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SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN
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INTERVIEWER: VICTORIA ROSE RACETTE
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BELOW.

Victoria: March 28, 1984, and subject is Paul Joseph Whiteford,
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Where were you born, Paul?

Paul: Assiniboia, Saskatchewan.

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

Paul: Oh, I live all kinds of different houses.

Victoria: Were they log houses?

Paul: Log houses with mud sometimes.

Victoria: Lumber houses?

Paul: We was travelling all the time them days.

Victoria: Did you have electricity or running water?

Paul: No way.

Victoria: About how many rooms did the houses have?

Paul: Mostly one room.

Victoria: And what type of heating?

Paul: Wood stoves.

Victoria: And what kind of furniture did you have?

Paul: No furniture.

Victoria: None?

Paul: You gotta make a bed with the wood, you know.

Victoria: Did your parents ever own any of the houses that they lived in?

Paul: No.

Victoria: About how far away were your neighbours, you know, from where you lived? Were some of them close or far away?

Paul: Oh yeah, some of them were close, you know, sometimes. I remember one winter we live right in a tent.

Victoria: Is that right.

Paul: It's right. Right in Lloydminster. I was about 8 years old, I guess.

Victoria: About how... was it just for one winter that you lived in there?

Paul: Couldn't get a house them days. No money, you know. I was working in the farms. After I finish threshing, well, we live in that same tent.

Victoria: So what did your dad do for a living?

Paul: Just work in the farm like I did too. Work, whenever he find work he goes. Moving all the time. That's why I never went to school.

Victoria: And did he ever do trapping? No trapping at all, eh. Did you ever hear of what they call road allowance people? What does it mean to you, what...?

Paul: Well, we were living on the road allowance for a long time. We had a house, we build a house there, you know. And where they don't use it, you see, and then nobody can chase you out of there.

Victoria: Did you have to pay taxes and that there?

Paul: No. No you don't. You didn't pay nothing.

Victoria: How long did you live, when you built the house there on the road allowance?

Paul: Oh gosh, I don't know. It's a long time. Maybe ten years or something, you know. Nobody owns the land around there too, but we built right on the road allowance so nobody could chase us.

Victoria: Was there a community? Was it near a town?

Paul: No.

Victoria: Just a road allowance eh.

Paul: Yeah. It was about four miles from the nearest store.

Victoria: Where was that at?

Paul: Baljennie.

Victoria: At Baljennie.

Paul: Just west of Baljennie about four miles.

Victoria: Did your family used to do special things together, like did they go hunting and camping? Well, I guess they must have went camping together because you said you were on the road a lot, you know. But about hunting, or berry picking, that type of stuff, did they all go together, you know? Did you know of anybody who done any storytelling?

Paul: No.

Victoria: Nothing about oh, you know, Metis history or anything like that?

Paul: No.

Victoria: Did you live close around your relatives?

Paul: Oh yeah.

Victoria: Were they uncles, aunts, or your grandparents?

Paul: Well most of the time they were Pritchards, you know, his family. Old Sam Pritchard, you know, lived close.

Victoria: That would be... they called him Solomon Pritchard, eh, Sam?

Paul: Yeah.

Victoria: Was there somebody that was really special to you while you were growing up, like an older person, you know, that you lived around or a relative or something?

Paul: No.

Victoria: You didn't do much hunting at all when you were young?

Paul: No.

Victoria: How about fishing, did anyone ever... get anyplace where they could fish?

Paul: No.

Victoria: Did you have any livestock at all? Cattle, horses...

Paul: Oh after, about 30 years ago now we had horses, you know, had quite a few horses.

Victoria: How did you travel, like when you went?

Paul: Oh, by horses.

Victoria: You had a team and...

Paul: Yeah. I had horses all the time but, I mean, no cattle because we had no place to put 'em if we did have cattle.

Victoria: Yeah, you'd have to... Was there ever a time when your dad didn't have any work at all?

Paul: Oh yeah, lots of times. In the winter time especially. it's pretty hard.

Victoria: Was it pretty bad for the family then when there was...?

Paul: Yeah.

Victoria: What did your relatives do, like your aunts and uncles and that, what did they do for employment? What did they work at?

Paul: My aunts? I didn't even know any of them, my aunts. My uncles, I didn't even know them.

Victoria: They weren't around where you were, eh?

Paul: No, they were way down south.

Victoria: So you were born in Assinobia, when did you come up to, you know, this part of the province?

Paul: 1922 after, a month after I was born.

