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SASKATCHEWAN  
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SASKATCHEWAN  
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LANGUAGE: ENGLISH AND CREE  
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INTERPRETER:  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- The daughter of a Hudson's Bay manager, Mrs. Jacobson was born and raised in Ile-a-la-Crosse. She attended school there and in St. Louis, Saskatchewan.
- Attendance at boarding schools in Ile-a-la-Crosse and St. Louis.
- The Riel Rebellion of 1885: story her mother told her.
- Job discrimination against Indian and Metis.
- Welfare payments and how they have destroyed the old way of life.

Carol: Okay, you were born in Ile-a-la-Crosse and what did your parents do here to make a living?

Mary: My dad was a Hudson's Bay manager.

Carol: Hudson's Bay manager?

Mary: Yeah.

Carol: And what about your grandparents? Do you know anything about them?

Mary: My grandparents, I don't remember what... On my dad's side, my grandfather was a Hudson's Bay manager too, in Norway House at that time. And then my mother's side, mother's dad, I don't remember, I don't recall. My mom knows everything, she can sure tell you lots.

Carol: Did your father make quite a good living or...?

Mary: Yeah, he worked for the Hudson's Bay Company for 35 years and then he retired.

Carol: And what nationality were your parents?

Mary: My dad is a French Canadian and my mom is French-Metis, like. You see, because her dad comes from Quebec, Montreal.

Carol: Jacobson is not a French name. It is what - Norwegian or something?

Mary: I am married to a Norwegian.

Carol: Oh, you were married to a Norwegian, right, right, okay, yeah, right. What was your name before you were married?

Mary: Boulanger.

Carol: Boulanger. Are you related to any of the Boulanger's around Batoche, Duck Lake, around there?

Carol: Maybe, I don't know. There has been lots of my uncles' kids being all over that way. My dad was the last kid my grandmother had on my dad's side, my dad. He was the baby and when his parents died... his dad drown and his mother died when he was about 10 years old, I think. They were living in Edmonton then. Not Edmonton, Winnipeg, that is where they were.

Carol: Was your father, were your parents born here?

Mary: No, he was born in Winnipeg.

Carol: I see, and when did they come here?

Mary: They came here in... I don't remember. My mother remembers everything. I don't remember anything of when they came over here. There was a bunch of them came over here. They were clerks and then after a while, well, they turned out to be managers and things like that from one post to another and all over, up north. And they got married with the Indian girls (laughs). We call ourselves Indians, Metis like. (laughs)

Carol: You call yourselves Indian or Metis or...?

Mary: Metis, yeah.

Carol: Did you go to school?

Mary: Yeah. Seven years in Ile-a-la-Crosse here.

Carol: And what was the school like then?

Mary: It was all French. No English, nothing. All French because only three nuns came to Ile-a-la-Crosse. We were the only three first boarders that was here because the boarder house was not finished. So we stayed at the father's house that time.

Carol: At the priest's house?

Mary: Yeah. That is where we stayed until the boarder house was finished and then we moved in. There was another bunch of kids.

Carol: Did they teach you Cree at all? Did you talk Cree at all?

Mary: We used to talk Cree, you see, so we didn't learn any Cree. Just French, all French. Was the Grey Nuns that time, Grey Nuns.

Carol: And how did they treat the kids?

Mary: They treated us pretty good. While I was here, I went to school here. I was a boarder in school here for seven years. And once, that boarder house burned down while I was there.

Carol: How did it burn down?

Mary: It was in a Holy Week like, and it was a Holy Thursday, and what year I don't remember. You see, we used to make decorations for Easter, like. Then they used only the heaters and cook stoves and things like that; so they must have caught fire to them, the decorations we made for Easter.

Carol: How many kids went to the school in those days when you went?

Mary: Oh, I couldn't remember how many kids there was at the boarders'. And then there were some extras, you see. They would go to school from right in town from their parents'. Because our parents, some of us, our parents was so far away, you see, so we had to stay at the boarders'.

Carol: So your parents would live right in the town then and lived...?

Mary: No, not my parents. That is how come we stayed in the boarders'.

Carol: What kind of things did they teach in the school then?

