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## Interview with Bob Desjarlais

Date: July 3, 2002

Interviewed by Leah Dorion-Paquin and Cheryl Troupe

Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan

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### Tape One: Side A

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**00.0 Bob:** Okay girls, this is what they called the Fisher house. The Fisher's had a crossing here and you can see there some place, there are some posts along the river and that is where they had a crossing here. That is where Middleton crossed the river to go to Batoche. This is where they should have sunk him.

**00.4 Cheryl:** Oh, are these the Fisher's then that had, eventually they had posts here and they had stores up in Batoche as well?

**00.5 Bob:** Yeah, yeah, those are the same Fisher's. They came here and they lived here and they had that Fisher crossing here and right back here where the golf course is there, that is where Middleton stayed overnight there when they were going to Batoche and this is where the Sioux should have jumped them guys, that time, cleaned them out. But that is, there was a letter sent from here and I think it probably would have went to the States because at that time probably Louis was still in the States hey and we found a letter in the archives of Winnipeg, it is a replied letter and on there it states *thanks a lot for your support* it says and signed Louis Riel. The letter is dated 1874, so they actually got going a lot sooner than anybody thought they did. See that is eleven years before the rebellion in Batoche and these guys must have sent Louis a letter, but that letter we can't find, we can't find the letter that was sent from here.

**02.5 Cheryl:** Just the reply letter?

**02.5 Bob:** All we found was the reply letter and I kind of think maybe the original letter that was sent to Louis Riel could be in the States, yeah, it could be in an archive in the States. I think that would be the only way we could find that letter.

**03.0 Leah:** Have you been down to the States Bob, at all?

**03.0 Bob:** Ah, no I haven't been down there my girl but I definitely wouldn't mind to go down there because there is at Turtle Mountain, there are quit a few of the relatives.

**03.2 Leah:** Oh, yeah the Michif relatives.

**03.2 Bob:** Yeah, yes, there are a lot of Michifs there. I got a tape at home of those guys. This is where that letter came from; I wanted to show you that.

**03.7 Leah:** So this is a real Métis homeland?

**03.7 Bob:** Yes, yes, this whole valley here girls, this was \_\_\_\_\_ all Métis along here. See there was lots of Métis right in town here for years and there is still quite a few. But you see the ones that are there now, you're going to have to turn around someplace here, like I told her about my old grandmother, she was what they called a midwife, that is how I came to this world, by my grandmother. There is lots of us, well all the people that lived down in the valley there and her sister was exactly the same as she was. She lived here in Lebret; she was a Mrs. Blondeau.

**04.9 Cheryl:** What was your mom's name?

**05.0 Bob:** She was a Mrs. Blondeau but there were a, what the heck were they now? God, don't tell me, don't tell me...

**05.4 Cheryl:** It will come back.

**05.5 Bob:** Yeah, anyway, Mrs. Blondeau and Mrs. Racette way down in the valley there, they were sisters. They were Allary's, they were Allary girls and they came out of the States and that film that I have at home of those people in Turtle Mountain, the Métis people from down the valley there, from that \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ (Michif), down the valley, in Michif language they call that \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_. But it is, there is lots of things that was done years ago here by the Métis people, a lot of the land that you see, that the farmers are working now, a lot of that was broken up by Métis people, hired by farmers.

**06.6 Cheryl:** All the hard labour.

**06.7 Bob:** Yes, all the hard labour was all done by Métis people; it wasn't easy, but they wanted to do it, they had the will, they had the willpower to do anything, anything to create work or employment or a little bit of money hey. Can you imagine what they paid these guys to work on the road here? Probably about three or four dollars a day and they probably worked anywhere from eight to ten hours a day, maybe more.

**07.3 Cheryl:** At least, and straight.

**07.4 Bob:** But my father told me that after they finished making the road they turned around and graveled it with the horses and the wagons

and those guys with shovels and rakes and stuff, they would rake the big stones off and oh there was lots of labour and I guess it took them all summer long to do this work but there was, oh there was lots of them. I wouldn't even, there was probably fifty guys working there. But they had guys with shovels and guys with picks and the whole works, they didn't all have horses but the guys that had horses were hired with their horses.

**08.5 Cheryl:** So the ones that were hired with the horses then would they get more?

**08.5 Bob:** Yeah, yeah, they got a little bit more, I think they got two dollars a day for their horses.

**08.7 Leah:** Wow, made a living.

**08.7 Bob:** But you see at that time there really wasn't that much money spent because like at our house anyway, for sure, like all our clothes my mother made, all of our clothes was made by our mother and a lot of the blankets were all made by my mother. And everybody had gardens, oh we had big gardens, we had gardens, oh you wouldn't believe, so the money they got, yes they could hang on to it hey.

**09.4 Cheryl:** Your mother was quite a well known seamstress wasn't she, in the valley?

**09.5 Bob:** Oh, yes, yes. When she was living in Abernethy girls, there was a family there, their last name was Foster and these people had three kids, they had two girls and a boy and the oldest girl got married, their oldest girl got married and my mother made all the bridesmaid dresses and the wedding gown for that girl and then after when my ah, the other one got married, the other girl they went through the same thing again but they were all different colours hey, so she made all the gowns for the bridesmaids and made the wedding gown for the bride and when the boy got married he came and I happened to be there at that time, I came, I left home when I was fourteen years old and I was at my mother and dad's at this time when this young guy come and make a deal with my mother because he was getting married and he wanted the same thing but in different colour of clothes and different design of dress for the bridesmaid. They had it picked and everything, so mother that is fine and he said, he kind of smiled and looked at mother and he said "Florence, I don't really like to ask you this question" he said "but I am going to," he said. "Would you make me my tuxedo?" Mother said "Well of course I will make you your tuxedo." So anyway he said "Okay, I'll pick out the stuff I want and I will bring the stuff to you." But his mother got wind of this idea and she went to her son and she said no, "Florence has got enough work to

do these things without making you your, you are going to go out and rent a tuxedo, that is what you are going to do; you are not going to go and buy material. But I already made a deal with Florence he said. No, no the deal is off, no way, she is going to make you all of the dresses and that is enough. But she probably would have done it too; oh she was willing to do it.

**12.5 Leah:** She sounded like a really wonderful, loving woman.

**12.6 Bob:** And then there is the Emerson's there, they had three kids and she made all their clothes, those kids, their school clothes, their everyday clothes out there, bib overalls she made for them, everything out on the farm there. And those people never bought any clothes for their kids until oh probably when they were fourteen or sixteen years old. Mother made their clothes for those kids, it was just unreal. Oh my mother she sat on that sewing machine from the time she got up until the time she went to bed, oh and then the guys come in and can you patch this pants for me Florence, oh God this had been a good pants of mine you know and I really like this pants and anyway. Okay, leave it and I can patch in and she patches this guy's pants. Then a guy comes in and says this pants is a little bit too long. "Florence, can you cut this pants for me?" "Oh, okay leave it and I'll cut it for you."

**13.8 Cheryl:** So when she was doing this seamstress work, were they paying her, were they giving her things?

**13.9 Bob:** Oh, yeah, yeah. Like the Foster's there, when she made all those clothes for them for their weddings and stuff what they did is in the fall when they butchered they would bring a bunch of meat in for mom and dad, so dad and mother didn't have to buy any meat. Mother made it all with the needle, so to speak. It was really good, it was so nice years ago, like now today the man and wife works alright but they don't seem to get along as good years ago when the wife and man were working, but they did it a different sort of way. Like right now, in my family my son and his wife are working and he comes home from work and she is gone to work, so ninety percent of the time he has to make his own meals.

**15.1 Cheryl:** Before, the work complimented each other.

**15.2 Bob:** Yes, yes. Before, my mother always made sure that if dad is working, she made sure his meals were ready and then she did her work. But now a days they can't do that, see the work by the hour or whatever or by the month or by the year or whatever, the job starts at four o'clock in the afternoon 'til midnight, well how do you make supper, you know? It is very difficult now, like my daughter and her husband too, they both work, good thing my grandchildren are big

enough now, they know how to fry eggs and cook some macaroni and cheese, Kraft dinner.

**16.3 Leah:** So this is going, which direction are we going?

**16.3 Bob:** We are going east. Wait until we go down into the valley there. I'll show you where all the houses were, all the people.

**16.7 Cheryl:** Calvin took me down there, it was just gorgeous. Adeline was saying that your mom used to work for the RCMP as well. She used to be a seamstress for them; she was a busy lady.

**16.8 Bob:** Oh yeah, yeah, she started sewing years ago, she used to stay in that school here, when the school burnt down here, she was there at that time, my mother. You see my mother was fairly small when my grandmother died, like the whole family but Uncle Henry and the older ones, they were fairly big already but mother and them, Uncle Toby and they were all small and Aunt Philomene, they were all small when Grandma died, they were very young. So my mother was brought up by the Valgaurds, a guy by the name of old John Valgaurd brought her up and it was old Gasper Valgaurd and what in the heck is that other guy's name but that other guy, they used to call my mother their sister all the time, but it wasn't their sister but their dad brought my mother up hey, but they really, really loved my mother because my mother did everything for them hey. She used to do all the sewing and when she was there and she used to help with meals when they were living on the reserve there and that old John Valgaurd was farming and had some farmland on the reserve that he broke up and he was farming there and he had about four or five kids of their own and they took in two, my mother and one of the others I forget whether it was Uncle Toby, it was one of them, there was two of them that stayed with John Valgaurd, but they didn't stay there that long; they were there maybe a couple of years and then the other kids were old enough and they had wives and they had a kid or two of their own like Uncle Henry and Uncle George and Uncle Stan, well they took the kids back, they said no we want to raise our own family hey. So this is where, they all ended up back together but at one time they were separated, at one time because my mother said she went to school down here at Lebret, the Indian school but when they were there, that is when the school burnt so they went back to the reserve again, but all this road here girls, all the way down here, this was all made by hand so to speak, with horses, cut all these banks down and oh yes, that was a real job you know at that time, but like I said there probably must have been fifty guys working here hey. They made the road right from Katepwa to Lebret there.

**20.7 Cheryl:** So, would your dad have been one of the ones who helped build the road or was it maybe even before him?

**20.8 Bob:** No, my dad was there yes, my dad was there. My father-in-law was there and two or three of my uncles oh, more than two or three, there was Uncle Joe Klyne and Uncle Sam Klyne; they were my uncles there and Uncle Pete was there and Uncle Renny and Uncle Fred Fine, Renny Amyotte, Fred Fine, oh there was lots of them and old Henry Klyne he was there two, oh they were all old guys and the younger guys they worked on the road here, yeah. After they finished the road, they graveled it from one end to the other, yeah, all throwing the gravel on the wagon by hand and throwing it off.

**22.3 Leah:** Boy that must have been, did they ever sing or anything while they worked to keep their spirits up?

**22.4 Bob:** Well, the thing was they told a lot of stories from what I hear and yes, they did sing and then imagine but there was definitely a lot of stories told. They used to have their campground was down here and then after when they moved out of here and where we passed over there, their campground was over there and they kept kind of moving along as they got the road finished hey.

