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SASKATCHEWAN  
TRIBE/NATION: METIS  
LANGUAGE: CREE/CHIPEWYAN  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: 03/29/84  
INTERVIEWER: VICTORIA R. RACETTE  
INTERPRETER:  
TRANSCRIBER: HEATHER YAWORSKI  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- General account of his life

Victoria: March 29, 1984. I'm interviewing George Pritchard at Willowfield, Saskatchewan. George, could you tell me what type of houses you lived in when you were growing up?

George: We lived in log, log houses. Well maybe I should start on when we lived in the south. We lived on the dugouts, dugout houses.

Victoria: Right in the ground like?

George: Right in the ground. I could show you maybe one where, where we lived. I could tell you where we lived there, we lived different places.

Victoria: What, what year was that in?

George: Oh, that's a long time ago. I would say about, ever since I could remember, I would say about 1909, 1908. I was pretty young because I'm 80 now. See, some place I don't remember -- I was too young, you see, but I could go and show the places where we lived. We lived in the dugout houses, and we live on the sod, what they call, sod made out of sod. Oh yeah, oh yes, and then when we come up in the north we made log houses with sod roof -- they leak all over when it rains. (laughs) Well they were pretty hard times, hard times, not like the white man, you see. See the white man had it good, see, but we didn't, see. (laughs)

Victoria: These houses, did they have any windows in them?

George: No. We made windows out of flour sacks, see, flour sacks, not this kind of windows. We was too poor to buy this kind of glass, I guess. (laughs) But we got by, see.

Victoria: Yeah. About how many rooms did the houses have?

George: Oh, just one room.

Victoria: One room, eh.

George: Yeah.

Victoria: What kind of heat, how did you heat it?

George: Wood.

Victoria: With wood.

George: Yeah. And a tub stove mostly, we made stoves out of tubs mostly.

Victoria: How, how did you get them to work? Did they have, did you have a chimney?

George: Oh yes, oh yes. To start with my dad and them, you see, they had different kind of stove, they made -- I seen them too -- they made against the wall. They made it out of mud and willows. They call them in Cree nishamnee, I don't know what they call them in English. You put, they got the light from there too. Yeah, they got the light from there too, see. They made their own stove. They made bannock there, what they call bannock. But I'm going to tell you a little bit about bannock, there's no such a thing as Indian bannock, see. I told that to the white man lots of times. Before the white man come here there was no such a thing as bannock, no such a thing as flour -- we had no flour, we ate straight meat, see, we eat straight meat, see. After the white man come, come here and they made biscuits, biscuits, bannock biscuits. And then the Indians they make them big now, that's what they call bannock, see, nowadays. But there's no such a thing as Indian bannock. There's no white man can tell me that there's Indian bannock because the Indian never made it. (laughs) They live on straight meat. Then the white man come here -- they killed all the buffalo and then we had to follow suit the same as the way they lived. To live, lots of us, lots of us, my granddad used to tell me, lots of us they eat what they call... They used to cut the rounds to make ropes, they never bought nothing, they didn't need no money. They could even cut buffalo hides to make ropes to catch their horses. And after, lots of place they couldn't know where the game was after the white man killed all the buffalo. They had to cut these in pieces like beef stew, these ropes. They boil that, they eat that. Believe me or not, that's no lie. I got that in my history, I got that in my history, the one you've taken. Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.

(laughs)

Victoria: What about furniture, did you have furniture?

George: No, we didn't have no furniture but we made our, after we got, ever since I could remember we have this augers. We made like benches, we put legs on them, you see. Oh yes. Put legs on there so that's where we sit.

Victoria: What, where you lived, at any place that you lived, did you own your own land there?

George: No, no, we squatted. It's our land but the white man took it away from us and then they made squatters out of us. Yes, this is true. See, even right now they won't give us a little bit back. They took it all and they don't want to give us no land back, even right now, see. Even right now they made squatters out of us, which the Indians shouldn't be squatters.

Now we can't even camp no place the white man comes there -- "This is my land." My granddad went to Montana once, see, long time ago -- there was a whole bunch of them not only him. This settler, he homesteaded. He had a sod house and he told my granddad, "This is my land. You can't pass here." My granddad told him, "Your land is overseas. This is Indian land," he told him. (laughs) And then he took his whip, he whipped that white man down with his whip, with a bullwhip. Well, when that white man got up he ran away to his sod house, and they passed, my grandfather and them. This is true, this is no lie, see. (laughs)

Victoria: Did, they didn't own their, their own land at all. When you stay, when you lived in these places was, was there neighbors close by? Was there a bunch of people that lived in them?

George: Well, they started to settle, they started to settle mostly in the south. I remember the south country -- there wasn't hardly anybody -- and they started to settle, I'd say about 1910, maybe a little before, some of them. And after they start to settle they push us. They pushed us in the north; they took all the land; we had no place to squat any more. Nowadays they don't even let the Indians, what they call the half-breed Indians, to live on the road allowances, and that's right today, and this fellow don't let them. They have to move out of there, you see.

Victoria: Do you know what, what they called road allowance people?