Mary: Like they teach now in English. Arithmetic, and...

Carol: Did they teach a lot of religion?

Mary: Yeah, they used to teach lots of religion, right.  
(laughs)

Carol: Did the kids like that or...?

Mary: Yeah, we used to like it because that's...

Carol: Were they all Catholic then? Were all the kids Catholic then?

Mary: Yeah, we was all Catholics.

Carol: Did they teach you anything about the Rebellion of 1885 at school?

Mary: She was in school when a lot of the tenants run away to the... (Cree).

Third Person: Oh, she says they never taught them nothing about the Rebellion. My mother was in school at that time when the nuns took off to Patuanak.

Mary: Her mother was?

Third Person: Yes.

Carol: Why did they take off to Patuanak?

Mary: They were scared of the Indians - that they were going to come and take the mission over and kill all the priests and nuns and everything like this. So all them Catholic people, they said they took off to where the cross is. That's where they made their tents.

Carol: Your mother told you about this, eh?

Mary: Yeah.

Carol: Did she think that they had any good reason to do that? I mean, did she think that, did your mother think that Louis Riel and the Indian Metis were actually going to come and kill all the nuns and priests or...?

Mary: That is what they were told, you see.

Carol: Did your mother think that was true though? Do you remember what she said about that?

Third Person: I'll tell you why they was scared. Because Louis Riel had a sister here that was a nun, in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and they said he was coming for his sister. His sister is buried here, in the graveyard here.

Carol: Do think that the Indian/Metis then had good cause to fight?

Mary: The nuns and priests alone, the Indians too. That's what, that's the ones they came, eh? As far as Sandy Point? South Bay?

Carol: What was that?

Third Person: She just said she didn't like... Himself, he didn't like about the Rebellion because he should have left the nuns and the priests alone, you know. 'Cause he came as far as Waterhen across here to South Bay Point here.

Carol: That is what her mother thought?

Mary: That is what I do and I still think about that too. The way it is going on nowadays, you see. Just like they are trying to take the mission away, chase the fathers and nuns, things like that, away from here. They should leave the mission alone. If they want to do something, they can do it outside the mission. Leave the fathers and the nuns and the mission alone. Because we don't want to be around here without

fathers and nuns. The nuns don't do anything. And we would be out of... no hospitals, no doctors, no nothing. Who is gonna - there is no Metis or Indians can run a place like that, no way. There is nobody can run a place like a hospital.

Carol: Why not?

Mary: Well, there is no Metis or Indians that are educated enough to run a place like that. No, no way. I can say that for myself and for lots of us. If they want a nurse or a doctor or a teacher, well, they got to get it from outside. They come from outside. Well, there has never been one picked up here yet to be a nurse. Even, for a while, they are working already in there but they are only working girls. But not....

...so it is no use for people... on my side I think, they better leave the mission alone. If it is built there, well, it has got to be there. Not to bother the nurses or fathers or nuns, and everything will be okay.

Carol: Do you think the nuns and the doctors and the priests treat the people good or...?

Mary: Yeah, good enough. As far as I know, that is what we have since I can remember. And I think they had the mission here and I don't see nothing that can be done with... what happens is God's will, what happens. Sometimes the school burns, the boarder house burns or else some kids drown, well, that is in God's will. It is not the nuns' fault or anything as what happens.

Carol: But how do they treat the kids though? The kids that come to school here.

Mary: I was a boarder for seven years here and I was treated good enough. I used to eat three times a day and sleep and

things like that. We used to take walks and school, too. But we didn't learn, that is our fault if we get a licking. Because we got to try to learn and they want us to learn something. If we don't want to learn it, well we get punished for it that way; we deserve it. That is the trouble nowadays. Kids, you see, go to school and they say, "Oh, the teacher said this and that and this." They come and tell their parents and their parents, they decide they are going to give the teachers hell. That is no good. I have been in school for nine years; I had it many times. If you are good in school, if you behave in school and listen what the teachers teach you, you won't get no licking, no strapping or nothing.

Carol: When you went to school, were there any white kids in the school?

Mary: No, mostly just around here.

Carol: What about the police, do you think the police treat the white people and the...?

