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Brenda: April 17, 1984, I'm doing an interview with Victoria Dumont, Duck Lake, Saskatchewan. Victoria, could you tell me what it was like growing up in Duck Lake? You grew up here in Duck Lake didn't you, you were born and raised here?

Victoria: Yeah. Well I went to school, the Sobert school here, you know, and they were all mixed, you know, French and all nationalities, you know. And there was the nuns used to teach us school. I can't say nothing about going, I liked going to school, you know, at the time, you know. But what I wasn't good is in the arithmetic, like, I was no good in that and that's why I most... why I quit school on account of that. Here today I'm sorry because today I can figure out all right, you know, with the pencil, but, you know, it's not like in your head eh? I was no good at arithmetic in my head. Like, some people has them time tables they can just go through them but I was no good at that. So that's the most reason why I quit school because I didn't like that, but otherwise than that

everything was okay at school.

Brenda: Did your parents encourage you to do well in school?

Victoria: Eh?

Brenda: Your parents did they encourage you to do well?

Victoria: My parents, you know, them days they didn't care, you know, they just wanted us to go to school. They didn't know, whatever we wanted to learn, whatever, you know, it's not like today, you know, there's a real big difference. They didn't care as long as we didn't miss school. That's all they cared, you know, they didn't... because they didn't know how to read an write themselves, eh, so...

Brenda: So they didn't know how to check up on you.

Victoria: No they didn't, so that's why they didn't care when I quit school, they didn't care. Them days anyways you weren't forced to go to school eh, you can quit any time.

Brenda: Did your older brothers and sisters, did they go to school?

Victoria: They went to school but they didn't go any higher grades than, well I think my brother Joe went up to grade seven, and my one sister went to grade seven, and the rest... This one here I think she went to grade four, this Mrs. Hergison here, and the other sisters only went to catechism, never even went to school. But this one went to catechism and she went to school. The other one went to school too but she was a slow learner, or something. She never learned. She doesn't know how to read or anything, and this one here she learned herself. After she quit school she read a lot, you know, and she kind of learned herself how to read and everything.

Brenda: Did you have fun days at school?

Victoria: Yeah, not too bad. You can't say anything bad about school. Well, see, sometimes the Frenchmen, they'd call me half-breed, you know, "You big half-breed" or something, you know, but I didn't care. I used to fight back with them and call them names too. (laughs) But that was all, you know. And I had some beautiful friends, too. I had three nice girlfriends, they were French, and I really got along good with them. But, like, some of them they were kind of nasty, especially some boys, you know, they called us half-breeds and everything. Some of them used to pull my touque off my head and everything, just teasing me, you know. I used to get real mad but...

Brenda: Did you like school?

Victoria: Yeah I didn't mind it at all. If it wouldn't be for that arithmetic I think maybe I would have went longer to

school, because I liked everything else except that, you know.

Brenda: So arithmetic was the one that threw you off?

Victoria: Yeah that's what threw me off, yeah. I used to be good at spelling, you know, and everything used to go... We had spelling matches often, you know, and I used to always be at the top because I used to spell so good, you know.

Brenda: After you left school you started working for yourself?

Victoria: Yeah, started working. Like, there were these people that they wanted me to work for babysitting more or less, you know. And then after that - well, maybe a year or so I done that, and then after that I went out working, like, for wages and it was only \$7 a month.

Brenda: That was your first paying job for \$7 a month?

Victoria: Yeah. And then after that, well, it went up to \$15. When I finished working it was \$15.

Brenda: That was housework?

Victoria: Yeah. Yeah and looking after the kids. There was kids there, you know, at that place. And one place that I worked there, this woman was paralyzed and she was really good, you know. She could, you know... she used to teach me a lot, like cooking and everything, you know. Every day it was always different, you know, and I used to like that working for her, you know. But I worked there only about maybe three or four months and then I quit. And she was crying when I left, you know, she didn't want me to quit but I quit on account of one of her boys was always after me. She had a bunch of boys, eh; they were all, like, you know, a little bit older than me. But there was one especially there--but what I should have said, I should have told her, you know, and told her husband, but in them days you wouldn't squeal on nobody, you know.

Brenda: You were just thankful for a job.

Victoria: Yeah, and that's another thing, yeah. But I found a job right away as soon as I quit there anyways, you know. It wasn't hard to find jobs then, you know.