George: Well I wouldn't know exactly, but mostly the half-breeds, I guess, mostly the half-breeds, some Indians too.

Victoria: What do they mean when they call you that?

George: They shouldn't really call us half-breeds, you see. Once you get to Montana it's all Indians. They call them half-breeds here -- there's no half-breeds.

Victoria: They're the same thing as what... what... They call us half-breeds here though. They're the same people as what the...

George: The same people as in the States. I was in the States. I rode by... I rode... you know, I've been around. I rode box cars, I rode lots of box cars, not only one. There was hundreds, thousands of people who rode box cars and I did, I did the same, see. Victoria: Did your relations live close around you when you were young?

George: Here?

Victoria: Wherever you lived.

George: Oh yeah, oh yes. Oh yes, a whole bunch of us lived there, see. That's where I'm going now. I'm taking some of my daughters and I'm going to show them where we squatted. Yeah, I even rode horses there, bucking horses.

Victoria: Where, where was that at that you're going?

George: Down in Swift Current, I'm going to show where I rode a bucking horse here and I got throwed off. But I was only a kid, see. My brother-in-law, he took some hay to one of those little towns, what they call Admiral. They were sleeping on the ground near the rack, you know, and I was riding this bucking horse -- my dad wouldn't let me but I rode him anyway. But I couldn't stay with him too long, he throwed me off, pretty near threw me under that rack there. I'm going to show them those places, my kids, they going with me, some of them, see. This summer we're going, a bunch of us going pretty soon maybe now. They like that, see. I'm going to show them this is where we lived, this is where I rode horses and so on. I'm going to tell them little bit of my life history from there see.

Victoria: Your life history, yeah. What did your dad do for a living when you were young?

George: Well, you see, when my dad left in... he left in... he got married in Bresaylor. He had already I think three kids.

Victoria: Bresaylor, Saskatchewan?

George: Yeah, that's right. And when he left there about 30, 35 years, he landed at what they call Medicine Hat. That's west of here, see, Medicine Hat. And he worked there doing horse work for some rancher. From Medicine Hat he went to Swift Current and he went across with what they call Charlie Reed. He had a big store there and lots of horses. They broke horses for what they call the South Africa or Boer War for Charlie Reed, him and what they call Gabe LaVallee. You know what happened? See, I was picking rocks north of Maple Creek

there, oh, I'd say about 20 years ago, 20, 25 years ago. I went to nuisance grounds trying to pick up some stove pipes for the camp. I met an old guy there but I didn't see him since 1914. I ask him what was his name -- he was kind of deaf. I was picking stove pipe, I picked lots of stove pipes, enough for the camps. But anyway he told me his name, and he had a nickname, they used to call him (name). "Was your name (name)?" And he said, "Yes." Well, that was my dad's pal. It was him that broke horses with my dad in Swift Current for Charlie Reed. So after I told him he want to take me home. I'm sorry I didn't go home with him -- his wife was still living. But nowadays everybody is in a hurry, not like the olden days. See, I didn't have time to go. I should have went with him, see. (laughs)

Victoria: So they, they broke horses and everything for...

George: For the Boer War, for the Boer War. You've heard of the Boer War, I guess.

Victoria: Yeah, yeah.

George: They broke horses.

Victoria: What, what else did they do to make a living? Was there lots of work then?

George: Hunt coyotes, coyote pups, what they call coyote pups.

Victoria: How, how did they do that?

George: Well they sell them, they sell them to the municipality, and this municipality -- well not this municipality, but Swift Current people. I don't know who bought them. See, what they done, they split the ears, and they give them so much for the, for the, for the coyote. And then in the States, Montana side, they cut their neck off. They were a little bit crooked there, little bit crooked there, but it don't matter, try to make a living, see. After the white man took all the land, took everything, we had to make a living somehow. They put these, these heads on the water and they sewed them heads with what they call sinew, the back here. They took it from the animal. You've heard of it?

Victoria: Yeah, yeah.

George: Sinew, that was a thread. And they sew these heads up and fill them that way. They take these to Montana, they get bounty there too, see, they get bounty both sides. (laughs) Is that a good story? (laughs) Yeah, that's what happened, see. And then I met one old guy, he was born in, he was born in what they call Fort Qu'Appelle, he was born in Fort Qu'Appelle. I met him in Billings, what they call Billings, Montana. And I met him again in what they call Great Falls, Montana, the next year like, see, met him there. He told me what, what the mission done, where the priests and the nuns

were. They bought these coyote pups from the Indians and the half... of course, they all call them Indians, there's no half-breeds there -- we say half-breeds, see -- the half-breeds and the Indians. They bought these coyote pups and they put what they call the mange so they'd be itchy, scab, itchy, see. (laugh) And they'll turn these things loose, you see, so they'd spread out this mange amongst the coyotes, so they could kill it, the coyotes, so they wouldn't be there. But instead of that they spread this sickness to the stock -- horses, and cattle, and sheep, and so on. Oh, I seen that, I went and seen that too, a year ago this summer, where they dip them. That's where I'm going to take these guys now, that's the place I'm going to tell them this. I'm going to get my picture taken there, this is the place where they did it. You can see the dirt yet where the, where that trench was. They made a trench not only one place. They made dirt all over, you see. That was 1916. The year after we come, we come to the north, see, we was pushed out -- they took all the homesteads. There was always... I think lots, I don't sleep very much at night, maybe three, four hours I'm already awake, and I think a lot about these old things...