**23.2 Cheryl:** You mentioned before that your dad also worked for, was it Ernie Skinner?

**23.2 Bob:** Yeah.

**23.2 Cheryl:** You'll have to point that out to us, where his land was and that.

**23.3 Bob:** Yes, yes, I'm going to take you to where my grandfather lived back in the twenties.

**23.4 Cheryl:** Do you have to go across that little bridge?

**23.5 Bob:** Yeah, no, no, we don't cross the bridge.

**23.7 Cheryl:** Last time Calvin and I were here and we interviewed you, Calvin and I went down in the valley and he showed me around a little bit so.

**23.7 Bob:** Yeah, see Calvin wasn't born in the valley, he was born on top of the hill over there, at the \_\_\_\_\_ farm. Yeah, his brother Jerry and his brother Lenny, they were born in the valley there. His brother Lenny is an engineer in Saskatoon and my cousin Jerry, he lives here in Contempora.

- 24.3 Cheryl:** What about the stories of the valley? The legend of the valley? Did you guys ever talk about that or was that the story that was told a lot?
- 24.4 Bob:** Well, not really. It was never talked about that much years ago; as a matter of fact, this has just been taking place in the last year or so. Last year I took out a lady by the name of Jacqueline Pelletier. I took her on this tour and I told her all about this valley and she is doing some of that work so she has got all that stuff of mine that I did. I recorded a bunch of stuff last winter on a tape sitting in the house there doing nothing so I talked about different things hey. This is where they used to have a big campground when they were making the road, those guys, the highway crew or whatever you call them. It wasn't called the department of highways at that time. *Ha, ha.* No it wasn't, it had a different name for it but it was all done by the boys here. That is some of the history of Métis people and so many times it just makes me sick when I hear some people say "They are just a bunch of welfare bums," you know. And the things they did for people and that has never been spoke of or brought up or been appreciated hey. Like there is lots of, like this road for instance, let's take this road, goodness there are millions and millions of people going back and forth on this road every year and nobody knows who in the hell, as far as they knew this was made by machine, they don't know the Métis people sweated all summer long making this road. Things like that and they just totally ignore and forget about it, but then again it is never talked about and I was telling Calvin the thing is we have to bring this stuff out, it has to be told, it has to be written, it has to be out because I said there is too many people out there that think, I said these people are always welfare bums, there is just too much of that.
- 27.5 Leah:** It is not true.
- 27.5 Bob:** No, it isn't. When there was something to be done, they did it and the thing is like I said, this Skinner farm out here it was all broken up by Métis people and now the farmers are getting sixty bushels of grain off of those farms now and nobody talks about it, nobody says thank you very much you bunch of Half-breeds or you bunch of Michifs, no way nobody ever comes out there to write about anything or put anything in the paper that this is what happened and that this is why the Métis people are so proud today because this is what makes me proud you know, because I know all of this and when I hear something like welfare bums, that hurts me pretty bad because there was no such a gal darn thing years ago. Métis all worked and they worked hard for very little pay. Okay you can slow down up here a little ways my girl; we'll start further down. There is a great big house here, a two story house and there is another little house along the lake there and there was a great big house here and there was another one

here and there was two there okay. Right here, there was one of them right here and that is where my dad's aunt used to live here, Mrs. Joe Pelletier.

**29.8 Leah:** Oh, fiddle player family?

**29.8 Bob:** Yeah, they lived right there and then there was another house right in those trees there and then there was two houses on the other side of the dam there. That is where Burt Amyotte and Leo Pelletier used to live on the other side of the river. Right here, this first house, this is where my Uncle Fred \_\_\_ and my aunt, they married and that is where they lived and this house here that was where Old Joe Pelletier lived and the next house just over a little ways, that is where my aunt lived, Aunt Adeline. That is where they lived; her husband was Fred Pelletier and then further down was Jimmy Pelletier and then the great big two story house that was Henry Pelletier lived there. And then here, this house on this side, it was, there was a house here along the bush, that is where Mike Pelletier lived and then on the other side of the bush there was an old, what in the heck was his name, oh darn, I can't think of his name but he was a brother to my Uncle Henry's wife; they were Pelletier's and he lived there and then back here where that great big two story house was that is where Nappy Rayband lived there; he was a brother to my grandmother, my mother's mother, that was her brother that lived there.

**32.1 Cheryl:** So this was it, this is where the action was?

**32.1 Bob:** Well, this is what they call Dog Town. Have you heard of Dog Town?

**32.2 Cheryl:** Okay, I've heard about it.

**32.3 Bob:** Okay, this is where Dog Town is, right here. And then where the action was is further down. See in here they used to have parties here.

**32.6 Cheryl:** With Jimmy Pelletier, would he be playing the fiddle?

**32.6 Bob:** Oh yeah, those guys, they all played hey. Oh what you call him, old Nappy Rayband; oh he was a heck of a fiddle player. I heard him play and he died after I was probably six or seven years old when Nappy left, but he was a brother to my grandmother so he was an uncle to my mother hey and there is still a couple of his kids still alive in Regina. But most of these guys here are all gone now like from here there are only Leo from across the river there, Leo Pelletier, he is still alive, he lives in Estevan. He left here years ago that Leo and he moved to Estevan and he worked over there, there was lots of work in

Estevan and a lot of the Métis people moved up there for that reason and a lot of them that lived, those Pelletier's they moved up to Estevan and went and worked over there and Burt Amyotte, he used to live across the dam there but he was later killed on this hill, when they were fixing this hill. A canapole ran over him and killed him.

**34.6 Cheryl:** So why was it called Dog Town?

**34.7 Bob:** Well I don't really; I can't really tell you the real story of it, why it was called that. I guess it was just kind of a community name or whatever you want to call it. But you see when the Métis, when they first came out of the Red River Settlement, they settled close to Ituna there, close to what they called St. Delphine, this is where all the Métis settled and they moved from there all over the place. When there was work down here, well they came down here. You see a lot of these guys to, they worked for Ernie Skinner because Ernie Skinner's land started right from here all the way down the valley and up the hill. My Uncle Joe Racette used to live up on the hill up here on Ernie Skinner's farm; he worked for him for years hey, yeah. And then my old grandfather and grandmother they lived up on top of the hill over there, they worked for Ernie Skinner.

**35.9 Cheryl:** Well you can sure tell. You can understand why people wanted to settle here; it is just beautiful.

**36.0 Bob:** Well the thing was girls, you know as I see it now, all these settlements were always close to a lot of water. They made sure that if they were going to make a settlement, they made a settlement where they weren't going to run out of water. Because they knew all along that there were plenty of animals around here, lots of deer, rabbits, so this is a real ideal place. You have got lots of water, lots of animals, got lots of wood to burn you know, everything was here and then they get out into these hills here, this is where they found all the medicine. Grandmother used to go up on the hill there and I thought once in awhile she was out there digging wild turnip but it wasn't wild turnip she was after; she was after medicines and she used to have a little shed behind the house there and I remember in the fall you couldn't go into that shed, it was just full of, she had all the rafters with nails in them and she had strings hanging from there you know and she had all these bundles, bundles and bundles of these, well they looked like weeds to me but they weren't hey, they were all medicines and all different kinds. Oh God I would say that there would probably be fifty or sixty different kinds hanging from the ceiling, dried. I used to get a kick out of her. She used to come around in the winter time and the visit wasn't really actually to come and visit you; she was there to come and inspect the kids. When she would look at this kid and she would say, "Well Florence you know, you should send one of the little boys home with me and I'll send you back some stuff for this kid."

**38.3 Leah:** She would make it?

**38.3 Bob:** And she would go over there and make it and bring it back in a day or two and gone. Just unreal and how she knew that, I don't know but she used to go from house to house all over. And she used to walk and she was fairly old already and she use to walk, she would walk down the road to beat hell and I used to laugh at her and my old Grandma Racette, they were sister-in-laws hey, oh God they would be fighting down the road, chasing each other with a stick, oh God, oh they were comical and then they would laugh, they would be in the ditch just killing themselves laughing. Oh they used to have lots of fun. That was Kokum Maross hey, that was Grandpa Charlie Racette's wife. Grandpa Norbert Racette was \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_, you see Kokum Maross was a Valgaurd from High Hills, Little Black Bear and Kokum came out of the States; she was an Allary and this old lady here, this Mrs. Pelletier, we are related to them too, on my dad's side hey, these other guys are on my mother's side because my mother was a Racette and my dad is a Desjarlais and his mother was a Cardinal and this Mrs. Pelletier here was a sister to my grandmother, my dad's mother. And then Mrs. Amyotte, I'll show you where they lived. She was a sister to my grandmother; there was three girls and two boys. Grandpa Joe Cardinal and Grandpa Bill Cardinal, Grandpa Bill Cardinal lived in Ituna and Grandpa Joe Cardinal lived down in the valley. I'll show you where Grandpa Joe lived. But we can go along the valley down in here, we can go along, down this way.

**41.0 Leah:** Fort Ellice here hey?

**41.1 Bob:** Yeah, yeah, this is \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ trail is what they call it here. Oh yeah we got to go on the right trail here; we are going on the Métis trail don't forget.

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**Tape One – Side A ends at 41.6**

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**Tape One: Side B**

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**00.0 Bob:** You see, those guys they made that road all the way down to here, this area right down to Katepwa, this was a new road put in, in the early eighties that road was put in. This is the original old road, the one that the Métis made.

**00.5 Cheryl:** So you must have had a lot of fun playing in the hills.

**00.5 Bob:** Oh God we used to slide, boy I'm telling you we are all professionals, we are all professional skiers. We used to make skis out of old barrels hey, oh lord you should have seen us, that must have been a real sight to see all these kids skiing in the hills and sliding.

Then you'll have to slow down a little bit there my girl, I have a little bit of a story to tell you about that one. It is again part of our relatives here. You see, this is all Ernie Skinner land now that we are in here, it was all Ernie Skinner's and there was an old guy that used to live right here, right there, you see there was a house there, a two story house, kind of watch because there is cattle in there Leah. So anyway there was a two story house there and that is where Lair Grant lived and he was married to my grandmother's sister, he was a brother-in-law to Nappy Rayband and she was a Rayband. I forget how many kids they had, they had two girls for sure, two girls they had for sure I think. There was Alice and Lily, they were Grants hey and that old Lair, he used to talk Cree, real Cree. Boy I'll tell you he was good, and I told \_\_\_\_\_ and I thrashed with him on this farm years ago when I was a kid. I was just a kid and I used to go to school here with his grandchildren, the Marshalls, and I went to school with Burt Amyotte's daughters.

**03.1 Cheryl:** And you went to Allary school, is that what it was called?

**03.2 Bob:** No, no, Katepwa school, just right over here, just around the corner.

**03.4 Cheryl:** Wasn't there an Allary school around here somewhere?

**03.4 Leah:** Crescent Lake.

**03.5 Bob:** No, Crescent Lake. Anyway that is where my grandmother's brother-in-law lived there. See all the cattle there?

**03.8 Leah:** Oh yeah, they are close.

**03.8 Bob:** And this is all used to be Ernie Skinner land here and this building down here, we can probably go down there and get Leah a picture of it. It is kind of a bumpy road you are on, just take it easy.

**04.2 Cheryl:** Calvin and I went down this way, I remember it.

**04.3 Bob:** This is kind of a bumpy trail. This used to be the old fifty-six highway here at one time. Yeah when I went to school here back in the early forties, this was a main highway at one time and then they put a little black top on it after but then they changed it and made a new bridge over there, shortened it all up actually, they shortened it up, that is why they changed it. Oh God this, I guess this is rough trail, this is a Michif road. *Ha, ha.* Tell that time, you guys will have to tell everyone that you travelled down the Michif road. Yes this is the Michif road this one.

