Road Allowance Interview, Nora Cummings

Conducted by Scott Duffee
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SD: Could you please tell me your name and your home community?

NC: My name is Nora Louise Ouelette Cummings.

SD: Alright, and your home community?

NC: Saskatoon. I am Saskatoon Road Allowance Métis.

SD: Okay, thank you. So, who were or are your parents and grandparents?

NC: On my father's side was Moise Ouelette. And my father was Jerome Ouelette. And my, koohkum, my grandma, his wife, was Elizabeth Dumont. And that was Gabriel Dumont's niece. My grandfather was married to Gabriel Dumont's brother. He's my great-uncle. On my mother's side, my great-grandfather was Charlies Trottier, and my grandfather was Peter Trottier. And we used to say "Trotchie," we didn't know they were Trottier until they found a baptism certificate, and they found out they were Trottiers. But it was always Trotchie. T-R-O-T-C-H-I-E. And a lot of them resented it because they used Trotchie all their lives and they couldn't understand why. We found out later that the older people didn't have any education, and when they would pronounce it to whoever did their signing, because most of them did their signing with an "X," they pronounced it in the French form. They would agree because they didn't understand. So that's how that came about.

SD: So, the original way of saying it is Trottier?

NC: Trottier, most of them, yes.

SD: How would you spell that?

NC: T-R-O-T-T-I-E-R. When we were growing up it was Trotchie. T-R-O-T-C-H-I-E. My mother Trottier and all my uncles, none of them used Trottier because they used Trotchie all their life. When they passed away, that's what they used. It had to go in on the death certificate as Trottier.

SD: Wow. So, the death certificate had Trottier, but in their life they used Trotchie, with a C-H?

NC: Yep.

SD: That is interesting.

NC: None of them, and now Charles, here at Round Prairie, they use Charles Trottier. But actually, they used, it was all Trotchie. But because of that, they just spelled it that way. It was frustrating for my uncles, I remember them saying, "No, no damn way, I was a Trotchie all my life, I'm not a Trottier. That's not who we are."

So, you know, that's the way they were. And then like the same with us, on our Ouelette side. My old uncle, my great-uncle he'd say, "It's not Ouelette. It's Whellette." And I'd say, "Well, why would you say that we all are Ouelettes? That's who we are." "Yes, but that's the way you're supposed to say Whellette." But we all used Ouelette.

SD: Did your folks and grandparents always live on Saskatoon Road Allowance?

NC: No, my dad's side came from Lewistown, Montana. And my mother's came from Great Falls and Havre, Montana. So, when the Rebellion broke out, they came and they then settled in a Métis community, which is Round Prairie. That's where there were 40 families. Forty families stayed there and that's where they had all their land and their scrip. That's just out by Moosewoods, Whitecap First Nation. That's where they lived all their lives pretty well. My mother was 14, coming on 15 when they moved into Saskatoon. My mother said that when the Scrip commissioners came around, the Métis didn't understand because a lot of them didn't read or write. I have all their land titles and scrip, and a lot of them are signed with an "X." So, a lot of them didn't or couldn't understand, or couldn't read or write. What happened there was that this farmer came out and it was the government, see that was a road allowance. At that time, some of that land was kept on the road allowance, and some was kept for where the farmers live now. I don't know if it was the government or the people that were buying it, but they sold one of them for five dollars each. They were told, "You have to sell this because the government says so." They've given them five dollars. That's how they lost their land. So, they didn't understand. So, some moved to Saskatoon. My mother and my father and my grandma moved here to Saskatoon, on this side of town. Where I live is our land, the road allowance. Where 1st Street and 2nd Street and Taylor Street meet, that's where our tents and our shacks were. We lived there. Some of our people scattered on William Avenue. And when I look at the avenues now, I have a picture in my mind because I can remember as a kid growing up because this is where I grew up. And it would be probably right off Broadway and between Broadway and 1st Street. That's where there were three houses. Their maiden name was Vandale, but one was married to a Camponi, and one was married to a Huskins. I lived on 2nd Street. So, it's up by 2nd Street, between 2nd and 3rd Street, halfway between Clarence and 2nd Avenue. There was another family there and they were the Birminghams. They were married to Browns. She was also Métis. So, we all lived in these little houses, these shacks. But where I lived between Taylor Street and 1st Street and 2nd Street, that was where the majority of our families lived. And where the Lakeview Pool is, my grandpa and my great-aunts and uncles lived in that area. And where the bowling alley is, I guess as big as that is that was all harvested. That was a community garden. They would plough that and we'd plant gardens, and then everybody harvested that in fall. And right on Taylor Street, my grandma lived in a little shack. I'll have to find a picture. I'll bring them down for you. When I talk about the weather, the snow was really high. I remember in the little shack, the snow was as high as our shack. And you know, when we talk about it, in fact my cousins came in there last week. We had seven of my cousins, the older ones, sitting around the table here talking about them days. How we didn't freeze to death or burn in little shacks. But you know we were warm. We