Victoria: They had homesteads then?

George: Some of them, not all. But what I was thinking, they never paid taxes, I guess. See the, this homestead all went back to the government, must be, must be. And I met one guy -- I'm going to tell you a little bit -- I met one guy, a fellow by the name of (name), he married a half-breed woman, a Pritchard woman. He lives in, he lives in Edmonton, you see. He come and find me when I was living down in the hills. I think he was taking histories. I was just leaving when he come. He wrote to me about three times after my dad died, but I didn't pay no attention to him. He finally came and found me, so I gave him, I gave him a bit of history what I know then, he wrote it down. He had a whole pile of history, I guess, behind his car there in his trunk, eh, in the trunk behind here. And anyway he come to find me again. I was getting an operation, gallstone operation see, he come and find me again in Battleford. I don't know whether he made a special trip or not but he came to find me anyway. See, but I was getting around already, and he told me, "The half-breeds got what was coming to them." That's the very words he told me. "What was coming to them?" I told him. "Well," he says, "the scrips, they got all the scrips." Well, I told him after he quit talking, I told him, "The scrips," I told him, "they got, did Queen Victoria brought them scrips from England to come and give it to them?" (laughs) He couldn't answer me there. Well, she never brought nothing, this is our land, she never brought nothing. If she'd a brought something from England then she'd a been doing something, but when they give us just like you give a kid a chocolate bar, take it away from him, and just give him a little piece, that's the way it looks like, the scrips. None of them kept them, eh, because the scrip we found out (inaudible). "See, this is our land," I told him. "We never sold this land. And Queen Victoria never brought, never brought anything from England to give it to the Indians. This

is our own land. They give them a scrip: that was our own," I told him. And furthermore, they didn't give it only to the Indians. I traced them scrips. They give them to the white man. This is true, this is true, see. They gave scrips to white mans.

Victoria: Did you grow a garden when you were young? Did your family grow a garden?

George: Oh yeah, mostly I remember my grandmother used to grow a garden, yeah, after the Rebellion. You want me to tell a little bit about the Rebellion?

Victoria: Yeah.

George: After the Rebellion she know lots of half-breeds and Indians run away to the States, after we got licked, this is true. Some of them run away foot, some of them run away foot, foot, see, there were hard times. Some of them run away foot, and some of run what they call this river the other side the Rockyboy Mountains. They live on coyotes, poison coyotes. The white man, they poisoned them coyotes and the Indians eat them because they had nothing else to eat after they kill all the buffalo. Everything they had, they had. There was something (inaudible) the Rockyboy Indians. I got that history, I got it. See, I got that history. See, they shipped them, them Indians, back. They deport them -- that was 1885, this would be about in 1886 when they deport them. They got off what they call Lethbridge. Before they got off Little Bear was arrested. Not only took them to, to, to Calgary and some of them run away back to Montana and they give that reserve, what they call Rockyboy today, see. But none of them guys living, they're all dead, those guys I'm talking about, see.

Victoria: What about, where was your dad and them during the Rebellion?

George: Well, he was in the Frog Lake, he was in the what they call Frog Lake Massacre. Victoria: Yeah. Do you, do you know some history on that?

George: Well, I had the book but I lend it to a guy in Austin (?). But... what they call that book? "Red Thunder". You can get that book, see, it's in Calgary. "Red Thunder" they call it.

Victoria: Frog Lake, that's in Alberta, is it?

George: No. Well, it might be, yeah. It might be, yeah.

Victoria: What did your dad do at that time? What was he doing?

George: Well, they were working for the... he was taking these priests that got killed there, he was taking them to different places, (inaudible) Lake, Saddle Lake, driving a dog team. See, that's the priests that got killed there.

Victoria: That's, that's Grandpa Sam you're talking about?

George: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Victoria: That's... they know him in the old Metis Society as Solomon Pritchard.

George: Oh yes, that's the one.

Victoria: Okay, tell me some more about what he did.

George: Well he... after the Rebellion was on up here, these -- what you call him -- took... Big Bear took these womens, these womens. And my granddad and my dad bought them womens -- they give them horses -- so they wouldn't be, they wouldn't kill them, see. You see, that's another thing. After he bought them womens, after the Rebellion they should even make a monument for my dad and my granddad and they never even done that, they never even done that. See, he done lots, my dad, my granddad and my dad done lots for the government.

Victoria: Where was this, where did that take place where they took the women captive?

George: Frog Lake.

Victoria: At Frog Lake, eh.

George: Yeah, Frog Lake, yeah. The monument is there. I went and seen it. Oh, yeah.

Victoria: Was he active in any part of Saskatchewan when the, when the Rebellion was on at all?

George: Eh?

Victoria: Was he where Duck Lake was at any time during the Rebellion? Grandpa Sam, like, was he around...

George: Oh yeah, well he was in Frog Lake.

Victoria: He was at Frog Lake when...