Victoria: Is that right. And what made your father and them move? Did they ever talk about it?

Paul: Well, it was dry. He had a coal mine in St. Victor. He had a coal mine...

Victoria: St. Victor, where is this St. Victor at?

Paul: It was about 20 miles south of Assinobia. There was a, kind of a little village there, you see. He had a coal mine there, that he owned it and he just took off. He just throw it away.

Victoria: Just left it like that, eh?

Paul: Yeah, in the dry years.

Victoria: That was during the Depression then I suppose, eh?

Paul: Well, 1922. It started then, I guess, so they all left. I got left with one of his brothers younger than him... no, I guess it was older than him, and we never heard where he went. He went further north than we did. We stopped here, you see, around Battleford. And he left. He went... And now, just a few years back, my sister went and found him. Mary went and found him up at... oh gosh, way up north, way down west. I don't even know what the heck they call that place up there.

Victoria: And after this many years, eh.

Paul: Yeah. They're old now, you see. They got two daughters. Mary went and seen them. They live in the city up there -- gee, I can't think of that name. Edna's got the address. I was tellin' her the other night, I said, "Try and write to them."

Victoria: Yes, I'd imagine they'd be getting pretty old by this time.

Paul: Yeah. They would be all older than us, you know, I mean me anyway.

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

Paul: French mostly. Then when we come up north, you know, we talk English and Cree. That's all we talk, French, when we was kids.

Victoria: What did you start talking first? Was it English?

Paul: French.

Victoria: Cree later on then, you said, after you moved, eh?

Paul: Yeah. We had a heck of a time but we learn how to talk Cree.

Victoria: Do you remember your grandfather at all?

Paul: No, I never seen any of my relations both sides.

Victoria: Neither side, eh. When you moved further to the north here and settled in, were there any other Metis families living around?

Paul: Oh yeah, yeah.

Victoria: Do you remember some of them, what their names were?

Paul: Well, mostly the Pritchards, you know. We used to, you know, kind of travel together, I guess, you know. Old Sam and his family, you know, that's our family, I mean, that's how come finally my sister got married to George. That's all I know. I mean, I don't remember... There were Trotchies, you know, one of my sister got married to a Trotchie.

Victoria: Did they always call themselves Metis people or, you know, some of them just not talk about it?

Paul: Well, I wouldn't know anything about that, you know. I was young and I don't... I didn't notice the difference anyway.

Victoria: Yeah, well maybe if you just grew up being what you were they... Especially if there was Metis families around you all the time, I don't think there was never that much attention brought to the fact.

Paul: They used to laugh at us when we talked to them in French, you know, I mean, you know...

Victoria: That's when you first moved this way?

Paul: ...we just about, we just about cry, you know, I mean, you know, laugh at us that we can't understand Cree, you know, I mean we can't talk Cree. It's awful when somebody, when you're young, you know, somebody laugh at you.

Victoria: Because you can't talk Cree, yeah. Did they ever have, you know, big social events like for Christmas or New Year's and that when you were young?

Paul: Oh yeah.

Victoria: What did they do at these times?

Paul: Dance, eat, dance and eat.

Victoria: They had lots to eat, eh. Is that at Christmas time?

Paul: No. No parties Christmas. Well, everybody goes to church.

Victoria: And did you live close around where there was a church?

Paul: Not too, not too close, no. And New Year's, they go for a week, dance, go to one house to another, you know. Eat and drink.

Victoria: Do you remember if your dad ever wore Metis clothing, what they call traditional Metis clothing now? Like, there was the big tall moccasins...

Paul: No.

Victoria: ...and a sash. They used to have a sash.

Paul: No.

Victoria: Your mom, neither one?

Paul: No.

Victoria: Did your mom know how to do beadwork, or know tanning hides or anything?

Paul: No.

Victoria: Did they know how to jig? Did your parents know how to jig?

Paul: No.

Victoria: Did you learn?

Paul: Oh, I can dance but I don't dance.

Victoria: But you must have at one time.

Paul: I might've. When I'm sleepin'.

Victoria: Was there very many other types of families living around where you lived? Like white people, were they living

in that area too?

Paul: Well, you know when we lived someplace there weren't too many white people. I remember the first year, the one year when, well, they build a new highway from Cando to Battleford. The first year they build that -- that's a long time ago, I wasn't very big -- that's the only time we see white people here. See, they were working together, see, Metis and white people. They use horses, you know.