used to haul wood. Where I live here now, this used to be all slough and bush. I was, of course, a tom boy, but at the time I wouldn't have called myself that. I just did what I had to do. And my cousins, two of them have now they're passed away, but they were the two boys. We'd come out and we'd get the wood and take the wood, and we'd chop it and cord it for winter. We always had competitions going and that's the way with the Métis; it's always the competition. Who could saw the most wood, or who could chop the best wood. I tell you, boy I kicked their butt sometimes. I was a good axe swinger, and I could saw that wood just as good as any guy. But we got along well. We lived with our koohkum because my mom and dad lived just across the bush from us. And my mom used to do day work and my dad, he'd do work, too. But my grandma got sick, so my role was to look after her. So that's why I stayed with her. But prior to that, I had my own team of horses. I used to work with my dad. You know when I drive by there on 2nd Street, between 1st Street and 2nd Street, there where those houses are, we had an underground barn. It was like a basement because we had no barns for our horses. So, they dug them right under and that's where our horses would be. In the winter time, they'd put big horses' blankets and cover then with cloth and canvas. We'd put big logs across so the snow wouldn't go in there. That's where our horses were kept most of the time. Right across from here, we used to call these three brick houses, the "Three Sisters." My mooshom lived in the first one. When I was a little girl, I lived in the second one for a little while my mom said they stayed until they got a shack set up. And the third one, she said her name was Black. But they torn that one down and they put the fire truck there. And that's what we grew up all around there. This was my home. And in the summer, where Stonebridge now is, my dad used to hay for all the farmers. So, we'd go and pitch our tent up and that's away from home. But that was how he made his living. So, we would go and live with him and my mom would cook, and us kids would stay out there. I had a brother and sister, and in the wintertime here we moved into a house. We lived right out, oh let's see, Bowman Collegiate over here, somewhere around Ruth Street and York Avenue. In that area there was a big bush, and I remember our big tent. My dad had a big tent, the old Métis high wall tents. And he had tin, and he put it around the top and then he made this floor with old wood, and it was warm and we had a big cook stove. We had a real house. And we moved in there and we were there in the winter, and it was so warm. And they were worried about us. My koohkum and others were worried about us, so they moved us into this old shack, and it was colder than our old tent. We lived in there until just before Christmas. So, we lived in a lot of our tents. My dad got a job, and it was up here on Ruth Street. I can picture it in my mind that's how I can tell you. Where the exhibition grounds were and just down, I would say, maybe on Munroe Avenue, somewhere around there. It used to be called the "Stewart's Place," and this fellow told my dad he would rent it to him really cheap. And he had a good barn. They did that for a while until we got our

shack, our house ready. They come and they rented that. We hunted rabbits. We snared rabbits here. We hunted deer out here and toward the "Flats," they called them. And there was nothing out here. Clarence Avenue, as they call it now, it was high banks. It was nothing but gravel. It was just an old highway. We used to slide down it. That was our recreation. We used to slide down. Then old farm trucks would sometimes come by. But it would be icy, and that's where we had a skating rink and we'd skate us kids. When I think back about living my life in this city, we had a good life. It was our home. I remember that Métis people are flower people. My koohkum loved flowers and I remember the flowers she used to plant there. Oh, beautiful flowers she had at the tar paper shack. And then it was pretty. I remember twice a year, we'd go to the modern press and they'd bring this paper, and we'd put this calcium on it, make the paste and would paste our homes. Of course, with calcium, we'd get different colors. There was competition with my aunties and my other family members, and everybody had different colours. They always wanted to make sure everybody's house was a little different. And I remember too that my aunts used to embroider a lot. Everything was so fancy. And my granddaughters said, "Well what did you use for covers grandma?" "Oh, my goodness," I said, "we never ran out of covers." "Years ago, we'd have old apple boxes that would be so high, and they'd have a middle board in between. We'd take them and would then put them on top and then we'd do the curtains and ruffles and stuff. And everybody had lots of stuff for it. And then curtains with our Robin Hood flour bags. That's when they would bleach them out. They used lye at that time; we didn't have bleach. And then, they'd fix them and they'd crotchet and everything was fancy." So, our houses were nice. They were all fixed up nice. And my koohkum, she'd braid the rugs with us with old stockings or whatever cloth we could get. They were pretty. That's how we'd fix up our houses really nice. I enjoyed it and they taught me how to cook, my auntie and my koohkum. That was when they got me away from the team of horses. I'd become a cook. They made me cook everything, including traditional foods. That's where I learned my traditions—from my koohkum and my auntie. And that's where I was raised and because my mom couldn't look after her. She had to work. She did day work. We scrubbed laundry on the board. And I remember my old uncle and them, they used to wear that big old heavy underwear. I remember being told, "You have to wash these, your uncle needs them." And we'd wash them and my cousin, and I would hang them on the line. And you know how the old lines would be stiff out there, in the winter especially. You got to take your broom out and go and hit them. And we'd pretend they were our uncle, and we'd give it because we'd get so frustrated doing this. But as kids when I grew up, we had so much fun. We made our own recreation. I remember Dad getting a great big round pole. I don't know where he got it. It was like a big round tree. And we dug and dug and put that half in, and we really fixed it tight in there, and then he got us a board. That was our merry-go-