George: Yeah, when this happened, see. And then they got captured from Big Bear. Big Bear had lots of Indians, you see, he was a chief. And they had to join in with Big Bear, they couldn't get away, see. You see, the... this history I'm telling you about... what they call Eastend, that was our folks' land, you see, at one time because they squatted there, see. And then when the white man started to come they had to move away, but some of them stayed in what they call Eastend. And when the Rebellion come, you know what happened there? I happened to meet a guy again -- he was still living, a fellow by the name (name) -- he told me all about it, see. They were captured and they took them to Regina as prisoners so they wouldn't help the Rebellion. Oh, this is true, this is true -- I'm not finished yet. (laughs) I'm not finished yet, see, I'm

not finished. They'd be ashamed, some of them. I should put it, really, put it in the "Gazette" or -- what do you call the paper?

Victoria: There's some white people in there that's got some... which ones are you talking about will be ashamed?

George: I'm talking about the white people will be ashamed, what they done to us, what they done to us. Oh yeah, what they done to us, they'll be ashamed. They captured these poor Indians and half-breeds and took them to, to, to Regina as prisoners so they wouldn't, wouldn't help the...

Victoria: Wouldn't help the Riel and them?

George: Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's true, that's true, that true, see. (laughs)

Victoria: What, what did they do for fun back in the old days? Did they have dances and stuff when you were a young boy?

George: Oh yeah, oh yes, oh yes. I will tell you a little bit, you know, tell you... There was lots of indians lived... Some more left? Victoria: Yeah.

George: Lots of Indians lived what they call Round Prairie in the early days, oh, 100 years ago.

Victoria: That's out, out of Saskatoon?

George: Yeah, that's where them guys, that's where they made the book, but they made the book after. See, I'm talking about way before that.

Victoria: Years and years before that.

George: Years ago, see, I'm talking about. There was lots of buffalo days. They didn't have no reserve then.

Victoria: About what, how, how many years ago would that be?

George: Well I couldn't say exactly, I've never asked my granddad.

Victoria: Would it be in the 1800s though, eh?

George: Oh, before the Rebellion.

Victoria: Yeah, okay.

George: Before the Rebellion, see, before the Rebellion, you see. There was two guys was captured some place in, some place in Medicine Hat, maybe. Of course, I got that on history, but I'm going to tell you this one. And they had their gun, they didn't take their gun away from them. But they kept them a night so they wouldn't skip, but they finally skipped one night. Nine days they didn't eat, these half-breeds, see they

followed the South Saskatchewan, they were living, they were living right there what they call Round Prairie, you see, the South Saskatchewan. And then nine days this one guy told -- he was more stronger than his partner -- he told him, "Try to shit. We'll eat our shit." And now, my granddad says, the shit wasn't very big I guess. This guy tried to shit, the ship was about a marble. This is a true story, this is no lie. See, and then they made bonfire and he cook his shit and this guy went out a little ways trying to get something to eat, see. When he come back, "Did you eat your shit already?" he told his partner. His partner said, "Yes." Well, he told him, "You're a dirty pig," but he told him in French (French), he told him, in French, you see. This fellow put his hand there try to warm up his shit but he already ate it. And pretty soon he killed a deer this guy, and they made dry meat and he made a hole here and he put water on that green hide, see he put the

green hide there, and he hid stones here, red hot, put them in there. He made what they call beef stew today. Boil it there, this thing boils. When that stone quit boiling, you throw the stone out and put another one in there till that meat is cooked. But he won't let him eat too much because your guts are small, they claim, after nine days. They got to Round Prairie, them guys. He named them too but I forgot the names, my granddad.

Victoria: Were you, were you, did you used to live at Round Prairie?

George: Yeah, yeah I lived there about nine... I got my picture but I couldn't find it. I got my picture, three of us.

Victoria: How old were you?

George: Oh, I must have been pretty young. I don't remember even coming to Battleford that time, see. I must have been pretty young.

Victoria: Well did, did Grandpa Sam settle there at Round Prairie?

George: No, no. No, no, no. You see how it was, that time too, you see, they got my guy and my uncles, my dad and my uncles, they put them in jail that time, see. They were so hard up they butcher some cattle and somebody, some white man report them. They went to jail for a while, see. And while they were in jail we stayed in Round Prairie, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.

Victoria: Who all was living there when you were...

George: I don't remember, I was too young, see. Alex told me we were going up this summer. "I can go and show you where your dad lived," he told me, Alex, Alex Oullette.

Victoria: Alex Oullette, yeah.

George: Yeah, he's going to show me where we lived see, oh yeah. I told Barber; he didn't know. I brought Barber here the time they had that Friendship Centre there, that meeting. I brought him here and he camped here. I told him I lived there before he was born. I told him I lived there, Round Prairie. He didn't know. I lived before he was born, that's the year Dad got married. See, he wasn't even born. And his dad went to jail (inaudible), yeah. You think I'm telling a good story? Victoria: Oh yeah, tell me some more. Did they, did they have many dances and that when, when, you know, everybody was all together back in the old days?