**05.6 Cheryl:** That is what we can call our video on the valley.

**05.7 Leah:** Yeah, the Michif Road.

**05.7 Bob:** Anyway this is where some of my, this is where it is at with my ancestors here, this school here, my uncle, Auntie Adeline went to school here, Mrs. Pelletier. She went to school here and I went to school here. That is what they called Katepwa school hey. It is privately owned now, it is owned by some other people. But my grandfather's brother-in-law had a brick factory right here.

**06.4 Cheryl:** Oh yeah, you can see that one whole side of that building is brick.

**06.5 Bob:** Yeah, well that used to be the brick shop here and it was turned into a barn later and just over there, there was a great big two story house there that was made out of brick that they made and that is where my grandfather's brother-in-law stayed and he made the bricks for the school.

**06.8 Cheryl:** So all the houses and schools and everything with brick throughout the valley is probably his hey?

**07.0 Bob:** Yes, Indian Head there is lots of buildings in Indian Head that were all made from this brick factory.

**07.1 Cheryl:** So what year was that, that they would have had the factory?

**07.2 Bob:** It probably would have been in the early twenties, yeah early twenties, and probably even into the 1910s in there. This is where my grandfather's brother-in-law was making those bricks and this is where a lot of those Métis from St. Delphine moved down here and they helped Old Pelletier make those bricks down here because they had to go all over the place looking for rock because they used to crush rocks to make bricks and I'll show you when we get down in the valley here, down further where they made the lime, where they crushed lime rock to mix in with the brick hey.

**08.3 Cheryl:** So when you went to Katepwa school here was this where you played ball and out in here?

**08.4 Bob:** Oh yeah, yeah this is where our diamond was and first base used to be over here and we used to play out this way here and oh yeah this was a great big field here at one time you know. I thought it was anyway. I went to school here in '46 or '47 it was.

**09.0 Cheryl:** Did you want to continue on this way?

**09.0 Bob:** Well we will continue on this way. So anyway this is where my grandfather's brother-in-law started that brick factory and this was their shop, their brick factory shop here but it was made into a barn later and the house used to sit right here. They had a great big three story house here.

**09.5 Cheryl:** Wow that would all have been brick of course.

**09.6 Bob:** Yeah, it was all brick yeah, yes that is exactly where it sat right there and that house was there until the late seventies, in the late seventies they knocked it down. Yeah this was all Ernie Skinner land here. When my grandfather first came down, they lived along the hill there, there was a house there and that is where my grandfather and grandmother lived when they were working with Mr. Pelletier here on the brick factory and then when things kind of slowed down here that is when my grandfather went to work with Ernie Skinner on the farm and they started plowing land and opening up land for Ernie Skinner. See old Ernie Skinner came here, oh turn here to your left; we'll stop here for one second here on the corner. Another thing, another little story I have got to tell you, see this little building that you see here, that used to be a potato farm. There was a lot of Métis people that worked on this farm here. This guy by the name of John Hasher-Jomie, he was a Jap and he came down here and farmed all this land here and they used to put in all these fields here full of potatoes and onions and everything you know and turnips and carrots they used to grow in here. My brother told me he worked there for years, oh that John Hasher-Jomie he wouldn't do anything without Tommy, yes oh yeah, brother Tommy was his right hand man and I will never forget this guy they had working here with them. He was from Crooked Lake down there. He was a Half-breed actually, but a lot of those Half-breeds were given treaty numbers, depending where you were at the time when they were passing treaty numbers around. Anyway his name was Gilbert Sparvier and he always used to talk and he still talks about it, but my brother Tommy is gone hey, he died here about five years ago. Anyway they used to work here and at about eleven o'clock on Saturday night he took the last bag of potatoes to Tommy. He said, and I would tell him, he said "That's it Tommy" and Tommy would look at me and said "Is that all?" *Ha, ha*. He said, I could have killed him by eleven o'clock at night. I'd throw him the last bag of potatoes and that is it Tommy and Tommy would say, "Is that all?" And they were all hand picked those potatoes; they had a machine to pick them out of the ground but they were all laying on top of the ground so they had to hire a bunch of people to pick the potatoes and all the Métis people that was living down there and some of them down here at the end of the lake, he hired them and brother Tommy was kind of the guy that was looking after getting the guys to come and work.

- 13.5 Cheryl:** When they hired just to pick them would it be men, women and kids and everything?
- 13.6 Bob:** Oh, yeah sometimes there was a guy that lived along the bush in a tent all summer. Oh yeah he used to work in the garden pulling weeds in the garden with his kids and then they helped harvest the potatoes and they went home after. I forget, I think they were from Crooked Lake someplace. But they lived here in a tent all summer with his kids and his wife and they were as content as can be you know. They moved home in the fall when the harvesting was done and then the next year, they would move back out here again and the kids.
- 14.3 Cheryl:** Did you have, like some communities had place names for certain hills and things. In the valley did you have that? You said your family lived along the hill. Did you have a certain name for that hill and that hill?
- 14.6 Bob:** Not in particular no, we never did that, no we never did that.
- 14.8 Cheryl:** Because some places do that, like if Seneca grew there, they would call it that where Seneca grows or something like that.
- 14.9 Bob:** Oh yeah, well along here it is too bad my brother is gone; my brother Tommy, he could have took us he had all his favorite spots for Seneca root, every year he used to dig a bunch of Seneca root and he would keep it, then he would send it to Winnipeg in the middle of the winter in January. He would make a package and then ship that stuff to Winnipeg and oh hell, he made money galore.
- 15.4 Cheryl:** It is interesting that you say that because if he is doing that in the winter he is making money all year round.
- 15.5 Bob:** Yeah, yeah, he used to work here during the summer and then in the fall he would go, the summer time I used to laugh at him, he done it for a long time, even way after his kids were small hey, he used to take the kids, him and his wife and away they go the Seneca root digger go out digging the Seneca root and years ago there was a lot of that hey, oh yes there was a lot of Seneca root digging. I remember when we were down here, no not so much down here but when we were living up on the farm there in the summer time we used to go out and dig Seneca root hey. It was really something to go out there and dig that Seneca root and we would get out there and dad would kill a deer and mother would can it and Grandma was with us again and most of the time we travelled in groups hey. Like my Uncle Sam and Auntie Sarah and their family and Uncle Joe and his wife, my Aunt Clara, they used to come and so we kind of travelled in groups. Same thing in Lebret, those guys in Lebret they travelled in groups,

they went all over and dug Seneca root. They used to go all the way down south to a place they called Strawberry Lake and they used to go all the way down there and dig Seneca root, these people from Lebret. We used to go up into the reserve, north, and we used to go south of the reserve, south of \_\_\_\_ and dig Seneca root there. We would take the tent and go and stay out there for a month or so.

**17.5 Leah:** Did you have a digging tool?

**17.5 Bob:** Yeah, yeah it was a little narrow, it was actually a car spring and put on a handle there with a cross bar on it and step on it and you pull it a little bit and pull the plant out and you don't leave any holes or disturb the ground that much. Everybody had this, it was good, they really knew how to harvest their stuff is what I am saying. Like with deer, they knew how many they could kill or which ones they could kill and they knew which deer didn't have a calf this year and they would knock it off and they would find a great big buck and they would say this guy has been around long enough, we'll get rid of that one and we'll get a new one. It was just like harvesting grain to a farmer today; that was the way they did things years ago with the animals and the people and everything else. Like when Grandma went out one day digging stuff like plants, that is what they did, they just shoved the Seneca root digger in there and they rough the dirt a little bit and pull it back a little bit and then pull the plant right out.

**19.1 Cheryl:** And you would never even know that anything had been there.

**19.1 Bob:** No, no you would never even know that anybody has been there; they hardly ever touched anything because this is what they lived on and they respected it, mother earth they call it and they would treat it as such. It was just unreal.

**19.7 Bob:** Métis hunting grounds and this was all Ernie Skinner land here too by the way girls, yeah, this was all Ernie Skinner land yet along here.

**20.0 Cheryl:** Does his family still live in the valley?

**20.0 Bob:** Well that farm there by the church there that is his niece there, yes that is his niece, not his niece. That girl's dad there was a cousin to Ernie Skinner, okay we can stop here at the corner. I want to show you something.

**20.4 Cheryl:** I went down there before, down that little road.

**20.5 Bob:** Yeah, we'll go down there after. Okay right there, that is where I was born and raised, right where that great big tree is, yeah that is

where I was born and raised. Just in the opening there my uncle used to have a house there, my Uncle Pete, my dad's brother and then right in the bush here my Uncle Sam used to live there; that was my dad's sister's husband, that was a brother-in-law. There was three houses there years ago.

**21.2 Cheryl:** What are these posts here? Do you know what those are for?

**21.3 Bob:** Well I don't know what those are for. I guess they were going to make a fence there probably, they were going to fence that in I guess.

**21.5 Cheryl:** So you could have slid right down your house and into the backyard. *Ha, ha.*

**21.6 Bob:** Oh yeah, if we got tired sliding there we would go on this one here, it is steeper and higher, oh God we would come down that one boy right across the field here right into the bush over there, oh lord. I did a lot of sliding here in these hills. Yeah that is where I was born and raised, right there girls.

**22.0 Leah:** Delivered by a midwife.

**22.1 Bob:** Yeah, all of us here starting from the church and this way, old granny used to live in the coulee here hey and we used to have our garden right here, oh God we used to have a big bloody garden, God we used to have vegetables oh hell we would have vegetables to burn boy I'll tell you but we used to have lots for the winter. Every house had a cellar dug in it hey, this is where we kept all the potatoes in it and everything and this is where the boys do all of their duck hunting.

**23.4 Cheryl:** You must have done a lot of swimming in the creek here hey?

**23.5 Bob:** Oh yeah, our favorite swimming hole was around the corner there. Yeah on Sundays we would get together. Boy, there would be about twenty five or thirty of us and we would dive right off the bank hey, oh God we would swim there. Then when that one would kind of go down we had another one over by my uncles, Uncle Renny's there was a sharp bend there and the water used to really wash that out in the spring and then all summer it would be really deep hole there and the bank would be right there and so we would climb up the bank and just dive right in; it had a built in diving board.