Brenda: Doing housework?

Victoria: Yeah, the same thing, yeah. But I liked it there on account of she used to show me all kinds of things. She used to be a good cook, you know, and everything; and every day was always different and I used to like it. But I should have told her. She was telling me, she's crying, she says, "Why do you want to leave me, Victoria?" And too stupid to tell her, you know. If I'd have told her, you know, they could have stopped that guy. Because everytime he could, you know, try to get around me, catch me someplace and everything, you know.

Brenda: Makes working impossible.

Victoria: Yeah, and I sure didn't care for that.

Brenda: Did she teach you how to do knitting or things like that?

Victoria: Oh no, not that, because her, too--she was crippled, like, you know, she was paralyzed half of her, you know. But what she done she didn't have no wheelchair or nothing, all she done was push in a chair like that to walk, you know, that lady. She died quite a long time ago now and she raised a big family. And she even raised three kids after she was paralyzed. Mind you, that man must be awful, eh. And that's when I went to work when them three little kids, they were small them, three of them, like, you know.

Brenda: To put his wife to work like that when she was sick.

Victoria: Yeah. And after that--and I know them good, you know--and this old guy, he got married with another woman after and he went, a bus hit him, you know, and he was in an accident. He finally died, you know, from that accident, like, he had to walk with two canes, you know.

Brenda: You got married in 1929?

Victoria: Yeah. And you can see my thing over there on the wall there. There's a plate there, 1929. We celebrated our 50th anniversary in 1979. We was 50 years married, and my husband lived only five months after we celebrated our anniversary. He died, well, he'd been sick all the time. You know my oldest son, the one that died, Anatol, he wanted to make--he was going to pay for everything--he wanted to have our anniversary at 40 years and that time my husband was good at 40 years. When 40 years married he was really good yet, you know. And the girls they didn't want to, you know. They said, "Ah, we can wait. Mom and Dad will live 50 years." So we made it, but it wasn't the same.

Brenda: Just barely.

Victoria: Yeah. And my husband even cried, you know. He didn't even like to go, you know. It seems like, you know, he felt...

Brenda: So your husband, if he were alive today he would be 87?

Victoria: Well, he died he was 82, that's five years he's dead, 87 yeah. And my husband was a rancher. He used to work for the ranchers, and then when we moved... You know, we were here for... we moved from here, 1937 we left. We went to Manitoba, to Birch River and we stayed there for 30 years down there. We came back here '68 and we lived here--see '68 and my husband died '79, like, you know, and we weren't here very long, see,

he died. But he didn't want to come back here, he didn't want to come back here at all because he liked it over there better. We already moved in town. He got sick. When he was 67 he had a big operation, you know, so then we had to move in town. He had to quit his job. He used to look after the community pasture down there in Manitoba, that's what he done, for 12 years he done that. After he quit ranching he went and done this. And so after that, well, when he came back here he just got sick right away like, you know, I think he just didn't like to be here, you know, he didn't like to come back here. But the reason why I came back here is because I had to come here and look after my uncle. He was 90 years old when I moved here. He came and stayed with me, and he died when he was 101.

So I kept him eleven years because my sister, all my sisters, they all kept him, all of them. So now I was the youngest and they thought, well... And this sister, she was keeping him all the time and her husband took sick and he was sick a long time, and her husband couldn't take uncle because uncle used to drink, you know.

Brenda: What was your uncle's name?

Victoria: Napoleon LaDoux. That's old Jerome LaDoux's son there, see, that you wrote. And he passed away he was 101, and my sister, my auntie, his sister, she died when she was 100 years old.

Brenda: Boy, they lived long lives.

Victoria: Yeah. So and then see this other sister, that's my oldest sister in our family, like, she's going to be 86 there, too, in November. Eighty-seven she'll be because she was the same age as my husband, she'll be 87. She's 86 now. And the other half-sister over there she's 88.

Brenda: Another twelve years and she'll be 100.

Victoria: Yeah, and my brother-in-law's--no 89 my sister is, my half-sister, and her husband is 88. They're a year different, like. And she's good yet, you know. If she wouldn't have broke her hip she would have been very good but she broke her hip and she always has headaches. She's got diabetes, you know, and she has headaches all the time. But her husband is kind of, you know, like he's lost and he's kind of a demented fellow, you know. So she has to kind of look after him all the time, he wants this, he wants that, and I think that's what is making her getting sicker all the time, you know. But I don't know, and her husband has got a bad heart, so I don't know which one first will go with them two eh.