George: Oh yes, I even remember when we used to have lots of dances, you know. Even New Year's, we used to make New Year's one week, New Year's, or more sometimes, because there were lots of people who used to live right here when we lived in Pelletier Lake there. Lots of people them days. Oh yeah, oh yeah. Okay?

Victoria: Yeah.

George: There was lots of people lived what they call Crossing. Just after you cross Saskatchewan Landing, what they call Saskatchewan Landing, then you go up a ways towards Swift Current, you see. There's a little town there what they call nowadays Stewart Valley. Well, from Stewart Valley straight east that's where Crossing is. There was hundreds, hundreds of people lived there, Indians and half-breeds. This is true. This is true. See they used to make little log houses, it's where the Swift Current River comes into Saskatchewan, see. They used to make log houses, they join them together just like streets. We lived there too but I was too young, I don't remember. Some of them live in what they call tipis all winter, year long, in tents, see, in that place. That's where I'm going to take these people now, I'm going to show them. I don't know exactly, we'll have to look for it, but I know just about where it is. You see, I'm going to take these people there. There'll be some old timers there right now from the north where the Indians used to live. You see these, mostly these what they call half-breeds, they like to be white man. That's why we lose our country. See, they like to be white man, they don't like to be, they don't like to be Indian, you see. Myself I've been around and, you see, I was in, one time in Kerrobert, I told my missus I didn't, we didn't see her sister for a long time. I told them, "We should stop here and see your sister," you see. And then we did. I asked... I bought a paper from a boy there, he was selling newspapers -- I give him 10 cents, that time it was 10 cents -- and then I asked him where Daniels lived. Daniels is my name. He said he didn't know. I told him, "What about the Indians?" "Oh, about six, seven blocks from here." See, see there you are. They didn't call them Germans or Norwegians. Well I gave him another 10 cents, he showed me where they lived. Them same guys might have paid white man, you see. But the white man knows us, they knows us, don't worry about...

Victoria: Yeah. What did they do at New Year's? Did they have a dance and...  
George: Oh, they cook lots now, that's the kind they cook

after they got the bread after they kill all the buffalos. See we call these (inaudible). I remember, I remember them days, you see I remember them days. Don't you eat?

Victoria: No, no thanks, not for me. What language did they speak, you know, at home when you were growing up?

George: Well mostly, I'll tell you mostly, mostly what they speak, lots of them, was French, what they call French/half-breeds, see, they speak part French, myself I speak French. I speak French and I speak Cree and I speak English, you see, three languages I speak, eh. You see, mostly... you see, our granddad was an Englishman. Them days, I guess, they didn't get married in church, they must have got married, just shack up, you see, that's about 200 years ago. I had, had the (inaudible) but my grandchildren cut it up, but I might get one yet. I got another book, see. Our granddad was named Samuel, Samuel Pritchard. Yeah, I got, I got the history.

Victoria: What... when... like Grandpa and them, Grandpa Sam and them, did they wear Metis clothing, what they call traditional Metis clothing? Like some of them had sashes, you know, and, and that type of thing?

George: Well ever since I could remember, see, they wear ponchos. But I met guys, I met guys, they still have them what you talking about.

Victoria: The sashes, yeah.

George: Yeah, they have them, they just have, just like chaps, see, and they have these napkins, I guess, I don't know what they call them. That's true, that's true, see. That's true, that's true.

Victoria: What about, did they wear moccasins?

George: Oh yeah.

Victoria: Big high ones?

George: Yeah, mostly moccasins. Mostly moccasins, yeah. After they wore rubbers, but before that they wear just straight moccasins, see, ever since I could remember, see.

Victoria: When they were, when you were young and that, did you ever see your mom, did she do any beadwork of any kind?

George: No, but she done lots of tanning. She tanned lots of hides. Especially, especially what you call deer, deer hides. Well, there was no moose where I was raised, just the antelopes and the deer, you see. But up north they had lots of moose in that country, see.

Victoria: What did she do with the hide after she made it, after she tanned it?

George: Moccasins and buckskin coats.

Victoria: Did, did they, was there very many fiddle players?

George: Oh yes, oh yes.

Victoria: Did you, did anybody in your family play a fiddle?

George: Next time you come out we'll play them. Oh yeah, we had lots. You see these fiddle players, they had what they call the touch first before they play, nowadays they'll just play right now, see, but them days they had the touch, just like a tone. Oh yeah, I got them. We play this year. But I think she went to Battleford. Oh next time you come we'll play that old time, old time fiddle. This is true, my grandma.

Victoria: Did you know anybody that sang any Metis songs or French songs?

George: Oh yeah, I got them too that time.

Victoria: You got some of them too?

George: Oh yes, oh yes.

Victoria: What are they about, what are some of those songs, what do they say in them, what do they talk about?

George: Well mostly French, well I forget now, they're just sitting there. I didn't listen to them for a long time, see.

Victoria: But do they talk, do they tell a story though when they, when they...

George: No, no, they just sing straight, the ones I got, the ones I got.

Victoria: Did you know anybody that, that used to use or practise, I shouldn't say practise, I should say that used Indian medicine?

George: Oh yeah, my mother did. Oh yeah, she knows all the Indian medicine, my mother. Victoria: What, what did they... do you remember any of the things that she used to use or what it looked like?

