

Marie: No.

Victoria: No. So you used to go to church quite often eh?

Marie: Well after. We went to Chip.

Victoria: And then you don't go very often now?

Marie: Well, we go to church.

Victoria: See a lot of people they used to go to church quite regularly and then, you know, when they got older they just sort of didn't go anymore. A lot of them because they couldn't get out and, you know, different things.

Marie: Well, I like to go to church, but sometimes I can't go. If got no money, I can't go. (laughs)

Victoria: Why do you think that, if you got no money?

Marie: Well, plate, you know.

Victoria: Ah, the plate. (laughs) Yeah, I think a lot of people think that especially about the Catholic Church, if you don't have money to put in the plates and...

Marie: Yeah.

Victoria: Do you think, though, the church, the Catholic church, helped Metis people or half-breeds? Do you think it really helped them at all?

Marie: Yeah, I think so.

Victoria: Did you ever hear of a Metis Society a long time ago in the '30s and the '40s? It used to be called The Saskatchewan Metis Society.

Husband: No, I don't think so.

Victoria: You don't, you never heard the name like Joe LaRocque or Joe Ross? And Tom Major? Joe McKenzie? Soloman Pritchard? You never heard those names at all?

Marie: No.

Victoria: When you look back at, you know, all your life that, you know, from the time you were small up until now, what kind of a life would you say you had?

(Discussion in Indian language)

Marie: I liked to stay in a house. I don't like to move.

Victoria: You like to stay in one place, eh?

Marie: Yeah.

Victoria: But was your life, was it interesting, do you think? Did you have a good time while you were growing up? Was it happy?

Marie: Yeah. I liked to go to dance. That's why I get married. (laughs)

Victoria: So your life was really kind of happy, then, while you were growing up, eh?

Marie: Yeah.

Victoria: Do you think that your life, you know, after you grew up, do you think you had a better life than what your mother

had?

Marie: Well, I don't know. My mother, if I go to dance my mommy go to dance too.

Victoria: No, but like, do you think you have better things now that help you, like... like...

(Discussion in Indian language)

Marie: My life is easier now.

Victoria: Yeah, that's what I'm doing wrong. Yeah. Is your life easier than what your mom's was?

(Discussion in Indian language)

Victoria: Like, do you have better things to make it easier for you than your momma did?

Marie: Yes.

Victoria: And, like, how did she do her clothes? When she washed clothes, how did she...?

Marie: I used to wash clothes with a washboard, tub.

Victoria: And your mom too?

Marie: And my mom too. And sometimes I wash clothes, diapers 11 o'clock, I have to hang clothes outside next morning.

Victoria: Now is it easier for you now though, that you moved in...

Marie: Oh yeah, I use them washers now, no more washboards.
(laughs)

Victoria: Now, is there anything in your life, the most important thing that ever happened in your life, could you tell me what it would be? Like, things that are really important to her is what I want to know, like, that matters most to her in her life. Even while she was growing up, if there was something that happened that was really the most important thing in her life. Like, if... important to her. Was religion important to her? Was getting an education? Would that have really been important to her?

(Indian language)

Marie: Well, religion, I guess it was, and music.

Victoria: You loved music, eh?

Marie: Yeah. (laughs)

Victoria: See, well, that's another thing. Maybe she would have liked to have been a famous singer or a movie star. When I was growing up I always thought I was going to be the most beautiful movie star in the world.

Marie: I started dance 12 years old.

Victoria: Uh-huh. And you really enjoyed it, eh? You like music and dancing. What about going to school? Would you have liked to have went to school?

Marie: I like to go to school, but no school.

Victoria: If you could be born all over again, though, and if you could have a choice, what would you like to have done?

Marie: Dance.

Victoria: Like, what would she have changed in her life if she could change it?

(Discussion in Indian language)

Marie: Well, maybe (inaudible), maybe the same.

Victoria: You think you'd like to have the same life?

Marie: Yeah.

Victoria: Your life must have been good then. You want it the same.

Marie: Yeah

Victoria: And do you like living in a small town? Or would you sooner live in a small town, in the country, or in a big city?

Marie: Small town.

Victoria: Small town, eh? Do you think -- you might have to help me here -- do you think that, like, if you could be born again, you know, a different person, like, if you were going to be born all over again, would you have liked to have been born a white person or a Treaty Indian maybe?

Marie: Well, if I was born a Treaty Indian well (inaudible); but if I born white, white people, I can't help it. I have to...

Victoria: But would you have wanted to be somebody different?

(Discussion in Indian language)

Marie: Same. I like my Indian. I never see before Treaty Indians I was a kid.

Victoria: When you were small you didn't see Treaties, eh?

Marie: No.

Victoria: Okay. I want to say thank you for the interview. It was very nice of you to let me come.

(END OF SIDE B)

(END OF TAPE)