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REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN
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REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN
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Sharon: I'm talking today with Eliza Pelletier of Regina.
Mrs. Pelletier, can you tell me anything about your
grandparents?

Eliza: Well, they were Metis of course and I'm a Metis
myself.

Sharon: Do you remember what their names were?

Eliza: My great grandmother Joseph Delorne and Melanie, well
her family name was Militaire. And my other grandmother and

grandfather on my father's side are Johnny Blondeau and Liza Lafrenaire.

Sharon: Do you know where they were from, where they lived?

Eliza: Well they lived in Lebret, but I don't know where they came from.

Sharon: And what did they (?)?

Eliza: Well my grandparents they used to work for themselves. They had horses and stuff like that, you know.

Sharon: Did they have a farm?

Eliza: Well, they had shacks before like before like, you know, they had cows, and horses and do their own work, and have gardens.

Sharon: Homestead?

Eliza: Yeah, something like that yeah. And then my father, I heard that my father had a piece of land somewhere in the States. And then I guess it was sold and he didn't get much money out of it.

Sharon: And then he moved over here?

Eliza: When he was small. I just heard that, you know, I haven't really (inaudible).

Sharon: Where did he live? Where were you born?

Eliza: I was born in Lebret.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: I lived there till I got married.

Sharon: Did you have a large family?

Eliza: I have three girls.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: My brothers and sisters I had three sisters and, well there was five of us and I had one brother.

Sharon: And your grandfather owned (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah. (inaudible).

Sharon: What kind of a house was it?

Eliza: Log houses.

Sharon: Did they have their own land?

Eliza: Yeah. Yeah. Well years ago the land wasn't much them days, you know.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: It wasn't much.

Sharon: Did they have some (?) too?

Eliza: Sorry, I can't (inaudible).

Sharon: Was it in the country or...

Eliza: Yeah. Yeah.

Sharon: Did you have running water?

Eliza: No.

Sharon: How did you get your water then?

Eliza: We used to haul water from the sloughs, you know. Wagon and (inaudible). Well in the winter they used sleighs, you know, they haul the water... Well we used to use (?) water mostly. Yeah.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Oh it was wooden coal stove.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Well, kerosene lamps.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Oh, very little.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah. Well, of course, very good bought I guess, but I couldn't tell you anymore, you know, because...

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Well, he used to make chairs, used to make rocking chairs.

Sharon: (inaudible). How did your family make living?

Eliza: Oh, go out hunting, make their, have some something to eat in their own gardens and stuff like that. You know, milk their cow and have chickens, or geese and stuff like that, you know. That's...

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Well, he used to go and work for farmers, them days the farmers were pretty cheap. (inaudible) wasn't very much when you go out working. (inaudible) some meat or flour and stuff like that, you know. They were really cheap them days. (laughs)

Sharon: Did your father have to travel anywhere to do farm work?

Eliza: No. (telephone rings)

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: We were poor.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yes. In Lebret that public school, I went as far as grade five then I had to quit. (inaudible) in Regina here to help my mother.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: They had ministers, you know.

Sharon: Did your brothers and sisters go to school?

Eliza: Yes.

Sharon: Did you like walk from your house?

Eliza: Yeah. Oh yeah. I'd say about a mile and a half, not too far for us anyway, we were used to that.

Sharon: Did you ever hear anything about the Metis (inaudible)?

Eliza: No, well not very many. Well we used to watch when we were small, we used to watch them dance, you know, (inaudible).

Sharon: What kind of dances?

Eliza: Oh, square dance mostly. Of course...

Sharon: Was this in a hall or someone's house?

Eliza: No, no in their own houses. But we were watching.

Sharon: Well, was it all Metis or...

Eliza: Oh yeah, Metis. They used to have lots of fun.

Sharon: Do you know any stories of (inaudible)?

Eliza: Like what?

Sharon: Like (inaudible).

Eliza: Well, when I was, one time I was told that, of course people in them days they used to travel eh, they used to be out in the, stay out in the prairies and all that stuff. And then I guess when this Riel Rebellion started the war started and I guess the Riel was on the Metis side, or whatever Metis or Indian I don't know, and he was helping them something like that. That's what I heard, you know. So I guess my grandfather was wounded and he bled to death and nobody had the time to look after him.

Sharon: Was this during fall?

Eliza: Yeah.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah. Gosh I don't know. I see that I don't really know anything much about that.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: No, no, no. See, my husband used to know about that than I did. I couldn't tell you anything else.

Sharon: Did the Metis people (inaudible) any different than the other people?

Eliza: Oh they had, oh I haven't got this picture of my grandmother the way she used to dress. You know, big skirts here and got a thing here...

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah. And then they had, everything homemade. They had homemade blouses and long sleeves, the old style. That's what they used to have years back. I still got a picture of that.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Well, just usual.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah.

Sharon: What language did you speak at home?

Eliza: Metis, well whatever Cree...

Sharon: English?

Eliza: Well, Cree and, as I said, and English mixed.

Sharon: French too?

Eliza: A little bit of French.

Sharon: What was their religion?

Eliza: Roman Catholic.

Sharon: Were you a strong Catholic?

Eliza: Oh yes. Oh yes we were strong Catholics. My grandma...

Sharon: Did they go to church?

Eliza: Yeah. Not now. (laughs)

Sharon: Did the church play a major role in the Metis community then?

Eliza: No, not that I know of.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: No.

Sharon: Did any Metis people that you knew did they try to hide their Indian ancestry?

Eliza: No.

Sharon: They were open about being Metis?