George: No, well I, no, not exactly but there's one, one where I dig it. It's in Battleford in that church there, I dig it. You get a cut, you see, you throw that in there, put a little bit of vaseline -- well them days it was lard mostly or tallow, I guess.

Victoria: Did, did you, did you ever go to school when you were young?

George: Yeah, when I went to school there in 1910, see, in what they call Ponteix now. But them days they call it Notre Dame and that was north, north side of that creek, I guess, just kind of a creek.

Victoria: Was that in, in Canada though?

George: Yeah, south of Swift Current about 80 miles, that's where we went, that's where we went to school, eh. And then lots of times when we come out of school the policeman would arrest the guy. I got my history, but I'm telling you here too. They went and arrest the guy, the guy was shooting cattle. He was a homesteader and these cattle run a little bit. They thresh, you see, straw pile; they had straw pile them days. They were eating them straw pile, I guess he shot his cattle, you see. Some of them made it home and die over there, see, and someone report him, I guess. So they went, they went and got him, you see, the police went and got him. He had a nice little black team. The police had a police station there -- this was only a village but it was a little town, it was a village but a little town. Instead of him turning -- we just come out four o'clock or so -- instead of him turning into the village, he tapped his horse -- he had a nice little team black horses -- he left the policeman there. The police was on the horseback, you see, the police was shooting them. I guess the police didn't depend on his horse too much. He went to where the rancher lives just not too far from where we live, east. He had a good saddle horse and he went and change his horse, the saddle horse, from this Frenchman. His name was Guay, this Frenchman, he was a Belge (?), I think. Anyway about that time this guy would be maybe 10, 12 miles away, you see, with his team before, before he change horses there. This fellow went to Montana. Them days when you go to Montana you was free. That guy left him, couldn't arrest him, couldn't catch him. When he got in what they call Whitemud, that river, he trade his horses off for a saddle horse, saddle 'n all, he got saddle 'n all for a good horse, he gave his whole team too. Them days were (inaudible). And he rode horseback from there to Montana. But he come back and gave himself away. He had too much stuff, I guess -- not right away, later. So they arrest him, they must have sent him to Prince Albert, I don't know, they put him in jail, that guy.

Victoria: How long did you go to school?

George: Not long.

Victoria: Not long, eh.

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

George: I went to school there again, me and my brother Pat,

see, we used to walk to the school, see. But we told the school man a lie -- I would have a fairly good education now that I'm sorry I did it -- I told the school man dad didn't want us to go to school, he wanted us to keep cattle -- my dad was herding cattle them days. And we told the school teacher that and we told my dad the school teacher didn't want us. We told lies both sides, see. We got away with it, see. That's why I got no education today. (laughs) We got away with it. (laughs) Yeah, that's what happened that time there, eh.

Victoria: Did your parents vote back then? Was there such a thing as voting in them days?

George: Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah.

Victoria: Who, what kind of parties were there?

George: Well, mostly I remember when the Conservatives were there, the Conservative policemen, they weren't... they wore plain clothes, see, not red clothes them days. (inaudible).

Victoria: Do you, do you know how your mom and dad voted?

George: Yeah, they voted, all the time ever since I could remember, they voted Liberals.

Victoria: Liberals eh.

George: Yeah.

Victoria: Did, did they, you know, the politicians then, did they come and visit at the houses?

George: Oh yeah, they used to give us money to buy, to make big parties. Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah, we made big party, even here we did, right here. You see I remember the time there was a fellow live here, a fellow by the name of (name). See, we got a bunch of money from him, he must have got it from the government, to make big parties. After the party Alex Ouellette told him, "Good-bye for four years." Oh, that guy didn't like it. He told him in French, (French) that means, "Don't say that," you see, in French (French). (laughs)

Victoria: What party was that at that time?

George: Liberal.

Victoria: Liberal.

George: Yeah. He told him, "Good-bye, good-bye for the next four years." (laughs) Well that's true, that's true, that's true. We never get no benefit out of these, these things. They don't give us nothing, they took all our land away from us. This is what happened.

Victoria: Do you think the church was involved in politics?

George: Well, I couldn't say exactly, not too much maybe. Maybe, maybe it did. You see, the trouble, see, the places were so far apart them days, you see, not like today.

Victoria: Did, did you, your parents or did you go to a church when you were young?

George: When (inaudible).

Victoria: Was there, was there a church close around though while you were growing up?

George: Yeah, yeah.

Victoria: That, was it a Catholic church?

George: Yeah.

Victoria: Do you think that the, you know, the half-breeds voted like for the party that they figured was going to do better for them?

George: No, I don't think so. I don't think the half-breeds and the Indians cared very much for nothing, they just voted. Maybe just for the parties even. See they make big parties for us, had lots of beans and so on. (laughs)

Victoria: Yeah. Did they, did they have liquor there too?

George: Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah. This is what happens. They, I don't think they cared very much for what was going on, but they were Liberals, most of them, I imagine.

Victoria: Were you involved in the first Metis Society that was first ever opened?