round. And we'd have our own merry-go-round. Yes, we always had things to do. We were never short for recreation, I tell you. When I think back, as kids growing up, we were poor, but we were never out of food. We always had food on the table. I mean we maybe didn't have steaks and stuff, but we had good steaks when it came to moose and deer meat, and then, of course, we all had our traditional foods. We didn't have a fridge, so in the bush they'd dig about as high as this table, and everybody shared because our tents were in the bush. And everybody shared these "dug out fridges" as we'd call them. We'd make sure the water was poured all the time to keep them cold and that's where we kept all our stuff and everybody knew where their stuff was. And my cousins were brought home to the tents when they were born and that's where we lived.
SD: So, what other Métis families lived in that community?
NC: Well, there were the Trotchies, the Ouelettes, the Letendres, the Landrys, the Vandales, the Birminghams, the Gardipys, and the Sansregrets. There was sort of a mixture. And all these people were all inter-related. I remember teasing my mom because we lived in Round Prairie. I said to her, "You guys were kind of like Hutterites, weren't you?" "Don't you go and tell me we're like Hutterites." I said, "For goodness sake, how did you guys find boyfriends that you weren't related to?" She used to get mad at me when I asked her silly questions. But I mean this was interesting for me to find out. I remember Christmas was more our day just for thinking about our time, share little gifts and stuff. It was more a way of thinking of our spiritual way and our food, and it wasn't a great big thing. It was exciting, but it was very Catholic. My grandma was very Catholic. New Year's, we loved New Year's. Everybody came. Even though our little shacks were small, they always found room for the fiddle and room enough for people to jig. Whether there were one or two people, there was room for all of us. I remember my old auntie and my uncle Bill Tate, he died now. I remember they had a grey building. It had what looked like shingles. And I remember taking all the furniture and putting it against the walls, and then they'd put the chairs so everybody could come in there. They went to all that trouble for one day, but they did. Right here, the first big house on York Avenue, not by the fire place, the next one over, that's where my "grandpa" Charlie Landry lived. I call him "my grandpa." That was my grandma's brother, but we always called him grandpa. We never called him uncle. And we got a place up on 8th Street. It was called Lutheran College. And I remember we always went by horses and sleighs in the winter. My dad and them would put hay in sleighs and put in all these horse blankets. Then they'd put these blankets because us kids all had to be wrapped up when we went. And New Year's was the big thing because they all came because he had a big house. And I remember thinking he was rich and thinking he had a mansion because they'd pull the doors, they used to slide into the walls. It was the front room and the dining room, and then they had a kitchen. Everybody brought food. And then they'd have chairs

around and would have dances. And they'd dance right after Christmas right too, on New Year's. So, we'd come and them too they had an underground barn for their horses so, and it was big, so everybody put their horses. Everybody came. We'd take our blankets and we were upstairs, us kids, we're running loud. The company was because that's the adults, we used to sneak down and look from the stairway to see them all dancing. And you know they used to drink but nothing like the way people drink now. They used to get drunk. It wasn't anything like that. It didn't come into effect until after my uncles come back from the army. But they would come and I remember the jugs of wine, and they'd go around and he'd have a little cup. And every so often they would give everybody a drink, and there was lots of food. They had to eat. And if somebody got a little too much, well that person went to bed. There was no argument, they went to bed. I never saw arguments or fights. And New Year's Eve, my great-uncle would shoot his gun for New Year's, in the New Year. And then everybody would come in and they'd have a drink and the dance started. And they'd dance and dance. They'd stay up all night those old people. So, I guess that was being thankful. We have another year and we're going to the New Year with a good feeling. I still do that. Every New Year's I have 60 to 70 people come through my house. I cook and I get the tables full and I make my bullets and my traditional foods. And I feed people. Every year, I start right after Christmas. I want my tradition to hand down to my children. I told my daughter and my granddaughter, "Oh maybe next year," and "Oh koohkum," she said, "You can't do that. We're here to help you." My grandchildren help. "We don't want you to stop." So, this year again my table will be here. I welcome you to come.

SD: Thank you, thank you.

NC: And anytime after 12:30 people come, and they go, and they come and go and visit. Tell stories and that's what we do. Yes, so you come. It would be an honour to have you.

SD: I'll wear my moccasins and jig.

NC: Yes, we have a lot of people that come. My children come. I have friends that come. People come. We enjoy our time. We start at about 12:30 and we go until about 9:00-9:30. My last table is finished and then the kids come in they clean up everything. Looks like nothings happened here because they don't come back the next day.

SD: Did any non-Métis live in that road allowance?

NC: Yes, what was his name? He was a Geisberg. I remember him. He lived there. And that one other fellow, oh he lived with, oh I can't remember the name, but there were two of them. They were married to Métis women. But they were more or less like us because they lived with us so long that they adopted our ways. But the one, he was German because he had a real accent. And I used to remember him talking

when I was a little kid and I used to try and mock him. Like we'd try and mock him because we thought it was funny the way he would talk. I think he was German.

SD: But you don't remember the last name?

NC: I can't...

SD: There was Geisbrecht you said?

NC: Geisbergs yes, and I can't remember...If I can just remember his name. And none of the other girls are old enough that they would remember him. Pardon? Emket? Yes, so we used to think it was funny.

SD: You sure that was his last name?

NC: I'm sure that was his last name. Emket, yes, and then was that Geisberg like I told you.

SD: Okay.

NC: Yes, and like I said the people that were married, the Camponi, he was Italian. And the other one, they said was a Swede. And the other one, that Birmingham I don't know what he was. But the women were all dark. They were all Vandales and they all fitted in. We didn't know what discrimination was.

SD: So, there were a few non-Métis families then?

NC: Yes, who lived here.

SD: Geisbrecht. Emket and a Swedish family?