Eliza: Yeah. They just, we didn't have anything against Indians. We had good friends, Indian friends years back especially my grandfather. Used to have Indians at home all the time.

Sharon: You got along with your (inaudible)?

Eliza: Oh yes. Oh yes.

Sharon: You never had any trouble with (inaudible)?

Eliza: Well, same as it is now.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah.

Sharon: Did the Metis people keep to themselves?

Eliza: Like for what?

Sharon: Did they mix with the other ones, or did they (inaudible)?

Eliza: It's the same thing as what's happening now. They get all together and stuff like that. I don't know, it's just like it is now.

Sharon: Were you treated the same way as the others?

Eliza: Yeah.

Sharon: Did anyone every try to get you to move?

Eliza: No, no, no. Not that I know of.

Sharon: Was there a doctor anywhere near you? (inaudible)?

Eliza: Well, to tell you years back we used to live on herbs, you know, like that's when we had our babies we didn't have no doctor.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah, I had mine at home.

Sharon: By yourself or did somebody come by and help?

Eliza: My mother-in-law used to look after me, she used to have herbs, you know.

Sharon: What would happen if somebody (inaudible)?

Eliza: Well,...

Sharon: There was no one there, there wasn't a hospital around there?

Eliza: Well I guess there was but it was too far to go, or something, I don't know. We used to put splinter, whatever, on and then we used to wrap them up and stuff like that. I used to see that, but I don't know it was for, a doctor.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Well, yeah when we were sick, when our kids were sick we used to do our own doctoring. Yeah. Of course now there's doctors and....

Sharon: Do you remember anything about the great depression?

Eliza: Oh geez, no, no I don't think so.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah.

Sharon: Do you remember where you were living at that time?

Eliza: Well, I was still living in Lebret. Well of course, I used to do a little odd jobs in town.

Sharon: You were working during the depression?

Eliza: Oh yes, I had to. I used to little odd jobs washing, you know, or stuff like that, scrubbing for fifty cents an hour.

Sharon: How old were you when you started working?

Eliza: Oh I was ten years old when I started to wash diapers.

Sharon: For your mother?

Eliza: Yeah. I had to do the other work myself as well.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Well, (inaudible).

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yes. She was always sick.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah they went to school, but...

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah, yeah.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Well, he never did anything much, because he used to go out digging seneca roots and sell it, you know, to have some money.

Sharon: How much did you get for digging seneca roots?

Eliza: Well I don't know, not very damn much for a pound. Because (inaudible) understand anything more. So I don't...

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Oh we had a garden, my dad always put in a garden. And we had a team of horses.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Not very much.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Just stayed in Lebret.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah.

Sharon: So he didn't want to go, he didn't qualify for it?

Eliza: Well, them days they didn't have anything to make our way (inaudible).

Sharon: You don't remember anything about (inaudible)?

Eliza: No, no.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Me, stayed home. (laughs)

Sharon: How old were you when you got married?

Eliza: Seventeen, I was going on eighteen.

Sharon: And your husband was from Lebret?

Eliza: No, he's from Lestock.

Sharon: What is he name?

Eliza: Henry Pelletier.

Sharon: And how did he make a living?

Eliza: Oh, he's just going through saying prayers in Sunday nights.

Sharon: Oh, at church?

Eliza: Well, when he come home from church.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: (inaudible).

Sharon: And where did you live after you were married?

Eliza: We lived in Lebret and then from there on after we had all our kids we started to travel.

Sharon: Doing farm work?

Eliza: Yeah, farm work, he worked for farmers, for, get the

team of horses and stuff like that to use, you know. He was working like that.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Well after when the kids were all grown up I started to go out working doing housework in Lebret and then when we moved well I'd get odd jobs here and there. And then we moved to Qu'Appelle and I started to work at the hospital, I used to do the floor and wax them, and wash the clothes and iron them. Stuff like that. And I didn't get very much for that.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Gee I don't remember now, I guess that's how...

Sharon: (inaudible). Well how long did you work for them?

Eliza: I worked there for a year, I sure liked the job too.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: I worked there, oh say six o'clock in the morning till after supper like, you know, say about seven o'clock. And then go home after, husband had to stay home alone on because I was married then, so...

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Every day.

Sharon: (inaudible)? Do you remember (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yes, but my husband tried to go in three times they couldn't take him on account of he had spots on his lungs. But my brother-in-law was taken, he went to world war two and the schedule, you know. And my brother-in-law, Jimmy (?), he went too, he went to world war two. My husband tried to (inaudible).

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Lebret.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Well, he stayed with my mother-in-law.

Sharon: Were there a lot of jobs available that time?

Eliza: No, no. My husband was working for Joe Bufour for years and years, well before I met him he was there then, you know. And then he used to work only fifty cents a day them days, he's a big farmer this guy. So from there on that's how come he returned. And when he got married well he went back and worked there. After the kids were all big then he quit, he had to quit because that old man was, passed away, you know.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah.

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

Eliza: Well, I joined with this in Qu'Appelle, I joined the Metis Society in world war two with Joe, and I used to be a board director, I didn't like it, I didn't understand too much, you know, because I don't understand big words and stuff like that.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Oh yeah. I used to go with him all the time, (inaudible).

Sharon: Did the Saskatchewan Metis Society help in any way?

Eliza: It happened when I joined it was in (inaudible).

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Well, they had meetings, and they had cabarets, and played cards, or bingos stuff like that. It was nice.

Sharon: (inaudible)?

Eliza: Yeah.

Sharon: Thank you very much for the interview.

Eliza: Thank you.

(END OF SIDE A)

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