George: Well that's the one I was telling you Joe LaRocque started. I'll tell you how he started that, see. The government give him a bunch of money, Liberal, and that's the time the CCF won, the CCF won. The Liberals lost out, see. I had a history about that. Oh yes, that's a good history, I got it someplace. Maybe next time you come over I'll look for it and I'll find it. Talk about a good history! You see, a fellow by the name of Don Field, he run againt the CCF, you see, but the CCF got in -- he lost out, he was Liberal, you see. And then the CCF lost for a while, you remember them years, I don't know how long ago. He lost for a while there, for four years, remember?

Victoria: Yeah.

George: At that time what you call him, Lloyd Woodrow [Woodrow Lloyd] was in, you see, and they lost it, you see. You see, but when a mistake was... I made, you see, when he made that history, this Don Field after he lost, he told the CCF they never give them half-breeds nothing them half-breeds in Green Lake. They said they're lying to him. That's what he told them I was there when he spoke. You know that they speak every year in Regina, they're (?) each other now. You heard? Every spring, I think -- I didn't hear it yet -- every spring I think they do that, see. So he took that in the House in Regina, this Don Field, that history I got, see. He run, he run, he told me, that was them half-breeds their land, that was... You see, after he lost out there the CCF or so many months there, I should have seen Don Field, I should show him that history, it was him that made it. Now you stick up for these half-breeds, I went and told him. But I never talked, see, this is true. He might have got up and...

Victoria: ...and said something, yeah.

George: Said something, you see. The Green Lake was just sitting there. See, they're squatters in there, you might as well say.

Victoria: What about here, did they have a Metis Society local here?

George: We have yeah, right here.

Victoria: No, no, but I mean in the 1930s and '40s?

George: Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah.

Victoria: Were you involved in Metis Society back in the '30s and '40s?

George: Oh yeah.

Victoria: What did you do, what were you...

George: Well we used to make dances, you see, and get up as much money as we can, not like today. Today they're getting big, big grants. You see I used to go to Ottawa too. See, I went with them. All they beg for the Society -- grants, grants, grants -- they never beg for no land. This is true. You see what I done, me, over there, I had a chance to talk to what you call him, (name) McDonald. I ask him if there is anything written for land rights for us, see. "Oh yes," he says, "you guys got land already, Treaty #3, Treaty #3. You want that, I'll give it to you." You want that I'll give it to you. ...books. Them days it was 25 cents a meal. Here, you mark that. And wherever they camp, and so on. They brought that back, but now they won't even tell us when they spend our money in the whore houses. (laughs) They won't, they won't tell us nothing. Them days they wrote everything, you see,

because we didn't have much money. We just collect on the dances and so on.

Victoria: Yeah. What, what did they talk about at the meetings then?

George: Well I didn't go, but I got some...

Victoria: But in the locals though, like in Willowfield here they used to have a local, eh?

George: We pretty near got land here. But then I don't think... maybe they was just going to lend us. T.C. Douglas was going to give us land here. You know what he told us? I had the history on that. I lend it to George Belanger sometime. Was he a president or was he...

Victoria: Yeah, he was a field worker here.

George: Yeah, he lost it for me, he says. We had that maybe we'd get that land yet, see. See, T.C. Douglas started, he told us he was going to make the (inaudible) here at Biggar.

At the meantime all those that got no place to live move to to Ranger Lake, the Bible students, you see, there them days. But after the times got better, see, they all spread out, the half-breeds. They all went, some of them went to Calgary, all over, you see. And then he talked to the rest were here, he talked them into going to Green Lake -- they did. So just went down that way, but just the same I was left here alone. See, they didn't want, I should have kept them letters, but I lost them, I guess, I don't know. They wrote to me, they didn't want me there (inaudible).

Victoria: Oh yeah, they didn't want you to go to Green Lake?

George: That's right, that's right. Your folks went down there.

Victoria: Yeah, yeah, we moved there, yeah.

George: That's right. It's because they thought I had lots of money, I guess. See, they didn't want me there. They just made the slaves out of all the guys that went there -- they didn't give money. Well, this is why they want the history I got there, Don Field's history, that's a good history.

Victoria: What, what did they use to talk about at the meetings when they had them here? You know, when your local at Willowfield here was...

George: Well, that's mostly the land, land all the time. That's why... that's how come this Douglas was going to set us up, you see.

Victoria: Did you know, you knew Joe LaRocque, eh?

George: Oh yeah.

Victoria: What about Joe Ross?

George: What do you mean by that?

Victoria: Joe Ross was, did he used to come around here?

George: No, not after he pass here. He was running, he was running for election that time.

Victoria: Joe Ross?

George: Yeah. I don't mean Joe Ross I mean...

Victoria: There was two of them. There was Joe LaRocque and...

George: Yeah, I know Joe Ross too.

Victoria: Joe Ross.

George: Yeah, I know him.

Victoria: Is that the one that was blind?

George: Yeah.

Victoria: What about Tom Major, did you know him?

George: Oh yes, I know him, yeah.

Victoria: Where was he from?