NC: Yes, well I remember. I know his name was Hoskins, but I forget his first name. And then there's Mike. I think Mike Birmingham. I think it was because his son was named after him. And what was, Camponi? I forget his name though. I knew his name, too. And then, my grandpa on my mother's side, when they came into Round Prairie, some of the Métis went to the west side off 11th Street. They just lived over there. But this was like our own colony. Everybody was there in the summertime or when we went anywhere, our families didn't have to worry about babysitting. The aunties or whoever was there and the koohkums, they looked after us. We always knew this was the rule: it takes a community to raise a family. So, we didn't know what it was like to be any different from other families because we were content. We were safe. We had our own community, our own colony. And it was in 1953, when they moved us out. That was the saddest day of our lives. I was 14. It was like my whole community was gone. And I remember the community members, they were very sad, especially the older people. They were lost. People moved from house to house. That's when the drinking got heavier. When my uncles and them were in the army and when they came home in 1946, my uncle and them started coming home. Like there were the Camponi boys, there were the Birmingham boys. That's when alcoholism started coming into our community. We didn't know what that was really. And but then, we all separated. My family were close enough to stick together, but we lost a lot of our culture, and you some of who we are. Cousins or children grew up, and they were either French or something else. It was sad. And I was never

known as a Métis. I was known as a Half-Breed. I was always a Half-Breed. I never identified as a Métis. My koohkum would say "li Michif," and that's who we were. But I never knew what discrimination was when I was growing up because we all lived together until we lived in the larger community. Then I started a bit, but not much. I found discrimination when I ran for city council. My children were older, and I got involved in the community, for our local and then in our community. I was asked to run as an alderman. I said, "I don't need to be an alderman. What am I going to do? I don't an education." And they were all teasing so Vicki Wilson, this non-Aboriginal woman and I, we ran. "Okay, I'm not chicken." So, we ran. I ran on the biggest ward with Dawn Junior, and she ran on this other side. And then another woman ran in or Vicki ran school wide. Well, she got a good whatchamacallit case. I said I only wanted 50 votes. And then I ran Judge Barry Singer he was with legal aide then. He was my campaign manager. When I would go out and speak, it would never bother me, but when it came to, I showed letters. I had letters where someone had phoned me and my children because they were saying, "Are these from the same father or are they bastards with have different dads?" And I've had them saying, "Indian women shouldn't run because they're all whores and they should stay at home." And I thought, "Wow, I've never seen things like this." It scared me because of my children. I thought, "What if. I used to go out, and I thought what if something happens to my kids?" My kids used to go Georges Vanier, which was all white. "What if something happens to them?" So, I was going to quit. But my deceased husband, Thibodeau, said "If quit now, you're going to run all your life. You stand up now for yourself and our children because once you run, they'll always keep you running." I said, "Yes, but what happens to our children?" So I went to bed that night, and I prayed. And I asked our creator to guide me and my decision, and I got up the next morning, and I said, "No I'm not going to run." I was hoping for 50 votes, and I got 51 votes. I was pleased. I'm the first Aboriginal person that ever ran in the city of Saskatoon in 1974. I did it as an educational thing for our people because I was quite involved then with the Native Women and the Métis locals. I was starting to get really involved. Then it was about two weeks later, they asked me if I would run, I said, "You are crazy. I had enough of this out there, you know?" And I remember Mrs. Lavallee's daughter ran for one of the parties, and they went to Meadow Lake, and they had to sleep in the landfill they got so discriminated against. It was really scary for me. That's when I found out about discrimination. I was away from my community. I was from my security. We had security. So, it was quite scary. So, you can imagine why a lot of our people fall down that path when they come from these small communities, reserves or a Métis community to enter the larger world.

SD: Yes, that's really scary.

NC: But you know Saskatoon is my home. I love Saskatoon. This is where I've lived all my life, and a lot of the time people say, "Would you ever move?" I say that "I was born and raised here and I'm going to go out here. This is my home."

SD: Did anyone own their property?

NC: In Saskatoon?

SC: In that road allowance community?

NC: Not then. Everybody used to go pick stones for their living. They'd go out and pick stones for farmers or they'd hay. That's how they made their living. I remember this family. The father's name was Clem Landry, and he had a large family. He was a beautiful man. He and his wife, and she never worked, but they had lots of children. He worked for S. A. Early's, so he would be up here in the summer, and he would help pick rock. He was the first Métis who ever bought a house, and he bought one near where Shoppers Drug Mart now is on Broadway and Taylor Street. Right back further where the alley part, his was the first house there. I remember his house was a big old white two-storey-house. He was the first Métis that bought a house off our road allowance. I remember him.

SD: That was big news.

NC: That was big. They were a well-respected family and that's not usual in a Métis community. You know how they always have a little bickering, but you never heard a bad thing about that family. They were a beautiful family. He was a beautiful man. I always admired him. He was my mother's first cousin. I remember when I was a kid growing up, they'd go fishing at Cochin and they'd take me along. His sister was my godmother. So, we'd go and they'd take me to Cochin fishing. So, yes, he was the only one that I can remember who bought a house.

SD: And so, picking stones was a way of—?

NC: Picking stones and we used to go and pick seneca root when I was a kid. We did that down by Pike Lake. We'd go and stay over there sometimes for a week and then we'd dig seneca roots and dry them. And my dad would hitchhike and sell them because they'd drop us off because we didn't have a vehicle. They would drop us off and then would come pick us up. When we lived out here, when we snared our rabbits, we'd dry them and we'd sell the fur. This is my scar from trying to skin a rabbit.

SD: Oh boy.

NC: Then we'd dry them and we'd sell them.

SD: Cut yourself good that day.

NC: Yes, I did, but nobody thought anything, we just wrapped it up and just kept going.

SD: You said your father did some threshing or something?

NC: Yes, we cut hay for farmers and we made haystacks. Yes, that's how we did everything in the summer.

SD: So, a lot of work for farmers?

NC: Oh yes.

SD: But then there were seneca roots.

NC: Seneca root, yes, and that was something a little different, which brought money for our living. They had to work hard to make sure we had enough and, of course, we harvested a lot of stuff. We had root cellars, dug outs and that's where we had everything. That's what I said, everything was canned. Nothing went to waste.