**24.4 Leah:** How are you doing? Are you hungry yet Bob?

**24.5 Bob:** No, no I'm not hungry. We still have a little bit to do here; we still have a little bit to do here girls.

- 24.8 Leah:** I didn't bring any snacks or anything for anyone, I'm not a good Michif. *Ha, ha.*
- 24.9 Bob:** Oh, wa, wa. \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ (Michif). In here girls we used to pick hazel nuts and what we used to call \_\_\_\_ (Michif) cranberries, wild high bush cranberries in there, oh there used to be lots. All of us in here, grandma used to Kokum Maross, Moshum Racette, they lived here and they were working. This was all Ernie Skinner's land here and they were working this with horses and they used to come in here. There were saskatoon's in there and chokecherries, oh God there used to be lots of chokecherries. We used to get all of our fruit here and then years ago we used to get the wild current and then we used to get gooseberries, wild gooseberries and my mother used to make jam out of those, oh good lord that used to be good with toast and bannock. Then we used to get, where we crossed over there in the bush back here a little ways, that is where them which you call it, what the heck are they called, but there is a berry in that bush over there, oh God there used to be lots what did you used to call them, berries. The gate open over here? No the gate is closed. So that is where Grandpa Charlie Racette and them lived. That is where Grandpa Charlie Racette, he is a brother to Grandpa Louis and old Joe Racette the one that lived by the church there, then Grandpa Louis, they were brothers hey. Grandpa Norbert lived in the coulee. This is where we used to come every New Year's morning at four o'clock in the morning for breakfast. We would come for bullets and bangs at Grandma's and you had to eat, you had to eat every plate. After we finished here, we would go in the pool, go to Grandpa Norbert's' and then from there we would have to go all the way to Uncle Joe Racette's, my mother's brother, we used to go there because my Kokum was there, my dad's mother and then after when auntie was sick then Kokum come stay with us. My old kokum, \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ (Michif) they would call her, her name was Rose.
- 29.0 Leah:** Saskatoon bushes over there, oh berries everywhere, fruit.
- 29.2 Bob:** This whole thing here, I know for a fact now that this is why the Métis kind of settled in here. There are lots here, deer here, oh deer galore.
- 29.3 Leah:** Did I tell you I saw some when we were at your other grandparents', at your Moshum's up on the hill. I saw two deer while you were in, I actually got the end of their tails going into the coulee, yeah just got a tip of their tails.
- 29.6 Bob:** I guess those are the two that the Michif's didn't get while they were here; they got away on them. But like I say, they knew how to harvest those animals; ducks the same thing, geese anything that they ate, anything that they put on the table was harvested properly,

it wasn't harvest or all killed off you know, it was always plenty of seed there hey, they made sure that there was seed there. Okay you're going to have to slow down here because we are just about. That old log house, this is the only log house that you will find around here, yeah that is the only log house around here for miles that you can find. That one there was my dad, my dad helped build that too, that was built for Uncle Pete Racette. I used to get a kick out of them years ago, like they would call it a log tale but years ago those Michifs would call it \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ (Michif) or else \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ (Michif) that was another way they used to cut the log for the corners hey. They used to ask the guys when they were building \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ (Michif).

**31.6 Cheryl:** What does that mean?

**31.7 Bob:** That means how do you want the corners of your house, dog tail or dog head? But I remember that really well. Like I said we used to get, like here in the coulee there is a creek here and the water would sit in there quite awhile into the summer and into the end of July probably, a lot of places and it was just amazing how those wild berries used to grow in there. Like chokecherries, saskatoons, cranberries, and what do call it, burns(??) and gooseberries oh God there used to be you would find a clump of gooseberries, hell you would fill up a two or three gallon pail from that little bush. It would be just loaded; same with the currents hey. And right in that opening there, by that tree ahead of us, that is where Grandpa Norbert Racette their house sat there and there used to be another little house that sat next to it and that is where his son-in-law used to live there, my godmother lived there, Louis Cardinal used to live there. Then on the other side of the coulee there, there was another house there and Grandpa Norbert's son, youngest one, Morris Racette, he used to live there and then Pete Racette used to live here; this was the third oldest kid of Grandpa Charlie Racette's boys. See this used to be Grandpa Charlie Racette, bought I think sixteen or eighteen acres he bought on this side hill and this is where he built his house here for his son. But my Uncle Peter, he married my dad's cousin's daughter, Uncle Fred Cardinal's daughter he married this Peter Racette and they lived here for two years and he didn't like it here; he was used to up north so they moved. He went with her back up there and they left this place and my mother- in-law and father in-law lived there after. So anyway, just back there that is where Grandpa Norbert Racette used to live, right by that tree over there, that great big tree and the barn used to be on this side and the chicken house was down a little bit further and then down back over there that is where Morris Racette's house used to be and then my Grandpa and then Louis Cardinal used to live right next close to grandpa, his house there hey.

- 35.7 Leah:** If you didn't know that they lived there you would have no idea, there is not much left there.
- 35.8 Bob:** Yes, that is right like even Uncle Louis Cardinal's kids I was telling them that and they just looked at me as though I was crazy. You have to turn around here some place because this is the end of our trail here; we have to go the other way further there. We used to, we had, we made buckets with chicken wire and we used to catch fish there, oh we used to catch fish and then they used to clean them and fix them and can them and dry them and oh God we would have fish for summer. Every spring fish would come up there and they would still be in good shape because they just came out of the lake hey. Oh God I remember that so well, and then the best, the thing I really used to love was canned deer meat, oh God that used to be good. My mother used to can lots of deer meat. My dad would kill a deer and mom would cut it all up and cook it in sealers hey and then in the middle of summer they would open a sealer of deer meat or a sealer of fish meat and oh God like I said we had lots of garden and then we had fruit galore. Like rhubarb, I remember my mother, one year everything we ate had rhubarb in it.
- 37.7 Cheryl:** Must have been a really good year for rhubarb.
- 37.8 Bob:** Oh that was a hell of a year for rhubarb but my Grandma and them, they used to have a garden about a whole acre down there, Grandma Racette because they had quite a big family hey, there was eleven of them but they went all home at four or five of them home when I was a young kid living here. But I used to walk from here, I used to walk to Grandma's place over there, Norbert Racette's place, Kokum Florence, I used to go with her to go and get medicine, come back. And one time I'll have to tell you this story again, I have told this story a hundred and ninety nine times I think. My old Grandma down there, old Kokum Flora, one time when we were living here our barn used to be down in here close to the river our barn. Our chicken house used to be down there and Uncle Sam they had a barn down there too and his chicken house used to be right there and we used to have a pig pen back there, we used to have pigs there, that barn of ours used to be right over there and the hen house used to be there. One time Kokum Flora come and she said to mom "Have you got any chickens clucking?" And mom said "Yeah, I got one," she said "sitting in the barn." "Well," she said "You had better give her some eggs." She said "Why don't you give me some eggs and I'll take the little boy home with me and I'll send some eggs back home with him and you can put them under\_\_\_." They used to trade eggs here, like grandma Racette and Kokum Maross used to trade with mom, they used to trade eggs so that they are not interbreeding their chickens hey, they have healthier chickens. This is where all the ball games that was held in the valley here was played right here. They used to have a ball

diamond here, oh God a lot of ball games were played here. We used to sit along the bush there and watch the ball games hey. Sunday's oh God there would be a ball game Saturday night, there would be a ball game here, if there wasn't a party some place, yeah they would have a ball game. And then right here, right along the edge of the bush here this is where old Isadore Amyotte, that was a brother-in-law to my dad's my old grandmother and old Isadore Amyotte's wife were sisters, they were Cardinal girls. So this is where old Isadore Amyotte used to live and then there is a house in here Frank Fayant used to live there and then there is another house a little bit further down and Jack Fayant used to live there.

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**Tape One – Side B ends at 41.6**

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**Tape Two: Side A**

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**00.0 Bob:** There used to be three houses here too, in a row and just around the corner here this is where Uncle Renny used to live, Uncle Renny Amyotte, like they still use the yard there. But this is where my old Kokum there. I remember that dog, his name was Major; he lived right there and a little lean-tos house in a little Michif house and then right here my Uncle Joe Klyne used to live right there, there used to be a house right there and then up further up there Uncle Harry Poitras used to live up there and then down a little ways there that is where Mark Harrow used to live there and this is where right there, that is where I used to call square dances. There used to be our dance hall there Uncle Renny's place. Yeah that is where we had our dance hall here that is where we had our parties, Uncle Renny's it is where they used to live.

**01.4 Cheryl:** And they still have stuff out here though?

**01.5 Bob:** Oh yeah, we have homecomings and anniversaries and stuff. There is going to be something going on here this coming weekend. See, when I was talking about Grandpa's over there we wanted to get that place to make it something like this hey where we could go to and celebrate our gatherings. I am seriously thinking about buying a chunk of land there, right at the church, buying that church property there and having a thing set up like this for the, you see these guys here are Grandpa Charlie Racette's family that got this and I would like to have one there for Grandpa Louis Racette and they can come in there and see these guys here. They all chipped in to buy this property and they all chipped in for the taxes and everything and every year they throw a little bit of money into the kitty and ten or fifteen dollars a piece. You got five or six hundred dollars there and like they are all cousins hey, we are all cousins so I was telling cousin Morris I was telling him when you were doing this for God's sake don't close this up, if you close it up I said goodbye and some God darn guy is going

to come along and burn it down on you. I said if you leave it open like that, they are not going to bother it.

**03.6 Cheryl:** That is a smart idea.

**03.6 Bob:** Yeah, and I was just telling her that the property at the church there I would like to purchase that and make something like this there. See this is where they hold their anniversaries and they have summer picnics for two or three days hey.

**04.0 Leah:** I think you should.

**04.1**

**05.7 Leah:** Oh wow! It is all falling apart.

**05.7 Bob:** Yeah it is all falling apart though; we have to go back I think. That is where the Fayant's were born and raised. Yeah, twenty-one kids.

**06.2 Cheryl:** Twenty-one kids hey?

**06.3 Bob:** Yeah, twenty-one kids they raised. You know what I can't figure out today is a lot of these places they get all hammered up you know the houses and when someone says something to someone it is oh the kids did that you know but that is the easy way out for the folks you know. These people raised twenty kids in that house and I don't think they ever changed a glass or a door or anything in that house from the time they were here and they were here quite awhile, they were there a lot longer than we were. Like we lived there at the corner and then after we lived there that is when from here we moved to Lebret, on top of the hill there. Dad worked on a farm there. We stayed there from '42 to '46 and then we moved down and we stayed by the church there that time when we first came down, but from there dad built a house down here after but I was gone already when they were living here. I was.

**07.6 Cheryl:** Twenty-one kids!

**07.7 Bob:** Yeah, yeah and so far I think there is three gone, there is three of them gone. But oh God there used to be a lot of, these hills here, there wasn't a bit of grass on these hills here because of kids sliding on them, all summer they slid on paper boxes and all winter they slid on sleighs there. They wore out all the gosh darn grass on the hills there those little guys and one of them was my brother-in-law, married my sister and then one of them was my sister-in-law, married my brother. Anyway, along here this was still the Michif road here there was this old guy right here, he was \_\_\_\_\_ I don't

know where in the hell he came from or how in the hell he got mixed up down here. He lived here, old Bill Bar was his name. He used to have horses, he used to work this little bit of land here and he had a little bit of land down on the hill.

**09.0 Cheryl:** Oh, it's an old workhouse.

**09.0 Bob:** No it is just brick siding; it's a wood frame house hey, that used to be his barn there. I can't see his driveway because all he had was a wagon and a team; that is all he ever used. He didn't even have a buggy. Right behind this hill here, this is where Grandpa Joe Cardinal, this is where he moved to after he came off of that farm over there where Grandpa Louis used to live; he came here and they built a house here right behind this hill here. It was a log house, two story house. It is right pretty well tight up against the hill there, it is pretty hard to see but it is an old log house. Then old Henry Klyne, he lived up there. You know that guy that Calvin gave those tapes to, that is where he was born and raised right there, George Klyne. Old Henry Klyne used to live there. Then just on top of the hill here, just on that little dip there, there used to be a house there and that is where old Philip Fleury used to live; he was a son in law of old Henry Klyne's and then he moved to St. Aloda(??) and then my Uncle Sam lived there and my dad built a house right down here and our barn used to be right down there and this is where when we were living here I think you can still see the hole there where the house used to sit; it used to sit there and our barn used to be down there and the chicken house and this is where my mother used to raise turkeys; she got into turkeys and she used to raise about two hundred turkeys and you should have seen the, those turkeys used to wander off and go up the side hill there hey and she would go get on the road there and put a little can there and she would hit that can and those turkeys would come flying right off that hill and they would land right by the barn there and those trees there that is where they slept, those great big trees there, there are hardly any leaves left on those trees today. They hung on those trees there, all night that was their sleeping place there them turkeys and then in the fall she butchered them hey. And she went around trading them for pork chops and...