Brenda: They haven't got long to live?

Victoria: No. Well this sister here, she has a house in town here but in winter she never lives at her house. But this winter she went to live with these people, you know, just to help them out because she was sick all the time. But next winter I guess they'll have to go in a home because nobody

will, you know, there'll be nobody to go and stay with them so they'll have to try and get in a home.

Brenda: You got married in 1929 and then you lived here in Duck Lake for awhile?

Victoria: Well after I got married, yeah, we lived here for quite awhile, yeah. And then, just, we went to Birch River there, like, you know.

Brenda: How many children did you have here?

Victoria: I only had two, I only had two kids when I went to go to Birch River. I had two kids here. I had three kids, four kids born here, four, no six of them born here. Because I only had two born over there, two girls was born over there. See, I used to come back here. For my oldest girl I came back from Birch River and had my little girl here, and I came back to have Clifford here too, and then I had Anatol and Camille here. They were born here. And the other two girls were born over there in Birch River.

Brenda: So you lived in Manitoba for 30 years?

Victoria: About 30 years, yeah, we lived there.

Brenda: How did you like living in Manitoba?

Victoria: Oh we liked it good there, we liked it very much. But now that place is just like the way Delisle says about the Jackfish Lake, it's all no good at all now. There's everything, people moving out, you know, and stores are all bankrupt, you know. There's only two stores in there now. And the one little store there, maybe she might as well close because she doesn't make too much. It's a woman that's got that. And the other guy there, the butcher, well he has everything, you know, and he's got a big place, you know, and he's got everything. And, oh, we had everything good there. There was lots of stores and there was Marshall Wells store, and there was a Co-op store there, and the bank, you know, and everything; but now there's nothing there. The hotel burned, there's three times the hotel burnt down there. They build it and burnt again and now they're not building no more. They say that, you know, they kind of figure now that they done on purpose to burn them places, so now nobody building one so that's the way it is. I go and visit down there once in awhile. I went last fall, but oh my God, there's just nothing at all.

Brenda: It's really changed.

Victoria: Oh well it's only because I've got friends there otherwise I wouldn't even go, you know, but these friends wants me to go so I go once in awhile. Pretty near every year I go there. I don't know if I'll go this fall but I went last fall anyways. See I got one, a daughter in Thompson and a son, that Camille and Connie, they live in Thompson. And then Lorraine

lives at Snow Lake, so... I was just down there here two weeks ago. I just came back at the end of March, like. I went on... I think it was on the 12th of March I went and I came back on the 23rd or 24th.

Brenda: So you have children that are living in Manitoba now. Do they feel Manitoba is their home?

Victoria: Well, they feel Manitoba is their home because they don't want to leave it anyways. But the one that lives in Snow Lake, like, my son-in-law don't care for Manitoba. He always lived in Manitoba but he'd like to go, because you see they have lots of snow down there, you know, at Thompson. But the other son-in-law don't mind and my son either. As long as they're working, you know, they like staying there. But this other one in Snow Lake, I think he'd move out of there pretty quick if he found a job in Saskatchewan someplace, you know, but he's got to stay where he is. Today the work is... you can't find no job, eh, so... But when he was here he was saying that, he said... And it just happened when he came here he had the flu so he didn't visit too much when he was here, he just stayed here for a week and that's all. Then they took off and went home. Well they brought me back here, you see, from Snow Lake. And then they got their neighbour to pick me up. That's the reason why I went, you know, because I'm tired going on the bus because I have to go way clean to Birch River over there, you know, and it's too much, going too far and everything. And I told them, I said, "I'm not going to your place no more on the bus because it's too hard." From Birch River I had to take the bus at 3 o'clock in the morning to go to Snow Lake like, you know. That's where I go first, because then they take me to Thompson after, you see. And so I said, "I'm not coming no more," I said, "because," I said "it's too much of a long trip." You know, you have to catch the bus at night, at 3 o'clock in the morning to go to Snow Lake. Well then I get there about at 8 o'clock at Snow Lake and then I have to go with another little bus that takes us in. You just go up to the road like and another bus from Snow Lake picks us up, like a van.

Brenda: So you have to keep changing buses?