SD: Like was seneca roots more important than stones or?

NC: Oh, no, picking stones was in early in the summer and they'd go right until fall. And that was big money. Yes, and making hay and stuff. Seneca root picking occurred when we couldn't have anything else. We'd go out and make little bits of money to survive off of.

SD: What kind of resources did your family harvest and where and when were they collected? You mentioned rabbits.

NC: Rabbits, yes. We sold the fur. We picked seneca root. That's what we harvested. Then, of course, we picked chokecherries and Saskatoon berries and sold them. So, we'd go out to pick them, and we would sell them, going into the communities and we'd have a quart sealer and knock on doors and sell them down here.

SD: Of which?

NC: A quart sealer and then—

SD: Oh, a type of jar.

NC: Yes, and we'd charge 50 cents and that was big money.

SD: Quart sealer, so that would be about a litre, is that right?

NC: Yes, and then we'd make sure they were all cleaned and then my dad made a box for us and then he'd put rope and we'd have it here, and then we'd sell them.

SD: And they were fresh?

NC: Yes, fresh.

SD: Saskatoons?

NC: The same with our high-bush cranberries. We'd pick those and sell them.

SD: People actually wanted those things?

NC: They wanted to make jelly. The white people thought it was just super because they don't go out and pick them. So, we would be out picking, and we'd sell these.

SD: Yes, they make a nice jelly I guess when you get over that stinky foot smell.

NC: Well, they liked them. We used to like them. Of course, our chokecherries, we crushed them and stoke them. We never—

SD: What does that mean to stoke them?

NC: Well, what we did was once we crushed our chokecherries, we'd crush them with big rocks. Then we'd put our canvas out in the bush more or less in the hot sun and then we'd take and make little stokes. Then when they're dry, we'd get cheesecloth and we'd cover them so the flies wouldn't bother them. Then when they were dry,

we'd put them in Robin Hood flour bags. Then we kept them for winter because you could cook them, and same with our Saskatoons. We'd dry our Saskatoons. Then we'd put them in water and they'd come just like—

SD: So, you dried the Saskatoons? So, they were almost like Saskatoon berry raisins?

NC: Yes, they were dry and you'd put them in cold water. And then we'd fry our Saskatoons and make gravy with them.

SD: I didn't know that.

NC: Yes, nothing went to waste.

SD: Were they like raisins, those Saskatoon berries?

NC: No, hey were big ones and then they'd dry and then when they were dry, they didn’t' go mouldy. So, you'd have to dry them.

SD: You'd use them for soups?

NC: Well no. We'd cook them for fruits and then, but we would fry them as well and make a gravy-like sauce and put them over our potatoes.

SD: Oh okay. Was it more like a syrup?

NC: No.

SD: It was an actual gravy?

NC: It was an actual gravy.

SD: Just had a sweetness.

NC: In fact, I want to hopefully get some Saskatoons for New Year’s because everybody's been asking me, they want to see this.

SD: Well yes.

NC: And I said I'll try if I can get some Saskatoons I'll do that.

SD: Okay, so they were dried Saskatoons, it wasn't like a raisin but it dried?

NC: It was dried. It would shrivel up.

SD: It would shrivel up. And you'd put them in cold water?

NC: When we were going to use them.

SD: And then would they puff back up?

NC: They'd puff. They'd come back, like you'd put them.

SD: Put them into your gravy.

NC: We'd fry them first. Then we would add the flour.

SD: Okay, yes. No, that makes sense. Yes, fry them, okay.

NC: We'd use them with either our rabbits or with our boiled meats. We'd boil potatoes. That was a good meal. And then when rendered all our fat that we'd boil. We'd get pork fat and we'd chop it all up really good, and then with those great big cast iron pots, we'd put them on and we'd boil that until all the grease rendered, and then we'd use cheese cloth. We had big crocks and then we'd dump it in there. We call it lii gorton. People called them “Indian popcorn,” but we called them gortons. We could make it, and then, of course, when we mixed in our chokecherries, we'd mix

them with that. We'd mix enough for winter for our lards for the bannock and whatever you want to cook with. And that would be just like this, snow white.

SD: That lard?

NC: Yep.

SD: How did you get it so nice and...?

NC: Well because if you rendered it and you strained it good, you'd have that.

SD: What sort of traditional medicines were used in your community?

NC: Oh, my goodness, well we used a lot of rat root. I still have that, and then there were rose bushes. You'd use the petals sometimes and then you could use that.

SD: Yes, the berries like?

NC: No, the, the flower. You'd take the rose bush. The wild rose bush flower, then you'd take them off the petals. Then you could use them if you had a sore or something. You could rub it and then sometimes you could boil them and—

SD: The rose petals?

NC: Yes, and then we had roots. We'd go and get roots, dig them out and we'd make them for if you had diarrhoea or stomach trouble. And then after women had their babies, they would give them some to clean their bodies out, and they'd make them tea.

SD: Do you know what kind of roots this was?

NC: I know to see them. But it's, I don't know. I know because my koohkum and the old people used to do a lot of that. So, we used a lot of—

SD: The rose was actually the rose petals?

NC: The rose bush. The wild rose bushes.

SD: So, you boil them in water to get the medicine?

NC: Something with the petals themselves. If you had sores, you can damp it in water and wrap it. Wrap.

SD: Wrap it with the rose petals.

NC: Yes, you just put that on the top on the rag. You know sometimes you get an old cold sore and yes.