**12.5 Leah:** Real traders hey?

**12.5 Bob:** Oh yeah, barter, you bartered all the time like my mother I said every Saturday her Auntie Mary Poitras, Mrs. Poitras, she used to make rugs too hey and they used to make rugs and they used to make rugs. That is pretty much the end of the tour here girls.

**13.1 Cheryl:** Do you know of any women in the valley that are still making rugs other than Adeline?

**13.2 Leah:** I would sure like to buy one off of one of these women.

**13.3 Bob:** You know what? We might be able to get my cousin Adeline Klyne, Uncle Sam's daughter, she might, she used to make them, my mother taught her how to make them hey. There is no fence along here; when we were living here I used to go from here way down here go on the road and then I used to go in the coulee, go in the coulee and chase them deer up to dad, Uncle Renny and dad and Uncle Harry, they would go up the hill here and then go up the coulee hey.

**14.0 Cheryl:** And you would be sitting on the other side waiting for them?

**14.0 Bob:** Yeah, yeah they would be waiting and then when the wind was right we would go; if the wind wasn't right then we wouldn't go hunting. They knew which ones to get, yeah, I never ever seen them open a deer with a calf in it or anything, that never did happen for as long as I lived. Like I never forget that Berny Wiens one time, years ago when he was one of the ministers there, boy I sure shut him up in a hell of a hurry at a meeting in Regina there. That is when we were after our hunting rights and he said at the meeting there "Oh if we open, give the Métis their hunting rights they will slaughter all of the animals," he said, "There won't be nothing left," he said. Boy I put up my hand right away and the chairman said, "Desjarlais, you got the floor." I said, "I am just going to answer this guy's question. I have been living in the valley all of my life and my dad and my uncles," I said, "hunted all of their lives," and I said, "You can still find animals down where we were, because," I said, "Métis peoples know how to harvest their animals," I said. "They are not like anybody else. I am not saying who but I'll use other people," I said. "We know how to look after," I said. "We figure this out as part of our farming. You have to look after your crop if you want something for next year; there is no way you can kill off all of those females," I said, "Those females they got to be there and there has to be bucks there and female ducks and there has to be male ducks there," I said. "So you can create all these new ones." And I said "They have to be killed off," I said. The thing is, if you don't do it, you are going to start to get disease and this is what is starting to happen now. They find that some of the deer got brain damage and they shouldn't be eaten. They got something like that mad cow disease hey so and that is what happens when you don't thin this out hey, you have got to keep thinning them out and weeding the bad ones out and letting the good ones go.

**17.4 to 17.6** Silence.

**17.9 Bob:** I wish like you still, two weeks ago my mother was on TV there and they got a film of mom at Prairie Christian Training Centre at the Fort there.

**18.3 Leah:** She sure likes flowers on her \_\_\_\_.

**18.3 Bob:** Oh, everybody yeah my mother too used to make roses and every God darn thing.

**18.5 Cheryl:** There was a point when they were talking to her and she would sell on this side and her Kokum and Moshum would sell on that side and their rugs would never meet.

**18.6 Leah:** They would never meet, they had their territories.

**18.7 Bob:** Yeah, like mom and Auntie Mary, they used to go up on top of the hill up that way and they never used to come this way because auntie and them from Katepwa there from Dog Town they used to kind of work this area so everybody kind of had their own area to work in hey. They didn't cross each other and this is where everybody got along so well hey and like I say we used to kill and used to share hey and I will never forget the story that I have told a few times. This old game warden that used to come down in the valley here, a guy by the name of J.Z. LaRocque hey old Joe LaRocque, he used to come down here, he was a game warden that time and he used to come and visit us there and mom used to feed him bannock of course he was an old Michif himself so he used to come down there and he used to tell dad to go hunting hey said if somebody comes he said, I said is it still there, that old log house, Jesus Christ I live in that old log house for God's sake. I said good for you are you still there, I said my dad, Uncle Toby, Uncle Joe and Uncle Sam they built that. I heard something of that he said but I can't remember who it was, it was your dad he said and I said yeah. That Kokum Maross actually gave her the pattern; I forget what the hell was the name of that.

**20.5 Cheryl:** It wasn't a log cabin?

**20.6 Bob:** No, no what the heck was the name of that. Oh mother made about a dozen of those quilts after so what she done there the first quilt she made she gave to Kokum Maross for giving her the pattern. What the hell was the name of that pattern?

**21.5 Leah:** Oh Bob, we were going to get you to say the name of that horse decoration.

**21.5 Bob:** \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ (Michif).

**21.6 Leah:** Good.

**21.6 Cheryl:** Any idea how to spell it?

**21.8 Leah:** So this gravesite we are going to, there is a lot of Métis buried there hey.

**21.8 Bob:** Yeah, there is Poitras, there's Bourassas and my grandfather is buried there and there, that was an old Métis settlement there hey, when they came out of the Red River Settlement that is where they settled first. This is where they stopped and this is where they settled. There used to be a great big lake there but it is just about all dried out now but at one time my dad often talked about it and even into the late eighties they used to lots of water there at one time, it was a nice big lake. Like I said the thing is before every time wherever they settled they always made sure there was plenty of water and a good water source hey, they didn't care about anything else but that water had to be plentiful, it was a must. This place here they settled all the way around, three quarters of the way around that lake they lived the Métis people and this used to be an old school here, Violet school was the name of the school here. A few of the Fayant boys, they used to live over here, they went to school there, old Clifford Fayant his brother and his sister they used to go to school there, but they were the only Métis family that used to go to school there.

**23.8 to 25.2** Silence.

**25.3 Leah:** It's beautiful.

**25.4 Bob:** Mrs. Suzuki here setting up. *Ha, ha.* We have to let our photographer get set up here, our naturalist.

**25.6 Leah:** It is so hard to level on this kind of ground.

**25.7 Cheryl:** Do you want to maybe stand in front and she can film you.

**25.8 Bob:** Oh, oh boy oh boy, well if I am going to go on which you call it that bird.

**26.1 Leah:** Okay Bob, we are rolling, tell us about it.

**26.2 Bob:** We're rolling. This was quite some time ago, I would say it is any where from fifteen to seventeen years ago, we didn't, the Métis didn't, my generation didn't know anything about this burial ground here but as you can see all these stones here are Métis people except for three of them. There was three Ukrainians here, they must have been buddies or friends or they were married to Métis women or whatever, here probably. They got buried here too. There are Poitras here, Brasses and my grandfather's stone is right there if I am not mistaken. But when we first heard about this place we came up here about four or five of us we came and found this cemetery here and so we saw the condition that it was in so we went back and reported to

the community back home, to the people at home and they said geez, we got to do something about it, we can't let it go like that. So we all came in here, there was about twenty-five of us and we all came in here with axes and everything and came and cleaned this all out and then after that well the community of Telemen keeps this place cut now. This back here on the hill here is where the church used to be and the school used to be there and you can see here the part of the lake that was part of the lake but this whole bottom here was lake at that point in time when they were here and I guess the lake ran quite a ways back over here but there was Métis houses, log houses built all the way around this but there was no there was hardly any farm land here at all due to the fact of the bush, it was all bush and this is why they let all those people settle here. I don't know exactly how many would have been here but I would assume that there would be probably thirty to forty families living around here and they had a church and a school here. But most of the kids like my dad he went to school but he only went to school for two summers and then he quit and went to work hey. But after we found out that this was here and our ancestors and a lot of the Métis people were buried here that we knew so we decided to come and clean it up and I am sure glad we did now because it sure makes me proud to see the way it is now. Because if we wouldn't have come in here and did what we did, this place we would have never found this place today.

**29.7 Leah:** So can you show us some of the graves?

**29.8 Bob:** Yes, yeah I know a lot of these like the Bourassas and the Poitras, I knew them all, I knew all of them families, I knew them all and like all the Poitras boys and Bourassa boys, the Bourassa family I knew them all. But you see one of these stones here is marked John Desjarlais and that is my grandfather's stone.

**30.3 Leah:** Oh yeah, right there behind you.

**30.4 Bob:** Yeah that is the one yeah. You see a lot of the stones have this moss on them hey when we found them, they were just covered with this due to the fact that they were in the bush and this moss had grown on them and we had to clean a lot of these stones. And I see Grandpa's stone here has still got quite a bit of moss on it.

**31.1 Cheryl:** He was quite young wasn't he?

**31.2 Bob:** Yes, yes, very young man, thirty four years old. Well my brother when he passed away he was only forty nine too and my dad, my Uncle Toby he was only forty two years old when he died. Yeah there is some Poitras in here.

**31.6 Leah:** Some Rosses.

**31.6 Bob:** Some Rosses yeah, some Bourassas, lots of them are all Métis and they are all people that came out of the Red River Settlement and ended up here.

**31.9 Cheryl:** Alice (?) Desjarlais, back there. There is another one over there, Marie Christine.

**32.0 Bob:** Yeah.

**32.1 Leah:** There are Fishers too.

**32.2 Bob:** Oh yeah there are Fishers. Oh there are a whole bunch of Métis people out here.

**32.3 Leah:** And you are saying a lot are buried also at Lebret?

**32.4 Bob:** Yes, oh yes. You see these here would have been buried, what year was my grandfather buried?

**32.5 Leah:** 1911?

**32.6 Bob:** Yeah okay. That would be in the early 1900's hey in the very, very early nineteen hundreds was when these would have been buried around here. But after the forties while the people were all pretty well gone from here hey, yeah the people were all pretty well gone from here in the forties.

**33.1 Leah:** Métis history is sure hidden history isn't it?

**33.2 Bob:** Yes, well the thing is there is getting less and less people that knows anything about this hey. I'm very glad that I am able to share this with you people today because it is something that I am very proud of and happy to live to be able to live to tell it you know.

**33.7 Leah:** And it is preserved and protected now.

**33.7 Bob:** Yes, it is like there was caraganas in here and chokecherry trees and poplar trees and like I said there are trees fifteen to twenty feet long in here, this was just covered with growth and there is an old fence in there, it is still in there, the fence that was originally put up in here, they used to have a fence here but again all this should be cleaned up in here and kind of straightened out but at least the whole gravesite here is shown, it is out in the open now, it is not in the bush anymore. And I often would like to see some of the older people like the Bourassas, the Fishers and Poitras. You know I was just mentioning to my nephew George when we were here last fall I said you know I said somebody should start arranging to have a gathering

here of these people, different families that got different families buried here, you know grandfathers, grandmothers, aunts, and uncles you know and have a big gathering here and kind of have a mass here for these people and arrange for a priest to come here and I am sure a priest would really love to do that, like father Glen, I often like to talk to him about this place you know.