Victoria: Yeah, I don't like that. So I said... But you know I could go the other way though, I could go, like, but they would have to come and meet me at Creighton, you know, like Flin Flon, close to Flin Flon. I could go by P.A. like, you know, that way. It's shorter that way too and I don't have to change no bus or nothing, you see. There it's okay. But if they want me there bad that's what they'll do for me to go, but I don't know when I'll go now. I had my... I went there last Christmas, you know, like, and last summer I went too, I went quite often.

Brenda: How do you remember your mother and father?

Victoria: Well I just remembered, you know. They weren't talkative people, like, my mother talked more than my dad. My

dad hardly talked to us, you know. He was really religious man. He always used to take his Cree book there and read Cree, you know, and sing. He'd go upstairs and sing hymns in Cree and everything, you know. We used to like to listen to him, you know, singing them Cree songs. We used to talk a little bit of Cree there, you know, like, we understood it. We understand it yet but we can't talk, but this is the woman that can talk Cree, you know. She's the only one in our family that can keep her Cree, like, she don't... But the other ones, they all forgot. But mostly we only talk French like, you know, when we're together.

Brenda: And your family did your mom and dad speak French too?

Victoria: No they talked Cree most of the time, like half-breed Cree, like, you know. It wasn't the real Cree like the Indians, like, you know, but they mixed up French and Cree together like, you know.

Brenda: One word French the next one Cree?

Victoria: Yeah, sure that's the way they talked. (laughs) But my dad mostly talked Cree, him he talked more Cree than French. And you know he used to go--my dad never even come to our church, like, you know, here. He used to go to the Indian church, you know, he used to be friend with Father Delmont. Did you hear about Father Delmont he used to have the mission here?

Brenda: Yes.

Victoria: Well that used to be my dad's friend, that Father, and that's where he used to go to church. He'd walk to church. We used to live way far from here, quite far, where he used to work for Mitchell there, and he used to walk over there at the mission to church and we got our church right here. Mother used to go here and us kids, and him, he'd go at the mission. He was a real religious man, you know. And we were growing up good religious people like, you know, and that's the way we are. But our kids today they're not like us, like, you know. They only have one daughter that goes to church, you know, the one that lives in Snow Lake. They go to church all the time, like. But my oldest daughter married that Christopherson, well he's, you know, he's not Catholic and he didn't turn Catholic for my daughter either. She had to get married in his church. What the heck is it now--Lutheran, they go to Lutheran church. But my other daughter Connie there, her husband is French but he doesn't go to no church at all, but her and the kids used to go, but now the kids today their all grown up so they don't go but she goes once in awhile herself. And she told me the other day I said, I ask her just for fun I said, "Connie, do you still go to church?" "Oh, Mom," she says, "I go once in awhile," she says, "but we don't like this priest here," she says. "He's old and he's boring to go." And here her kids, they were saying that, you know, it's always boring to go to church and now she's saying the same thing too. "Well," I

said, "we sure..." You know, if I don't go to church one Sunday I feel I'm lost, you know, because I have to go to church every Sunday. There's no way...

And here this one is more Catholic than me yet, because she never missed all during Lent or not one night she missed that church to go every night, and, you know, she's 82 years old and she's really good, you know. And then she, now she's going to go there till Lent is over and then she'll go to Saskatoon to her-- not to Saskatoon, to Dalmeny--Saskatoon, yeah, and then they'll pick her up in Saskatoon. Her daughter lives in Dalmeny, that's where she's going to come and pass a few days at Easter and then she'll move in her house after. She lives just next--you see the post office there, there's a little grey house there, the next house is her house and then the other next house is my other sister's house. And right here by the citizen hall is my oldest sister, that's Mrs. Petit, she lives in that yellow house there, and the Debrays, they live over there -- we all live close together like, you know. So everybody says to me, "You're lucky you got all your sisters here, you know," because it is, you know. I feel at home now more than ever. Well I felt good when I came home, but only my husband, you know, he didn't like it and I didn't like that either just because he didn't like it, you know, kind of felt bad for him for awhile, but he finally forgot about it but he was sick right away it seems like. And I was saying to my sister I said, "Maybe if we wouldn't have come here maybe my husband wouldn't be dead yet, you know," but I don't know.

Brenda: How old was your husband? I mean, where did your husband come from?

Victoria: He came from St. Laurent that's where he was born, St. Laurent.