SD: Yes, just the rose petals. I didn't know that.

NC: Yes.

SD: Did you ever use seneca root for yourself or did you guys just sell that stuff?

NC: We just sold that. Some of the old people probably did, but we never did. We sold it. A lot of the old people probably used it. They used a lot of that.

SD: Who were the medicine people in your family or in your community?

NC: My koohkum and aunties.

SD: Okay, did you have anyone in your family that made beaded or embroidered moccasins or other items?

NC: My aunt did. She was a great embroider, and she would make the moccasins.

SD: What was her name?

NC: Louise Belcourt. She was a Tate then. Her first husband was a Tate. My other aunt, my uncle Alec's wife Mary, that was her sister. They were very competitive. Mable Landry was her name. They always seemed competitive when you went in their house. But my aunt was really good. There wasn't anything that she couldn't do. She could sew. She could cook. She was the one that taught me how to cook the food.

SD: Belcourt? Wow.

NC: Yes, she had a lot of little tents used.

SD: I was going to ask; did you guys make those tents?

NC: No, we didn't. I don't know where they got them, but I know the one tent we had was the traditional high wall tent.

SD: Do you know what happened to any of those beaded or embroidered artefacts?

NC: I don't know what happened to hers when she'd give a lot away when she got older. She didn't have any children, so she gave a lot of them away to relatives.

SD: You already mentioned about how your family celebrated New Year's Eve. Is there anything you want to add to that or is there any other type of celebrations we missed?

NC: Well, we celebrate New Year's. Actually, New Year's is our day. It was a Métis day, and I continue to do that, but in them days, little shakes always found room for the fiddle and the jigging, and of course, the traditional foods. It's so nice when you can do that. I think it would sadden me to see that tradition stopped at any time soon. I'm hoping not. I don't foresee it stopping in my family because I have 28 grand children and 36 great-grandchildren. It's instilled into my children and their families. I'm hoping that will carry on but you never know. But I hope it will continue, they tell me. They love it. They enjoy it.

SD: Any other special occasions or holidays that were celebrated or that you can think of?

NC: Easter.

SD: Oh okay, and how was that?

NC: Easter. I guess that stems back to the residential schools and it was Lent. Lent is 40 days and you fast and everything was taken away. But come Easter, I tell you Easter was like Christmas because you got to eat the foods you couldn't eat because all you ate was fish or…They were very creative with how they cooked their foods. We never had meat all during Lent. And some people would have meat on Good Friday, on Fridays, but we couldn't have meat, and so when it came Easter, we enjoyed it. The other thing too that was exciting for us as kids growing up, we could colour the eggs. We coloured all the eggs so much, most of my cousins. We'd boil and colour these eggs, and then my mom and my aunt would send us off to play and then they'd hide all these eggs. We had to find these eggs and then if we found those eggs, we got a little prize. Who got the most eggs, got the prize. Sometimes, we'd get a

nickel. It depended on how many kids there were. They knew how many eggs were out there. They had counted them so they'd know how many each one of us would get.

SD: And you coloured them yourselves first?

NC: We'd colour them. When we coloured them, the whole idea was for us to colour them was to show the nice Métis colours. It was like a craft when I think about it now. But it was a way making children to be thankful. When I think of Easter now it's usually about snow or something, but at that time there was no snow, the crocuses and the flowers were out. They'd hid them in the fields on 2nd Street. And they'd grow in the darnedest places. Sometimes we'd laugh because they'd wrap them and put them in a gopher hole. We'd always wonder how in the hell a gopher did it because the gophers weren't out then. We had a good life growing up. It was beautiful because our families were together. We looked at one another, and I had two brothers and a sister, but I had an extended family. I had my cousins who were like brothers to me. I had cousins that were like sisters to me. That's the way we grew up. W were just family. That's how we lived our life. And it was very rewarding for me when I sit back and think in this city. Who would ever think until this day that I would still be around to see it? I go with my husband to Tim Horton's at Stonebridge, and it was called the Cold-Op. That was Clarence Avenue. That's where we'd snare all our rabbits out here. That's where we picked all our berries. And that's where we hunted our deer. And here I go and sit and have coffee and I look at all the big houses and I say to him, “If the old people could just see this, they'd never believe this!” I look at these houses and they think they're rich, but they're not as rich as we were. We had so much. We had our culture. We had our identity. We had family who were together. We had all of that. Métis people are so fortunate and some of them don't understand how fortunate we are because we're a unique culture. That's how I feel. That's how I've been with my children. And I have every race in my family. My grandchildren have little blue eyes. I have little First Nations. I have two coloured babies. So, I'm a real mixture and I love it. It's just like the sash. It's entwined with another. And I always see how it is with me and my family. The Creator has given me such gifts.

SD: I want to ask before I forget, so New Year’s Eve was the big celebration…

NC: New Years Eve was the big celebration. New Year’s Eve was bigger than Christmas. At midnight, great-uncle would fire his shot gun on New Year’s.

SD: How many times?

NC: Three times, and that was to bring in the New Year. We were thankful that the New Year was brought in and everybody was there. And that was three times that he did that. He did that here in the city on York Avenue at that brick house. And I laugh sometimes thinking if they ever did that now they'd be in jail. But you know, didn't mean anything to us. You know, it was exciting. Everybody would say, “bonne

année!" And we'd go around that way, you know, Happy New Year's and a hugging, and a kissing. Everybody was happy.

SD: And the other question I was going to ask: was deer was harvested quite a bit?