**35.8 Cheryl:** What a beautiful place this would have been when the lake was here.

**35.8 Bob:** Oh boy, I guess the lake, they said that lake my dad said heck it was ten to twelve feet deep and they used to swim in there and God it was just a real ideal spot and the stones are still where the buildings were up there you know, yeah. But it's really nice to see this being looked after now. See there is the name of the community right there; yeah St. Delphine that's what this community was called. And I was telling George you know I said it would be nice if somebody was to build a little church and a little school to sit here as you know, yeah.

**37.2 Leah:** I can see why they lived here.

**37.2 Bob:** Yes, um yes it like you say everything was plentiful out here like today we see beavers out here. I imagine at the lake here there was lots of beavers at the lake here and there was probably lots of muskrats in the lake here and there would be minx and weasels, stuff like that hey, game would be plentiful around here for people to live on. Lots of trappers catching muskrats and stuff. Yes I remember years ago when I was a little kid, my uncle and I, we went trapping for muskrats one spring there, it was nothing for us to go out and catch a hundred and fifty to two hundred rats in one evening we used to have quite a few traps and we had each a gun and we used to shoot the odd one. You no more than set a trap and walk away from it and you would get about twenty five feet from the trap and you could here your trap go off and you go back and there was a muskrat in it and you would give him a hit and threw him on the side there and then set your trap again and walk away and you wouldn't get more than thirty, forty feet away and bang! Ah to hell with you, you just keep walking and go and set another trap and after you set that trap, oh I had better go and take him off, set that trap again, so we would go back and take him off and oh we used to, they used to be so plentiful at one time rats, muskrats hey and they were good eating, people ate them and they still eat them like in The Pas, it is a real delicacy there for those people. Like my daughter-in-law she would walk ten miles to go and have a piece of muskrat, yes and my son's brother-in-law there, they call him crazy Pat and he would go miles away to go and have a what they do over there is they shake and bake the muskrats they use that shake and bake on them. Oh he loves that. One time he was sitting in the café there and he had his old belly sticking up like that so

I tapped him on the belly and said "Gee you're getting pretty round there Pat." "Yeah," he said "Yes, Bob, don't hit that too hard," he said. "There are three shake and bake muskrats in there." *Ha, ha.*

**40.5 Bob:** Guys like that they didn't hunt, they didn't care about hunting that much so what my Uncle Renny and my dad and Uncle Harry Poitras they used to go out and they used to butcher four or five deer hey and they would cut them all up and they would say we'll cut a piece for this family, he's got three or four kids hey so they would cut a piece of meat accordingly and in no time at all the meat is all shared up okay we have to deliver the meat, okay I'm going that way anyway so I'll take this bunch and you go that way so you take that one. I'll go this way and you take that one you know. Oh they had everything figured out and everyone got fresh meat and then everything was quiet for two or three weeks and then someone would squawk about wanting some meat, so it was time to hunting again and I used to go with them pretty well all the time.

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**Tape Two – Side A ends at 41.7**

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**Tape Two: Side B**

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**00.1 Bob:** Yeah, I used to be the dog, I used to go and chase the deer to the. They would sit and wait for them and I would bring the deer and boom, boom, boom, boom, I could hear them shooting and my Uncle Renny used to laugh. Years ago we would go and kill some deer and as soon as I would get to where they are, they are skinning already hey, they're butchering the animals and as soon as I get there well I had matches in my pocket and I had a shaker in my pocket, my mother put some pepper and salt in a shaker, mixed hey and I used to carry that in my pocket, matches and my salt and pepper so I would get there and the first thing I would do is make a fire. Okay as soon as one of the legs in clear there, I would put it on a stick and cook some meat, I would start cooking and so I got cooking there and Uncle Renny, "Alright nephew where is your salt and pepper?" *Ha, ha.* So I would dig in my pocket there and hand him my salt and he used to laugh and he said "I don't know what we would do without you," he said. God, he said, this little guy he carries, and I had a knife too, I carried a knife all of my life and I still carry it; my dad always carried one all of his life so I carry one.

**01.8 Leah:** Did you ever play *les petite cato*, little knife?

**01.9 Bob:** A little wee bit years ago, not very much. A bunch of us little guys we would play marbles too in the spring until the we get kind of sick of it, then we would play knives and then we would play those, what the heck do you call that, I forget the name of that God darn game but it was just like dice, something like dice.

**02.5 Leah:** Jacks?

**02.5 Bob:** Yeah, we used to play that for hours you know, I will never forget those things and then what we used to do what was our favorite thing once we got a little bit older when we got to about around ten years old, eleven years old were some of them and some of them were twelve and well I was about nine years old I guess. We used to square dance, you see what they used to do the people on Sundays, they used to go to Grandpa's and a lot of time they would go to Grandpa Joe Cardinal's and when all us kids would kind of be left behind hey. So mom and dad well they would go down there and dad would play cards, the guys would play cards and the ladies would be sitting in the blankets there along the bush too, outside of the house in the shade telling their stories you know. And us kids we'd be home alone so we would get a hold of Uncle Edward, Edward Racette he used to play the fiddle and my cousin Stan he used to play the guitar so we would get a hold of Stan and Uncle Ed and then we would go around to Uncle Renny's there and there was four girls there hey so four of us guys would go there and we would start square dancing and pretty soon there would be fifteen to twenty of us or more. So this one time, my Uncle Renny he almost died laughing that time too, him and Auntie Emma, they were all down at Grandpa Joe's over there so we were square dancing in the house and I was standing on top of a chair there calling off the square dance and the guys were dancing to beat hell and I guess when they got close to the house they could hear this music and they could hear these guys hollering just calling all square dance. I guess uncle said to mom and dad oh my god he said you know he said, that is Bobby calling and dad said yeah it sounds like it. So anyway they kind of snuck up to the house and they were peeling through the window and watching us square dancing like a bugger and then all of sudden the door opened and they come in laughing and we kind of quit, no, no, no uncle said don't quit keep going, keep going and we said oh no we don't like dancing with an audience. We used to have lots of fun. We used to do that for hours and we got pretty good at it and I loved dancing.

**05.6 Leah:** Me too.

**05.6 Bob:** I used to love dancing. Well I really love watching dancing now but I can't dance anymore, my knees are so bad that I can hardly stand up never mind dance.

**05.8 Cheryl:** Did you do a lot of singing?

**05.8 Bob:** I used to yeah, we used to play the guitar and sing.

**05.9 Cheryl:** Do you remember any songs?

**05.9 Bob:** Oh I remember a couple of songs, yeah we entertained ourselves. It is not like kids today, they don't even know how to entertain themselves. Years ago we knew how to entertain ourselves and my Uncle Edward he was just great like he was more or less the babysitter in the valley there hey. Like in the summertime he would come and play ball with the kids and whatever and he would be out there sliding with us too. At night, a nice moonlight night we would take the sleighs. A few times we took the cutter up there, we took the shaft from the cutter and about ten kids got in that cutter and we let it go, oh God they ended up way down by the river and those guys were laughing like I don't know what. Uncle Edward he would come too with his sleigh, come sliding with the kids but oh he was a dandy babysitter, he was just unreal and then he would bring his fiddle and play and he would make us dance. He was a good step dancer hey, oh he could jig, Uncle Ed, he could jig like a bugger, so he would show us some steps and say, "You go like this guys, come on you girls you got to try it too." Oh God his demonstrations and then we would just kill ourselves laughing and if someone would make a mistake everybody laughed like hell. The heck with you guys I'm not going to do that anymore and a couple of minutes later he would be back up there trying it again, never give up, a typical Half-breed you know. Once that music started you know your feet were going automatically. We'll go straight on through; we'll go to where my grandfather used to live. See like I said he lived down here when he was working but after he started working for Ernie Skinner when they started breaking this land up here. Ernie Skinner had built a house up on top of the hill here and this is where my grandfather and grandmother moved in. You see they used to live up on the hill here years ago.

**08.9 Leah:** Is there any houses or log cabins left out here?

**08.9 Bob:** There is only one my girl, there is just one left, yeah we will see it. I'll take us to it.

**09.1 Leah:** Is all the mud off of it now, no mud it's just...?

**09.2 Bob:** There is a wee bit of mud left in it, yeah a little bit of mud left in it. I'll never forget this guy I used to have work for me, a guy by the name of Johnny Meran. He died a few years back but he used to work for me for about nine years as a carpenter and one time he was half shot and this guy was stuccoing, was doing some stuccoing for us and when we were finished we went to the bar and we were going to have a couple of drinks hey and Johnny said hey he said you didn't \_\_\_ how to stucco he said to this white guy, my wife used to do that years ago he said, she was \_\_\_\_\_. But oh God I laughed and I will never forget that and this guy he just sat there and was just taking it all in hey, he thinks he is so smart. Stuccoing, he said, my wife did that fifty years

ago. That's true enough, his wife was an Amyotte, Margaret Amyotte was her name and she was a sister to that Burt Amyotte that was saved, that lived across the river there or across the dam there at the end of the lake. Anyway, Margaret, oh she was a hard worker. That woman worked hard all her life and she used to mud houses and in the fall she used to go around repairing mud houses you know putting the mud on.

**11.3 Leah:** It's a big job.

**11.4 Bob:** Yeah, and she was good at it, like John said my wife was a good stuccoer he said.

**11.4 Leah:** He meant it too.

**11.4 Bob:** Yeah, he meant it.

**11.5 Cheryl:** She was just ahead of her time.

**11.5 Bob:** Yeah, yeah. John just wanted to make sure that these guys he knew this is nothing new for John, this is something.

**11.7 Leah:** They use clay from the river I imagine hey?

**11.8 Bob:** I'll show you where all the clay came out of.

**11.9 Cheryl:** I just have a question. When they built the road, this is what it probably, what it would have looked like?

**11.9 Bob:** Yes, yes, this was built by them too.

**12.0 Cheryl:** So it would have looked very much like this?

**12.0 Bob:** Yes, yes, very much like this yeah very much like that yeah. All hand work but like I say there is so much of that history that people did years ago that is not appreciated at all. Nothing mentioned about it.

**12.6 Cheryl:** What about horse races? Did you guys have lots of horse races?

**12.6 Bob:** Oh yeah, every little town had a horse racing, a sports day hey. Indian Head the first of July was a sports day, a horse racing there and Balcarres used to be on the sixth of June. There used to be horse racing there, 24<sup>th</sup> of May in Fort Qu'Appelle there was horse racing there and Wolseley was on the end of May and Qu'Appelle they used to have horse racing in Qu'Appelle too. I have lots of relatives in Qu'Appelle; that is where all those Perigiens came from hey, my

uncles, like my mother's brothers-in-law, there was two of them there.