Brenda: But he never really felt at home around here eh, he felt more at home in Manitoba?

Victoria: Well, Manitoba, he felt more at home, yeah. And although he lived here, you know, he lived in St. Laurent his home was in St. Laurent and after we got married well we stayed here in Duck Lake, so we used to go and visit a lot in St. Laurent, you know, when the kids were small, the first two kids like, you know.

Brenda: Well the church played an important role in your family's life. Did they ever, did the church ever want you to vote their way? Like, would the church ever try to influence people to vote Liberal or...?

Victoria: No, no not at all, no. Not that I know of anyways, you know.

Brenda: Did the priest ever come and visit?

Victoria: Oh yeah some priests came to visit us, yeah.

Brenda: Just to visit?

Victoria: Yeah just to, you know, like, they have a visit once a year, like, you know, and there's one priest especially, one little priest we had here, he used to come and give communion to my uncle here and my husband when they were sick, like, you know. My husband couldn't go to church anymore after we got here, after he took sick, you know, he couldn't walk he was just dragging, you know, walking with a cane. And so the priest used to come and give them communion here once a month, you know, every Friday of the month, like. And they still do that yet, you know, for some people, like for the shut-ins, they still go. But not this priest that we have here now, but he sends, there's a nun that comes and gives communion because all my sisters, they can't go. There's only her and me that goes to church, this one here. The other ones, they can't walk to church, like, you know, they're too, well that one is too old and the other one is not that old but she's crippled, she walks with a cane. She can't walk to church, she can't even walk here, you know.

Brenda: Oh, so you have to go over and visit her?

Victoria: Well I go every day there pretty near, I never miss a day. And now they're... I'm going to go... like, from Wednesday night I have to go, now let me see, Third, I gotta go about Fifth street, I guess, I have to go and stay with one lady there for maybe (telephone rings).

Brenda: Were you ever interested in Metis politics?

Victoria: No. I was never interested in politics.

Brenda: Do you vote?

Victoria: Yeah.

Brenda: What do you think about politics? What do you think about the party that you vote for?

Victoria: Well we always voted Liberal so I don't know what it's going to be now.

Brenda: What do you think of the PC government?

Victoria: I don't think much of it.

Brenda: You think more of the Liberal party?

Victoria: Yeah. Always did, because my dad always said that, you know, he always said, "You don't never vote Conservatives, always vote Liberal." So we always kept our word till now anyways. So I don't know what it's going to be now.

Brenda: What were his reasons for wanting you to vote Liberal?

Victoria: I don't know why. He was always a Liberal I guess and he thought we should always be. And especially my oldest sister here, she always says that, she says, "you know what Dad always said, just for us to vote Liberal," she said. Well I voted NDP once, you know, because my friend here was running for NDP when we lived in Birch River, you know, and I voted NDP that time but she didn't win anyways. But she was running to be NDP so I voted for her that time. That's the only time I did.

Brenda: Did your mom practice the Indian medicine or your dad?

Victoria: No.

Brenda: They didn't know anything?

Victoria: No.

Brenda: What about for cures, like when people got sick how did they get cured?

Victoria: Well they had, you know, they had some kind of a medicine. Like when the kids had fever--I don't know how they called that, in French it used to be le baume they called it but I don't know what they called it in English though--but that was really a medicine. Every time the kids were sick they always had that as kind of a... and it used to take fever away, like, you know.

Brenda: What was it, was it a root?

Victoria: Well it's more like--it's not a root. It's more or less a seed, like, or something, like, you know. I think it's balm, balm in English. I don't know how they call it in English but in French they said baume, and this guy even knows that too because he said his mother used to use it too on them. That was a really--everybody knew that medicine I think. And then there was another root, it was belle angelique they called it and I don't know how they call that in English either. See we just learn in French and we don't know how to say it in English. But I think, in a way I think it's that ginger root is that belle angelique, to me, you know, I think that's what it is.

Brenda: Do you know how it looks?

Victoria: Well it's just a little wee, about that long, brown, you know, looked brown, and you used to chew that and sometimes they'd boil it and you'd drink it, and sometimes you'd just chew it. I think that's what he was talking about there, he said, for heart. I think that's what it was. Yeah, and then there's another guy there, this Dumont there--what the heck do you call him?--old Elie Dumont he used to boil some kind of a weed too that...

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