George: Gosh, I don't know. I think Tom Major, he was from, I wouldn't say exactly, but he stayed in Prince Albert them days, and he stayed up in West Oak around Frog Lake, see. But I wouldn't say where he was from really, because I didn't pay much attention. I was too young that time I guess, I don't know.

Victoria: What about Joe McKenzie did you know him?

George: Joe McKenzie, gosh, I don't know him. I might know him, see, but I kind of forget now, it's too long. Oh yes, there was lots and lots of things could have been done, see, and now we lost our things, you see. It's not right. Now what about it? What about it now? They want to have (inaudible) and I don't understand that very good yet. We do have a (inaudible). I don't know if they're going to be good or not, see. I don't know anything about it, to be honest with you. I don't know anything about it, see. Wouldn't mind having a little say to own this land, part of it anyway, some of it.

Victoria: So you think, you know, everything, after everything that has happened to you and everything, did you think, would you say you had a good life?

George: Well I made, I made my own hard way, you see. See, I could have been a rich man but I didn't own (inaudible). You see, what happened, I bought some cheap land and I resell it. Now maybe I made \$500, \$600, maybe \$1,000 on the land, see. I thought I was making big money. If I had that same land now today I'd be a rich man. That land is worth about \$100,000 a quarter, you see. When I sold it, see, I bought a quarter in Meadow Lake and I resold it for \$1,600, I paid about \$600 for it, see. I made \$1,000. I thought I was making big money. And here I had a whole section there that I bought from the

Hudson's Bay down below there -- I paid \$700 and something for the whole section, and that land was cheap. I sold it for \$15,000. I thought I was making big money. The fellow that bought it, he sold it for \$45,000.

Victoria: Oh my God.

George: See, this is what happened. And I had another at Pelletier Lake, he bought some cheap land from amongst the half-breed homesteaders, you see. He got up to about 16 quarters. Well then my aunt she died and my uncle he died, and I went and seen the boys and the boys told me -- they had two boys -- one of the boys told me they want to sell that ranch. "How much you want for it?" I told them. "\$12,000," he said, for 16 quarters -- the land was cheap that time. I didn't have no \$12,000 but I could have borrowed it see. See, I made a mistake there again. I could have been rich there again, see. Well, I made a lot of mistakes. I'll never have that chance again. Yeah, that's right, I made a lot of mistakes.

Victoria: Would you have wanted your life...

George: I could have, I could have rent that place (inaudible), see.

Victoria: Yeah, but would you have wanted your life to be different though? If you could live it over again, would you want it to be different?

George: Well I'd take all them chances again, I'd be rich. (laughs) I could take all them chances -- I know better now, see,

Victoria: What do you think is going to help native people though, you know, in the future? What do you think that, that things could be done so that things would be better for them?

George: Well, I don't know. Sure, they're so far down below now. I don't know about the average people, but they're so far down now, the young people. They drink this Lysol, you see, they're drunkards. They're drunkards, drunkards, even the older people. They drink this Lysol and one thing or another, and them kind of guys, I don't think they'll ever get up. But my bunch here would get up, I know that, if we had land. They all live in my land here -- I pay taxes and everything. This is true.

Victoria: How many, how many of your family is living here?

George: Oh, there must be seven, seven families. But them days earlier there's 26 families in there, you see, the time T.C. Douglas was going to give us land. See that's, that's

the

book they lost for me, see. And I wrote T.C. Douglas, see if he had a copy of that. Well, he didn't know himself either but he said he's going to look in his library, he's got a library in Regina, see. But I didn't... I should have got somebody that was well educated. I should have went and looked there, see, because he gave me permission to go and look in Regina see, see if there was a copy of that book there, see, which I didn't, see.

Victoria: Do you think though that native people are going to be better off in the cities or in the country, you know, in the future?

George: Well some of them, lots of people spoiled now. Everything is running water now, see. (laughs) I don't know, to be honest with you, I never studied that too much, you see. Some of them I think would do all right in the country. But lots of them, even the Indians, those rural Indians, they go in the city. You take around Saskatoon there, pretty near every corner you go there's Indians, you'd see Indians on the streets wouldn't you? You know that, that west project there, that Friendship Inn, they eat there and they'll drink all their money. Some of them live on the reserve, they should send them back to the reserve, them kind of guys. Send them back to the reserve. They got good houses, but they let them come and live there and they pay \$500, \$600 for a house for them Indians where they give them relief down there on the reserve, give them what's coming to them. But they don't know that they pay \$500, \$600 for this house for them, let him live there, let him drink all his money up, go to the Friendship Centre and they go and eat there -- I've seen them there. I go, and eat there myself when I go there -- that's how I know, I see them there. Lots of old-age pensioners eat there free. And them same guys -- I go to the bar, I go and have a bottle of beer -- they sit there having a beer. They want to eat free there. (laughs)

Victoria: Well okay, George, I hope you're going to give me some more information on this, you know, when I come out the next time, eh.

George: Well I think it will be better next time.

Victoria: Okay. Okay that's real good. Thanks for the interview.

George: I'll have them, them other papers, you know. I mean, I'll put in some more and have some more.

Victoria: Okay, that will be great. Okay, thanks a lot then.

(END OF SIDE B)  
(END OF TAPE)

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