Victoria: Would that be the Number 4, Number 4 highway?

Paul: Number 4 highway, yeah. That's a long time ago.

Victoria: And they used horses to build the road?

Paul: Yeah.

Victoria: What did they, how did they do that?

Paul: You know, what they call the frisnels (?), you know, that grab the dirt...

Victoria: Like a plow?

Paul: Yeah. Work this way: you hold it, then you go and dip it, see.

Victoria: And they used horses to pull? Well, for heavens sakes! Did you work there at that time?

Paul: No, I was a young guy.

Victoria: Your father, did he work at that time there?

Paul: Yeah, and two of my brothers, the oldest ones. Yeah, he use all their horses (inaudible).

Victoria: And did they make good money while they were working at that job?

Paul: Oh, I guess so. But I don't remember how much or nothing. That's a long time ago. I guess that was in the '30s yet.

Victoria: Was there anybody, like in your family or anybody that you knew of, you know. older people, that used Indian medicine at all, like for sickness, or for any other thing? Did you ever see a sweat lodge?

Paul: There used to be some Indians there, see, my dad used to know, you see. Lots of times, like me, when I got sick one time, I don't know, I guess I had a cold. I couldn't eat, you know, I was throwing up. So this Indian come and give me some medicine. Something, you know, boil water and you put it there and I breathed that. Well, it didn't take long, I got well. And I eat, oh boy, makes me eat. That's all I remember, you

know, I mean...

Victoria: Yeah. You wouldn't know what was in it, eh?

Paul: ...you couldn't get to the doctor or anything. You had to use horses and it was quite a ways to Battleford, you know. It was the only place there were doctors.

Victoria: How about a sweat lodge? Did you ever see a sweat lodge?

Paul: I seen them but I never use one.

Victoria: You never used one, eh? What did they look like, a sweat lodge that you seen?

Paul: Well, they get these willows, you know, and they bend them. They sharpen them so they put them in the dirt. Then they bring some rocks there. Then they make a fire. Then they put a canvas over it or blankets, whatever. Then they go in there with water, with them hot stones in there, and they pour the water on the hot stones. That's where the steam comes from. That's when I was still... I've never been in one of them.

Victoria: You say the church was quite a ways away when you were young. Whereabouts would they, you know, would you have went to to go to church? What would be the nearest one?

Paul: Well the closest we could go is wherever there was a church, you know. I can't name the places.

Victoria: Yeah, Willowfield there. Probably at Baljennie would be the nearest one?

Paul: No, no. They never had nothing there.

Victoria: Nothing there?

Paul: No. We had to go to the reserves then, see.

Victoria: Oh, uh-huh. Red Pheasant then would be the closest to there, eh?

Paul: Yeah.

Victoria: Did the priests ever come out and visit at the houses?

Paul: No.

Victoria: Do you remember the old, the first Metis Society that was ever formed? I think it was called the Saskatchewan Metis Society at that time.

Paul: Yes.

Victoria: Did you... were you a member of it at the time?

Paul: Yes. I spent a lot of money there. You know what I ever got?

Victoria: What?

Paul: Still (inaudible) nothing!

Victoria: Nothing, eh?

Paul: Not like you. You're getting something, I'm not. I never got nothing.

Victoria: Is that right?

Paul: I had to work, go cut a load of wood for 50 cents and I spend that in... to save money to buy a lunch box when they have a dance, gave that to the Metis Society. What I got -- nothing!

Victoria: Do you remember some of the other members that was first, you know, involved in it?

Paul: Oh, lots of them. Yes.

Victoria: Who?

Paul: My brothers. Same with some other people. Pritchard boys, the whole lot. They never got nothing. Nobody gets nothing.

Victoria: Did you have a local at that time? Was there a local that you, you know, you had? Where was it at?

Paul: Old Sam Pritchard and what-you-call-him, Beauchesne -- you know Beauchesne.

Victoria: Dave Beauchesne? Yeah.

Paul: Them (inaudible) in there is gettin' all the money. They go all over, I mean, supposed to go to meetings.

Victoria: Where did they say they were going to meetings at?

Paul: Well they go to Regina or Saskatoon.

Victoria: Was there lots of people that went to the meetings at that time?

Paul: Why sure. Everybody was trying to help, see. They're supposed to get something for us. What I got is nothing for me.

Victoria: But whatever, you know, happened to it at that time... like, what... that must have been in pretty early years, eh?

Paul: Yeah. You could buy a package of tobacco for 10 cents them days.