NC: Deer was more so than a moose. Not that often. It was more than fish, deer, and rabbit.

SD: Where did fish come from?

NC: In the summer, they'd go out to the lakes, but in the winter, they'd have some people would bring them in and we'd buy the fish, especially, especially for Lent. Oh, my Lord, we had lots of fish. We had a big box outside where they were all full of fish, which everybody in our community harvested. Everybody would come over and everybody would chip in and then they would have all this fish. So, everybody who needed fish would just come and take their fish. They didn't have it individually in there.

SD: What lakes did you harvest the fish from though in the summer time?

NC: Oh, they'd go over to the dam out here. That wasn't like it is now.

SD: Okay.

NC: And then sometimes, they'd go to Cochin which wasn't far.

SD: And then probably during Lent someone would sell you the fish?

NC: They went before Lent. They'd come in and sometimes, they would be in bigger lakes, so we weren't going to get them.

SD: Who was that that sold all those fish?

NC: Some of the people, I don't know where they came from; it might have been the north a lot of the time. It could have been just people that were fishing. I know they would come with a big sleigh, and they'd have all these fish and a big canvas, and then I remember the boxes. They were big. You ever see these disposable boxes here. Well, that's how big those boxes were made, and then they'd be full of nice clean canvas, and they were full. So that's where they were thrown, I guess. It was the same with our rabbits. Everybody shared. We never locked our doors. Our doors were never locked. If somebody happened to come by and nobody was home, they'd make their tea or have a lunch, and then they go on to the next house. That's the way it was. Growing up, we were scared of the police. I don't know why we were scared of the police, but we were dead scared of them. I remember, this RCMP officer and he rode a horse, and he came through where we lived here on Clarence Avenue, through the bush. And I ran. When I ran his horse trotted. As I ran, my heart was just pounding. I was so scared. I thought he was going to take me away, but I think he was kind of teasing me. And but yet it was such a scary feeling. And I remember the old people saying he was simâkanisikimâw. And right away, I knew, that was a no-no. And that was something we always knew.

SD: What did they say?

NC Simâkanisikimâw.

SD: That's what it means

NC: Yes.

SD: Okay.

NC: And then we'd get scared right away.

SD: Does that translate into something other than the police? Was it a literal translation?

NC: I don't know, that's the way we...

SD: That's just what was said.

NC: When it came to government people, they were always suspicious of them. They never had a good feeling about government people. There was always a scary part to it. You know, it holds true until this day. It was probably because of what they went through. On Sundays and holidays traditionally they'd be playing cards. They played all kinds of cards. They loved that, the old people. The other thing on Sundays, I remember growing up when we had tents, I always remember that. I like telling this story because I couldn't believe why on Sundays, my uncles and my aunties all made us dress up. We had to have our hair done. Nice dresses. My uncles in their suits, and their shoes shined. I remember their white shirts and their red ties. They always wore red ties. And they'd come across this prairie all dressed like this. And then they'd take off their jackets, and they'd all play ball after they'd eat. It never ever dawned on me until later years and I'd wonder why did they come in their suits? They would get all shined up and would do this. I used to ask these questions, and nobody had an answer for me. It wasn't until about maybe 10-15 years ago, I ran into this northern man, and we were talking, and I said, "You know, I have a question that I always wanted an answer for." "Well," he said, "If I can help you, what do you want?" So, I told him and when I finished, he said, "You know what that is?" I said, "No." He said, "That's because we were raised in the residential school, every Sunday we all had to get dressed up and make sure our shoes were polished. They were all dressed in their little suits and the girls had to be all dressed. This was a tradition from the residential school because they would go to church. Then after church, everybody would come to our tents." That was the answer he gave me.

SD: Interesting.

NC: It makes sense, when I think about it. And I think, "Wow, it took me how many years to find out my answer?"

SD: Does or did anyone in your family speak Michif?

NC: Oh yes, my mother and my koohkum and my aunties and uncles.

SD: And do you speak it?

NC: I do, but I lost a lot of it. It's not very good, but I understand all of it. My husband is actually from Buffalo Narrows. I call him the "bush" in Cree, and he always laughs and he calls me "Swampy Cree." My mom used to say, "We're not Swampy Crees, we're Michif."

SD: Do you know any Métis traditional stories or songs?
NC: I used to hear Chi-Jean stories. Chi-Jean was always in everybody's stories. The songs that the old people sang, I remember my old uncle he'd sing but it was more in Michif-French way of doing it. I remember when he would get a few drinks he would sing that way. He would sit there and sing.
SD: How were the Métis treated in your community?
NC: Amongst one another or from the community at large?
SD: From the larger community. Did your family encounter racism from the larger community?
NC: When we left our community from our road allowance, yes, very much so. That why our families fell apart because they found so much racism. And then alcoholism came into the picture. A lot of them didn't have an education. They wanted jobs. They were good workers, but they couldn't find the employment because of their education level. They were only labourers. A lot of them worked as labourers. It was hard labour and they worked for anything that came by. It wasn't carpentry. It was probably just the gopher-type jobs. A lot of the sidewalks that are on Broadway were done by our people. Years ago, in the Dirty Thirties, my uncles and others, worked on the old black bridge. They had to work in order to get any help, food stamps and stuff.
SD: Yes, that's right.
NC: That's the kind of work our people did.
SD: Do you have any other specific examples of having encountered racism yourself or others in your family?
NC: Well, I had my dad one time. My dad wasn't a drinker, and he went into the bar, it used to be the Barry years back. We lived on Avenue G, and he went down and he thought he would go and see if my brother-in-law was in there. He was a small man, and they grabbed my dad and they threw him out of there, and they told him, "They don't allow Indians in here." They hit him, and he cut his face. Oh, my family was really upset. And yes, there was lots of racism. When my kids went to school even, that was in the '70s. Right here at Georges Vanier. I lived on Avenue I. It was a big house because I had lots of children. I kept my koohkum. When my koohkum died, we didn't have money to rent a hall for lunch after the service. So, I cleaned out the front room and the dining room, and then we put chairs out because we had a lot of people coming and lots of family. The neighbours reported this to my landlord. Then two days later, my auntie, my great-aunt, she was one of my favourites. She passed away. So, the following week, we did the same thing. Of course, there were lots of people in and out. So, they notified my landlady and told her we were bootlegging. I tried to explain to her. I had to move out of that house because they said we were bootleggers, and we had a bunch of Indians coming, because of all those Aboriginal people. I tried to tell her. I ended up renting a house on York Avenue. This is how I