Mary: There was only one - well, you see, but that time when we was going to school.

Carol: What about nowadays, do you think the police treat the native people and the Metis people the same as they treat the whites?

Mary: Nowadays?

Carol: Yes.

Mary: Nowadays they don't treat very - I think they are more on the white man's side. That is what, that is the way it looks, eh. They are more on the white man's side than the poor Metis and Indian's side. That is the way it looks. That is the way I look at it anyway.

Third Person: If there is a white man and Indian walking, they would pick up the Indian and throw him in jail and tell the white man to go home.

Carol: Why do you think they do that?

Mary: Well, I just don't know why they do it.

Carol: But you don't think the teachers are like that? The teachers that you had here last year, you don't think they treat the Metis people any different? Just the police?

Mary: They don't do that, they don't treat anybody different. But the kids, you see, that is the ones that makes the trouble. They go home and say, "Oh, this teacher said that to me, 'You go home, you bunch of Indians, and things like that. You don't know nothing.'" Well, most of the time, they are lying so that the mothers or the fathers, they go back and raise heck to the

teachers. But they shouldn't believe the kids.

Carol: Do you think the Metis people and native people have as good a chance at getting jobs as the whites?

Mary: I suppose they would if they know something about how they are going to teach them or going to teach the kids and

things like that. There is not very many Metis and Indians that knows how to teach.

Carol: Well not just - I am just talking about any job like. If they go to Prince Albert or here in town or, do they have the...?

Mary: If they got a chance, if they - some boys and some men, if they got a chance to have a job or carpenting or anything like that, well they can do it better than the white man.

Carol: But do they get the job just as easily though?

Mary: No, they don't get a job so easy.

Carol: Why is that?

Mary: I don't know. I'll tell you - Mr. Red here, he is number one on a saw mill. And then he goes from one saw mill and show them how to run it. Then he went to Buffalo at the landing, and they got there, there is two white men that came there first and they get four dollars and fifty cents an hour. And him, he knows better than white men, he knows just as much as the white men and he gets only two fifty. How come? Just because he is a Metis and the white man gets more. And some white men don't understand, they don't like it. Like, Jonas here, Jonas Favel doesn't like that. Why treat a Metis less than a white man? He should get the same wages as the white man because he knows just as good as them two white men.

Carol: What can the Metis people do about things like that?

Mary: Well, some people talks for it and that is how come he is home now, doing nothing. Because he didn't want to do it anymore.

Carol: What can they do to stop these things happening, to stop this discrimination and so on?

Mary: Well, I tell you, he stopped. He didn't want to go and work anymore.

Carol: I don't just mean this one case. I mean, when this happens to lots of people, eh? What should they all do? Is there anything they could all do to stop this discrimination?

Mary: There must be something to do. Well, I can tell them what people should do. Because sometimes I get stuck talking in English.

Carol: Oh, okay, go ahead in Cree then.

(Speaks Cree then to the third person)

Mary: How come the white man gets more?

Third Person: She says she doesn't know how to solve it. But she says this person I'm talking about, he says he should - he went down yesterday to that sawmill and he told them if they don't sign a contract, he's not working - a contract with them to get him \$4.50 an hour. So that is what he said. He don't know how to solve it himself. Maybe the men will know, she says.

Carol: Okay, do you remember what were the kind of houses that you lived in when you were young? Were they quite different from now?

Mary: Yeah.

Third Person: Oh yeah, I love the houses. (laughs)

Mary: We love the houses, you see. And some of them, we used to put logs on top, too, for roofing. Even me after I got married to that Norwegian, we used to build shacks with logs and then put logs on top for roofing. Then we used to flatten out birch bark and then after we flatten that we used to put that and then put sand on it, on the roof, and no leaking. They were just as good as shingles. (laughs)

Carol: Were things tougher then? Did people work harder then?

Mary: Yes. That was good for them. And we used to eat anything, no matter what. And good living.

Carol: Like what?

Mary: Like ducks and tongues and moose and moose meat and fish. Anything. People used to make their livings really good. And now, everything comes from the store. Too much welfare, that is what poisoned the people.