Victoria: So... and they went to meetings, did they? And then what happened? Did they just quit, or did everybody just quit?

Paul: No, they kept on agoin', I don't know how many years, till all at once somebody else took over, I guess.

Victoria: And that was the end of it, eh?

Paul: Never done nothing any good.

Victoria: They didn't talk about any scrip of any kind? You know...

Paul: Oh yeah. We supposed to get some land and all that. We're suppose to get some land, supposed to get some land -- and where's the land.

Victoria: And they talk about jobs and stuff, I suppose, at that time.

Paul: No.

Victoria: No jobs?

Paul: No, just the land. They're trying to get some land, you see, from the government. That's what they were after.

Victoria: Did you ever meet any of these people at the meetings, like Joe LaRocque? Had you ever met him at that time?

Paul: No.

Victoria: How about Joe Ross?

Paul: There used to be one there that he (inaudible). He couldn't see. He usin' his fingers...

Victoria: Joe Ross?

Paul: Is it? I don't remember his name.

Victoria: He was blind.

Paul: Yeah. I see him quite a few times.

Victoria: I had talked to some other people from Willowfield and they said that they thought it was Joe Ross and that he come out there. He was blind, like.

Paul: Yeah.

Victoria: And Sam Pritchard, he was the president back then, eh?

Paul: Yeah. Yeah Sam and Babe Beauchesne. You know we

gathered up quite a bit of money there and we... every once in a while they'd make these parties, or bingos or stuff like that.

Victoria: That was to help raise money to send people to the big meetings, eh?

Paul: Yeah. And it was hard to make money them days.

Victoria: Did you ever cut cordwood back in those days?

Paul: Oh yeah.

Victoria: How much did you get paid for a cord of wood?

Paul: About \$1.50 or something for a cord.

Victoria: And did they...

Paul: A load of wood... a load of wood, the farmers come and get it, it was \$1.50 a load of wood. Now, you go and cut it, okay, you get two bits a load to cut it, you know, if somebody hires you, you see.

Victoria: But how big was the load then? What kind of a load would it be?

Paul: 4 X 3, 4 wide and 3 high. Them was hard days, I remember. Of course, everything was cheap but, I mean, still... a hundred pounds of flour was \$2.

Victoria: Good heavens!

Paul: Now what the hell is a hundred pounds, about \$25 right now, or \$30?

Victoria: Yeah, around that. Yeah. But then you're paid more wages nowadays than you were too, you know, then. About how long would it take to cut a cord of wood?

Paul: I used to cut about two, two a day. That's work, I mean for me, I mean I was young. George Pritchard he cut about four or five loads a day. He was strong, healthy, young. I think I was only about 14 then, see.

Victoria: When they lived at Willowfield...

Paul: That's green wood, you know, and that's heavy (inaudible)

Victoria: When they lived at Willowfield there, were they... did they live in just a... kind of a settlement or how far apart were the houses?

Paul: Oh, not too far.

Victoria: Just a short distance, eh. Would -- you can remember of it -- about how many families lived in that area?

Paul: Oh gosh, I don't know, about ten.

Victoria: And they all mostly made their living about the same way, eh, and you know...? Did... was there ever any politicians that came around at that time?

Paul: Yeah. Only just a couple of days before election. Old Doug Inniger, he bring a bunch of groceries and...

Victoria: Where was he from?

Paul: Cando.

Victoria: What party was he running around for?

Paul: Oh, gosh...

Victoria: The CCF?

Paul: No, no. No, no.

Victoria: Liberal.

Paul: Yeah. Oh gosh, yeah! Old Sam was Liberal, see. He'd have a meeting there and feed us all, you know. Beans, (laughs) every God damn thing. That's the only time we see him.

Victoria: What did he tell you, do you remember?

Paul: Oh, I don't know. You couldn't hear him because they had a small house, you see. Us kids, you know, they don't let us in. It's a big deal. But we go and eat anyway.

Victoria: So they were more or less just come out to bribe the people, eh?

Paul: Yeah, that's all. They was just buying his votes. They'd bring some wine for the old people, you know.

Victoria: Oh, they even brought liquor?

Paul: Oh yeah.

Victoria: And about how far was Cando from Willowfield at that time?

Paul: Let's see, I think it's 14 miles.

Victoria: Fourteen miles. How did he travel?

Paul: Mostly horses.

Victoria: Oh, he came with horses too.

Paul: Well, there's hardly any cars them days.

Victoria: Um-hmm

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