- 13.5 Cheryl:** So was there anybody that really stood out, that was really good on their horse or was really fast?
- 13.6 Bob:** Oh yeah, there was quite a few boys from the reserve that used to come out. Slow down a little bit here, it is not a highway, it is just a trail going into the field. Here, we'll take that. I can't see very good, I just got my operation on my eye and I am just starting to see decent. Here it is, just a trail in the field, yeah there it is, just a trail.
- 14.7 Cheryl:** Another Michif road.
- 14.7 Bob:** Yeah, yeah. *Ha, ha.* This is an old, old Michif road this one. Yeah Moshum \_\_\_\_ (Michif). You see this was Ernie Skinner land here too hey, this is where my grandpa used to work here, yeah he used to run this.
- 15.1 Leah:** Can you tell us a little bit about your Moshum in Michif so your grandchildren can hear it on tape someday.
- 15.2 Bob:** Yeah... (Michif).
- 16.5 Leah:** So you were talking about the fall? I am catching a little bit.
- 16.6 Bob:** There should be a little trail in here, the grass is kind of long here, you have to kind of watch it. But we have been going in and out of here, me and Jacqueline drove in here with a little car and my cousin and I drove in here a few times with a car because they didn't know, they never knew about this hey, I was the only one that knew about this. That is about as far as we should go I think. Okay this is the house where my grandfather lived and this used to be a great big barn down there and they used to have a chicken house down there and back further there used to be a pig pen over there; they used to raise pigs. Every one of these houses, as you'll notice, they were all shingles on the outside, they all belonged to Ernie Skinner.
- 17.9 Cheryl:** The shingles did?
- 17.9 Bob:** Yeah, the houses that was the way they made them years ago and my Uncle Henry used to live across the valley here on the other side here. His house was made the same, it had shingles on the outside but it was a one story, this was a two story because my grandpa and them they had quite a few kids hey so this is where they stayed and they used to work all this land with horses. Years ago Ernie Skinner used to buy horses by the carload from the west, Broncos, guys were selling them from the west hey. I don't know

what they were selling them for, probably sold them pretty cheap and they would ship them down here and when they got to Indian Head here, at the stockyard, my dad used to do the breaking, him and two other guys they called the Lawson brothers, Ted and Jack Lawson. They used to help my dad. You see them Lawson boys they used to round up the Broncos in the west down there around Maple Creek, Swift Current country, and anyway one day when they loaded up all those horses there and they were shipping them east well those Lawson boys said somewhere, someplace these horses have got to be broken in because they are going to be used for farming. So they followed these horse this way and that is how them two boys got down here; they were originally from Maple Creek them two boys but they stayed here, they worked here for a couple of years with dad for Ernie Skinner, breaking in the horses. But dad said they used to have lots of fun breaking in the horses. And my cousin tells the story of when my grandpa and them were here, like I lost my dear cousin here this spring here, she was with me that time when I made that film that I got and she was telling me that one time my uncle slid with the sleigh from on top of the barn down on to the hay stack and he said it couldn't have happened any nicer, they came right from in the roof and landed right on top of the haystack with the sleigh. There used to be a spring down there, that is where they used to get all of the water, they used to water all the horses, well grandpa and them here they would have probably had anywhere from 25 to 30 head of horses here because they probably ran two or three outfits to run this land here and it took lots of horses hey but my dad did tell me exactly how many carloads Ernie Skinner brought in from the west that time but I forget the number now. But there was an awful, he had a pile of horses and then Uncle Henry had a bunch of horses and then over the hill down there I'll show you where Grandpa Norbert used to live and where Grandpa Charlie Racette used to live down there and by the church there, that is where Grandpa Joe lived and they were all four brothers hey, Grandpa Joe Racette, Norbert Racette, Charlie Racette and Louis Racette used to live here, they were all brothers and they all worked for Ernie Skinner.

**22.3 Cheryl:** So what was the house like inside?

**22.3 Bob:** It was, it's probably stucco, not stucco but plaster in the inside but there wasn't an ounce of insulation in it. My cousin Margaret was saying that Uncle George was telling her, that was her dad hey, that was my uncle George Racette, he was saying to her that sometimes his hair used to freeze to the side of the wall so by morning, his hair would be froze to the wall. I remember years ago like all these old houses had the big wood stove, kitchen stove and right behind the kitchen stove would be a barrel, where they had all drinking water and the whole bit.

- 23.3 Cheryl:** On the side here was that like an addition or was that a summer addition?
- 23.4 Bob:** No, that was put on later. Like Grandpa Louis Racette lived here and then Grandpa Joe Cardinal lived here after and he, they had quite a few kids hey and he worked for Ernie Skinner after Grandpa Louis passed away and then when Grandpa Joe Cardinal moved out of here, moved down into the valley when he got fairly old, he couldn't work anymore, so he moved down in the valley, built a house down there my dad and them built him a house down there, they moved down there. A guy by the name of Henry Poitras lived down here after and when Henry was here, he had a car and he didn't use horses like all the other ones like Grandpa Louis Racette and Grandpa Joe Cardinal, they never had cars; they used horses so there was really no need. See that was a little garage built there and Henry Poitras put his vehicle in there.
- 24.8 Cheryl:** There is a chimney at this end and then it looks like there's a hole over there. Would there have been another chimney over there? Like a woodstove and then a fireplace or a smaller stove?
- 24.9 Bob:** No, no there would be a great big heater, there would be a heater in the living room and then a stove, so they would use two stoves ninety percent of the time.
- 25.2 Cheryl:** So would there be an upstairs or was it just a loft area?
- 25.2 Bob:** No, there was an upstairs; that is where the bedrooms were.
- 25.3 Cheryl:** So, on the end here is that a window?
- 25.3 Bob:** Yes, yes there is a window there for upstairs.
- 25.6 Cheryl:** Leah, did you want to go to the other side and see? There may be a window or something you can peak in. And so you said there were other buildings?
- 25.7 Bob:** Yeah, the pig barn and then chicken house and then there was a great big barn there, I remember that, oh it was a huge barn, it probably held thirty or forty \_\_\_\_\_. (Fuzz)
- 26.2 Cheryl:** Did the women sell...
- 26.2 Bob:** Oh yeah, yeah that is right and the thing, they all went to the store and pound off for groceries whatever like the biggest thing they used to buy was probably \_\_\_\_ because Ernie Skinner had flour, sugar, tea, and coffee and stuff like that right at his place that these guys had access to, all the guys that were working for him. The kids had

clothes and the ladies at Christmas time he used to go around giving the ladies a chunk of Christmas cake, a few chocolates and that was for the ladies and a few toys for the kids. Oh he was an excellent man actually, he was a real life saver for our people. He had flour, like they would take grain into town like they had a flour mill in town here and in fall he would get a whole bunch of flour made and he would have all that flour down there and the guys would come and get flour. Then he owned sixty percent of the Army and Navy store in Winnipeg years ago so he used to get all the surplus, all the army and surplus clothes for those guys. It was, he was really, really good to the people, I can't say a bad thing about Ernie Skinner, though a lot of people did criticize him and said he was a cheap old so and so, but that was some of them people that really didn't want to work anyway, they wanted kind of a way out. They want to blame somebody else but themselves; they're not at fault, Ernie Skinner is at fault.

**29.0 Cheryl:** By the sound of it, if they were willing to work hard and they were loyal he would treat them right.

**29.2 Bob:** Oh yeah, he treated people so good and the thing was, now that we are talking about Ernie Skinner, we just about was related to him, if it wasn't for the religion. You see him being a Protestant and my aunt, my mother's aunt was a Catholic and they were going to school in Lebret here and when they found out that Ernie Skinner was running around with this one girl, they took those two girls, they took home to Winnipeg before things got out of hand. That was religion that did that, it wasn't him being an Englishman and her being a Métis, that wasn't it at all and it was religion and the nuns that did that, that broke them up.

**30.6 Cheryl:** So did you have big New Year's parties here?

**30.6 Bob:** Oh God yeah. And the thing is, Grandpa Louis Racette, he used to play the fiddle, he was a real good fiddle player and my Uncle George used to play piano, my Uncle Stan used to play fiddle, Uncle Henry played fiddle, Uncle Toby played fiddle, uncle Tommy played fiddle, all out of this house and Aunt Marion used to play piano too, which is a sister to my mother. But they had a real orchestra all in the family. Yeah Uncle Henry was a really fine fiddle player, Uncle Toby was a good fiddler too and Uncle Tommy. I never heard him, he died when I was only two years old but everybody talked about him. They said he was a good fiddler. I heard Uncle Stan. Uncle Stan was a good fiddler. As a matter of fact, my niece has got Uncle Stan's fiddle, when Uncle Stan took sick he gave that fiddle to my dad and then when my dad passed away my brother George took that fiddle and then when my brother George passed away two years ago here, my niece took that fiddle.

**32.0 Leah:** So it is still in the family?

**32.1 Bob:** Yeah, it is sill in the family.

**32.1 Leah:** I would love to see it sometime.

**32.1 Bob:** Yeah, it is a very good fiddle. But there is a lot of those old, old fiddles around yet but no, I don't know who owned them. Anyway they had, they used to have some wonderful dances here long ago, even when Grandpa Joe Cardinal lived here, I remember when I was a kid coming here when Grandpa Cardinal lived here. Boy oh boy they really raised the roof here.

**32.8 Cheryl:** They cleaned out the living room?

**32.9 Bob:** Oh yeah, they cleaned out all of the furniture from the living room. There was just a few chairs there for the fiddle players and the guitar player and they would just dance and they danced all night until it was daylight. And if everything was going good they would dance right into the sunrise. Oh they had parties. Like in New Year's years ago they used to call \_\_\_\_ (Michif) they used to call it the sixth of January, so anyway they used to dance from the first of January to the sixth of January and then Lent would come on, nobody would dance because they were all good Catholics. Oh God no one would dance we can't do that, Lent is on. But before that, every night they used to party some place, like they would have a party here and then tomorrow night maybe they would have a party down at Grandpa Charlie Racette's down the valley hey and then a few days later, they would have it at Grandpa Norbert's and then a few night later maybe they would have it at Grandpa Joe Racette's. Oh they went from place to place and then they would have it at Uncle Renny's and Uncle Fred Fayant's place there. They used to dance there, oh they had parties all over. At old Henry Klyne's there they used to have parties there, they would go all over the place, but New Year's was a real great thing years ago with the Métis people and the Michif's here, they used to celebrate New Year's, they never celebrated Christmas. New Year's they would celebrate and so only you would hear somebody's bells, everybody had different bells on their horse and everybody knew the sound of those bells. They could tell you who was coming, they knew by the sound of the bells. Anyway, we'd be at home there, we weren't too far away from Grandpa Charlie Racette's and we can hear Uncle Renny going so then we would take off too and we would all end up at Grandpa Charlie Racette's for breakfast there, four o'clock in the morning New Year's morning and then they would just move from place to place and every place you go you had to eat bullets and bangs, grease bannock but them days they used to call them bangs. This is what my cousin was talking about here, my cousin Lawrence Dematier was saying something about what do they call that thing

they use for closing the door he said, there is a thing you put on when you close the door he said. Oh, I said, \_\_\_\_ (Michif) that is what they call it, it is just a piece of wood with a screw in the middle and you can turn it. My cousin Margaret laughed. She said I just about died one time on the count of \_\_\_\_ (Michif) Well he said, what happened? Well I went and gathered the eggs one time when we were on the farm and the door blew shut and that darn \_\_\_\_ (Michif) came on he said, I couldn't get out, oh God we laughed at my cousin Margaret.