Carol: Could people here still live on pemmican and fish?

Mary: If they want to.

Carol: Because I thought that there wasn't very much fish left here now, and not very many ducks left and stuff, eh?

Mary: If they got the permit and then the duck season is open, then they could go anyplace and hunt ducks. And the same with fish. There is lots of fish in Seven Lakes but people don't go

far from their homes nowadays. And before, long time ago, they used to go out for months and a year. A whole year, they used to go out and do their living. Now, it's - that welfare poisoned everything I think. That is what it is. That is what



people... they just stay home now, men, doing nothing.

Carol: Well, I understand that there is not that many animals around here anymore. And the fish - the mink ranchers - didn't they take a lot of the fish, you know, and feed them to the mink? Thousands and thousands of mink? The white mink ranchers?

Mary: Just the same way, they go to some other lakes, well, they can catch just as much. They don't need to hang around, just around here, see, where the mink ranchers is. They can go someplace and fish. And they still can make a good living on fishing.

Third Person: There is a different price. In the 1930s, you used to get 5 a pound and today they are getting 39.5 a pound for fish. And then in the 1930s all they bought was white-fish. They didn't buy pickerel and they didn't buy pike. Now they are buying the works.

Mary: Everything is... it's all going round and round and round.

Carol: Do you remember the...?

Mary: And the stuff costs so much nowadays. And long time, even me, I remember we used to buy a box of cigarettes, 25 in a box for 25 and a package of tobacco, 10 . And now, 80 in the cafes and 75 in the stores.

Carol: I guess you would have been too young to remember the First World War, but what about the Depression?

Third Person: The 1930s, the Depression.

Mary: The First World War?

Third Person: No, no, 1930s. (Cree)

Mary: I guess I was in school then. Salvation school, two years in St. Louis, Saskatchewan.

Third Person: She went to school in St. Louis, Saskatchewan. But she says she doesn't remember it; she says she was probably in school then.

Mary: Because I stayed here in Ile-a-la-Crosse and I went to the boarders' for seven years. And then my dad sent me out to St. Louis, Saskatchewan in a boarder house. It was the Black Nuns then. And there, too, it was all French. At St. Louis, Saskatchewan. So maybe that is the First World War, I remember now. The people just dying, too. There was lots of them. There was a sickness going around here, the first year I was over there in school. I remember now. My mom used to write me a letter how many people died and some went hungry and everything was dry.

Carol: That was during the First World War?

Mary: Yeah.

Carol: What was the sickness?

Mary: It was the flu, some kind of flu.

Third Person: Dying by five, six per day.

Carol: Were there doctors around then to help with the sickness or...?

Third Person: Some kind of chicken pox like, uh?

Mary: Yes, and there was no doctors, just the Indian's doctors. There were some Indians but they were really good too.

Carol: Did you know then what the First World War was all about?

Mary: No.

Carol: You wouldn't remember I guess, if anybody went and fought or not. What about the 1930s again, were things tougher then? Was it hard to make a living and...?

Mary: Not so bad.

Third Person: In the north, it wasn't bad in the north.

Mary: No.

Carol: Well, you're father worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. But what about other people, did they have a tough time making a living in the Depression, in the thirties?

Mary: We used to have everything that I can... even I remember growing up.

Carol: What about the Second World War? Do you remember that, in the forties? 1939?

(Discussion in Cree)

Mary: The same thing.

Third Person: It's again, the time of the First World War, that's when the Germans were trying to fight against us.

Carol: Did people from around here go and fight?

Mary: Yeah, even one of my brothers was... two of my brothers, and his dad.

Carol: Did they want to go or were they forced to go?

Mary: Well, they were picked up. They wanted to go and one of my brothers-in-law went on the First World War and then the Second one, he did.

Carol: Why did they want to go?

Mary: Well, they just wanted to save their country, I guess.  
(laughs)

(Discussion in Cree)

Third Person: She says when they went out to try and make a living and plus that, they didn't want their land taken away.

Carol: Who was going to take their land away?

Third Person: No, it's just like, fight for their country, I mean, see?

Carol: Okay. Good.

(End of Side A)

(End of interview)

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