**37.2 Leah:** Margaret, is she married to a Harrison?

**37.3 Bob:** No, no, that is a different one, this Margaret was married to a Lawrence Rolls. She died this spring.

**37.5 Leah:** Oh just recently?

**37.6 Bob:** Yeah, I took pictures right here. I have got a film at home and we took video. Yeah I videoed this whole trip one time but it wasn't really that good because it was so windy and we didn't have cover for the, what we should have done is covered the speaker with a rag or something just to keep the wind from blowing through the screen. But they were quite surprised when I told them all about this, my cousin Lawrence Major he couldn't never get over it and I lost him too and I lost three of them from my reunion club, my mother, my cousin, Lawrence Major, and my cousin Margaret Rolls. They all sat with me when we planned our reunion last year. See what we were thinking of doing too, we were thinking of purchasing this yard here, a piece of this land here and the old house and we were going to restore the old house but we started thinking you know with all the vandalism around now, all we would do is get this thing all fixed up nice and somebody is going to come along and vandalize the place so I said to them, I think we are going to just have to forget about. They all wanted it because grandpa and grandma lived here hey, which is good but how, it is off the road here and the guy a mile down the road here he is the next door neighbour but there is no way anybody can keep a close eye on it. I said to them, it is just too dangerous. We would just get it all fixed up and something is going to happen terribly and we are all going to be disappointed; it is not even going to be funny you know. Anyway, so this is where grandpa and them used to live and then like I said right straight across here that is where Uncle Henry lived and he worked that part of the farm for Ernie Skinner. This is all Ernie Skinner land across here. Turn right here.

**40.7 Leah:** I walked in it, it's not too bad. You'll just have to take your time. You can tell someone was here.

**40.9 Bob:** Yeah, oh yes, the same thing I imagine when grandpa and grandma were living here you know because they didn't have no cars

all they had was the wagons and the buggies and in the wintertime they had sleighs and the cutters. When they went into town they went right straight across into town hey, they didn't go around the road when they went to town in the wintertime; they made a trail right across the field and straight into Indian Head you know and that is the way everybody travelled. But this here it is...

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**Tape Two – Side B ends at 41.7**

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**Tape Three: Side A**

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**00.0 Bob:** Indian Head here.

**00.1 Cheryl:** How is your wife? When I talked to her last she said she was...

**00.1 Bob:** Oh yeah, she had \_\_\_\_\_ she's alright. When you get to Cumberland House you're going to have to show him that picture of \_\_\_\_\_ (Michif). *Ha, ha.* Down the valley. So who is your folks?

**00.6 Cheryl:** I am from Prince Albert.

**00.6 Bob:** Oh, you're from P.A. That is where my daughter is from, yeah and my sister-in-law lives in P.A. They owned the Peppermill that used to be Choices. Yeah that is my brother-in-law and sister-in-law.

**01.0 Cheryl:** Yeah, we were up there on the weekend and with all those fires, it was just...

**01.1 Bob:** Yeah, they owned that Pizza Hut close, Pizza on top of the hill there.

**01.2 Cheryl:** Oh, okay.

**01.3 Bob:** '62, yeah at that time Joe Amyotte was the president and then Joe Amyotte took sick and Walter Langham took sick and Doctor Howard Adams took over and then when Dr. Adams was going to get fired, then Jim Sinclair took over.

**01.9 Cheryl:** You must have quite a few good stories then hey?

**01.9 Bob:** Oh, yeah I got some good memories of those guys, like I worked with them all and they all came to my place. I used to kind of be the kingpin of the work there you know like they used to, I was the youngest one of the bunch actually and I was very respected in the organization with these guys hey like a lot of ideas that I had was put to use which I never said anything about some of the boys they used them and said oh we come up with this idea and didn't say where it

came originally from but neither here nor there to me as long as it was done hey. That was the big thing with one through to get to work boy I'm telling you they wouldn't have the God darn gall to say that because they went through a lot of gall darn problems a lot of you know like it is fine now. We drove how far we drove already? Years ago how long would it have take us to drive this? As far as we went, it would take us a bloody week with a team of horses hey so you know you couldn't get from point A to point B in a matter of minutes you know, unless your job was a half mile down the road and half the time it wasn't, you had to go miles and miles to get a job or to go and find work. Yeah, but anyway I am able to tell you guys a little more here. Okay that was Uncle Louis' place over there and just down here is where Joe Racette lived and he had eleven kids I think this guy had. That was a brother to Grandpa Louis.

**04.7 Cheryl:** Now, is this the little church that you guys used to go to?

**04.7 Bob:** Yeah, yeah this is it.

**04.7 Cheryl:** I remember driving by it before and I remember you saying twenty five to thirty people in there and I remember thinking wow! You must have been packed right in there.

**04.9 Bob:** Yeah, this is it. You can pull right off there on the side a little bit and we'll let Leah pull a little shot of it. Okay you see the end of those trees right there behind those two granaries there, that is where Grandpa Joe Racette used to live. Yeah, he was a brother to...

**05.3 Cheryl:** Do you know what that foundation is for? Like was this church always here?

**05.3 Bob:** Yes, this church was always here and that there was a little house that was built there, the priest used to come stay there; he used to drive down here with the horses. In the wintertime he would come down here with the cutter and in the summertime he would come down here with the buggies. Something similar to the one Grandpa Louis and them used to have. This one was Ernie Skinner's but cause this was all Ernie Skinner's land and that house that you see in there that is an old Ernie Skinner house it came from over there, they moved it across. We didn't have a cemetery here; we buried the bodies in Lebret.

**06.3 Cheryl:** I remember you talking about that. You'd be playing after church, that you would be visiting.

**06.3 Bob:** Yeah, there was a bush just on the other side of the church there, there used to be a bush there and that is where the horses were tied all along that bush and the guys used to play cards there and then

we would eat there and we used to all have a pot luck dinner Sunday after mass and the men were on this side and the ladies used to sit on the other side. Then the summertime we used to get people from along the lake come out here to church in the summertime hey. They were Catholics so they come out here and hell we would have as many outside as we did inside and then we used to have Catechism out here for two weeks in July every year and it was quite a place and this is where a lot of the weddings were held here, you know a lot of weddings were held here.

**07.5 Cheryl:** Did anybody from the valley ever go to Lac St. Anne, the pilgrimage in Lac St. Anne?

**07.6 Bob:** No, at Batoche?

**07.6 Cheryl:** No, no in Lac St. Anne, Alberta.

**07.6 Bob:** No, I would love to go there. I have heard about it. I heard about it that is where they go and swim hey.

**07.9 Cheryl:** Yeah, that is quite the old church hey?

**07.9 Leah:** It is amazing.

**07.9 Bob:** Yeah that is where a lot of, this is where I made my first communion and got my confirmation here and I got as far as being a Catholic. This is where I learnt all about my religion, Catechism.

**08.4 Cheryl:** The priest that would come, he would go to all the different churches in the valley? There would be one that would go?

**08.5 Bob:** No, this was the only one. This was the only church that we had in the valley and this is the only Catholic Church that we had here and the priest would come from Lebret. In the wintertime he would come with the cutter and horse and the summertime he would come in a buggy with one horse. He used to keep his horse there tied up in the bush there in the summertime because he would get here Saturday night. Sunday he would stay in that little house there, there was a stove in there, a bed in there, he would sleep in there and make his breakfast there and ninety percent of the time he would come and have dinner with us and then after he had his dinner he would hook up his horse and away he would go back to Lebret. Every midnight mass my aunt and my Grandma Racette, Kokum Maross, they used to sing a Cree song that was only sung at midnight masses. It was sung in Cree. Do you remember it? I kind of remember the rhythm. That is the way it goes, that is the rhythm of it but it is sung in Cree and that is the only time they sing it. The same thing when somebody got married, my dad was really great for that and old Frank Fayant used to

do it to. There were certain songs, they were French songs and they sung them at the table when somebody got married. It was kind of like a boy and girl exchanging lives or whatever, continuing their lives you know and that was what the song was about. They only sang them just before they are going to eat and as soon as they are finished singing that song well my dad used to blessed table times but they always tried to get an older person, an elder to bless the to say the grace and they all said a prayer and they all said our father you know and every time. The tradition years ago when somebody got married, they used to shoot the shotgun; I remember that down in the valley there. This is where my life starts here, yeah.

**12.0 Leah:** My dad used to tell me at New Year's they used to shoot the gun to keep the \_\_\_ away for another year.

**12.1 Bob:** Yeah, yeah they still do that in Lafoir you know.

**12.1 Leah:** Yeah they do in \_\_\_ yeah guns ring out.

**12.2 Bob:** Yeah, that's right, they should. At twelve o'clock, boom, boom. They call it \_\_\_\_\_ (Michif), we'll scare them.

**12.5 Cheryl:** \_\_\_ bang pots and pans on New Year's at midnight.

**12.5 Bob:** Is that right? Yeah, well that is something too, I remember my old grandmother did that at one New Year's but every New Year's, every wedding we used to shoot, well not a great deal but three or four shots just to announce it's New Year's and announce it's celebration is close, well they would fire at the say the horses, they using horses and they didn't want to scare the horses hey and then the horses would be about a half a mile from the house and the boys would start shooting. They would shoot about half a dozen times maybe and then everybody knew that. My dad used to make what they called them, oh I forget what they called the, but they used to decorate these horses with these things they used to make like wool you have on a toque they would make those and my dad would make bend number nine wire and he would hang these things hang ribbons from these little balls and then he would put it on the horses bridle here and that horse would shake his head and those ribbons would be just bouncing hey and sometimes those ribbons would going fairly good speed would make a funny noise and oh Jesus and you know the horse would want to run away because he would get scared hey. Then he would make some that would go on the back of the horse and then one on the horse's head.

**14.7 Cheryl:** Oh one on the back of the horse like on the tail of the horse?

**14.7 Bob:** No, right on the back, your harness hey, he's got a back \_\_\_ they call it and my dad used to mount it on there. My dad used to make all those things like that; he was handy like that. I remember Uncle Bill Racette when he got married there, we made those so soon I knew how to make those God darn things. You got to cut a piece of paper hey cardboard, depending on what size of ball you want to make, you cut it like that.

**15.4 Cheryl:** Like a donut?

**15.3 Bob:** Yeah, you cut the centre out and then you keep winding this God darn stuff up there and then what you do after you cut that wool all the way around. You tie some real strong thread in the middle and then you pull that wool out and it shapes like a ball hey, then you trim it up. I made those when I was just four or five years old. I sit there and twisting that and you finished twisting that one there he would give you another piece of wool there, different colours. Sometimes they used to make them one colour and sometimes people wanted them like Uncle Bill there he wanted all different colours so we had all different colours of yarn there, so we would help dad twist this and make these darn things.

**16.4 Cheryl:** Do you know what ever happened to the things they put on the horses with the ribbons?

**16.5 Bob:** I don't know what ever happened to them. You know, I was, if things goes right for me here girls, I'll make one of those things for.

**16.7 Leah:** I'll buy one off of you for the archives.

**16.7 Cheryl:** Yeah, if you were to make one we'll come down.

**16.8 Bob:** Yeah, I'll make one just for the archives just to explain what it is, it is hard to explain. My dad used to twist this wire hey and then he would flatten it, flatten this wire out and then he would twist this wire together here maybe three strands or four and one would go straight up and then he would twist these in kind of a little bit of a circle and then he would make the ends. Then we would have to twist wool all around that wire too, cover it all up real good and then he would tape that on to the bridle hey. Boy they were nice. My dad used to have some nice ones, my dad made them and he used to keep them hey and mother used to put them away and somebody was getting married they would come and \_\_\_ (Michif). What they used to call the...

**18.0 Cheryl:** On dogs they used to call them feathers. Is that what they used to call them on horses?

**18.1 Bob:** Yeah, yeah. No, no they had in Michif they had a special name for...

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**Tape Three – Side A ends at 18.3**

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