got back to my side of town. I had my children, but I had rented from this lady when my husband was in the sanatorium. She was a really great lady, and so I called her, and she said, "I have a house for you." So, when she told me, I said, "Oh my God, I don't think so." I said to my deceased husband, "I don't know." It took me long to make a decision. He said well, "We have to find a place for our kids." But I said, "We're going to move where these middle-class white people are. What are they going to do with?" I was scared. I didn't want to come and live there. So she phoned me and she asked me if I was going to and I told her and she said, "Oh, no, no, you move into that place. And if there's any trouble they'll deal with me. You move in," she said. So, we did, and it was all more retired middle-class people, and I'm the one with all the kids on the block. So, we moved in, but it was okay. We ended up living there 23 years. We bought the house. Over 23 years, we bought the house. My children went to Georges Vanier and then they went to Bowman. But we had a principal here at Georges Vanier, and I didn't know that he was abusive with my children. He was racist, and one day my twin came home, and he didn't want to tell me something. So I lifted his shirt and I could see his mark. So, I questioned it. And I thought, "I'm not sitting behind here while my children go through this."

SD: So, the principal punched him in the chest?

NC: Well, pulled them. He gets them with his fist, and he pounds them against the…

SD: While holding onto his shirt.

NC: So, and like the other one swore not to tell me. I went, and he told me that the principal said, "You little Half-Breeds have to learn." But my kids didn't want to tell me because they knew, but my oldest boy finally told me. So that's okay I never said anything. Next time one of my children went to school I got dressed. I thought, "I'm not sitting behind." I come and I walked to school with him. I walked in the school. I was mad. The more I walked, the madder I got thinking about this. And the principal was writing and I walked in. He said, "I'll be a moment." I said, "Never mind a moment, you'll take time to see me now." I said, "Who do you think you are?" I said, "You bald-headed Russian thing!" I was so mad. "You know this is Canada. This is our country. Don't you come here and treat my kids like second-class citizens. They're just as good as you." But I think my kids said, "Mom, we're so embarrassed. Everybody in the school." I said, "I don't care." And I went on and on. Oh Mrs. Thibodeau …" I said, "I didn't come to sit down and drink tea." I said, "I come to tell you what I think. You will never touch my children again because I will report you to the school board." So, I did. Here I had this other woman who was not Aboriginal and she come up, "We're so proud of you. "You should help us demonstrate." I said, "No, you fight for your children like I had to fight. Nobody was there for me or my children." But from that day forward, my children all finished their schooling there. They were very good at what he had been left. And the boy who just come in, he was going to St. Gerard School. He lived on the west side, and before I moved over and

at night when he was small, he would cry. He would say, “My ears ache.” I would say, “Well why?” And he said, “They’re sore.” I'd say, “Well, why are they sore?” Then finally he told me that the teacher used to pull his ears all the time. So, I went to the school, and I put her in her place. I would not stand for it. I went through that when I was going to school, and I wasn't about to let my children go through that. So the racism I endured here at this day school was not going to happen to my children.
SD: Can you talk about what you experienced at, it was St. Joseph's?
NC: It’s now called Oskayak School. Back then, it was called St. Joseph's School. I went to school there and we had a nun. Her name was Sister Grassyellow. I always remember her name. She was a very racist nun. I got a strap for a whole month. My cousin and I, we didn't know why we got strapped. To this day, we'll never know. I was going up the steps of the church during Lent, and I slipped and I cut my eye. I still got a little scar. She told me God hated me. That’s why. I slipped. God hated me that's why he did this to me. For the longest time, I didn't know why God hated me because my grandma used to make us do prayers and rosaries. And then if you didn't say the word properly or pronounce properly if you read a book, she had dish pans of water with three apples. She would make you bob for those apples and if you didn't, she would stick in your head and hold you under that water. She would say you were stupid. She had pointer sticks and she would hit us with them. I had a cousin who had bowels removed. He had to have a bag and he was quite sick. She would pull it open and show the kids and say, “Look it, he's just like a monkey, see what this is?” Of course, I got up because he was my cousin and I felt sorry for him. I told her, “Don’t t do that to him.” I stood in front of him, so I got the strap. I got her pointer stick. She’d make us scrub the floor, and a friend of mine, we'd have to clean the floors. There were bathrooms, and then on the opposite side were the bathroom for the teachers and the nuns. And the girls’ bathroom, I went in, but they were kind of high. And one time I went to the washroom, and she was in there, but I didn’t know, and we both happened to come out at the same time, and she grabbed me, and she said, “What do you think you're doing in here?” So, I told her I had to come to the bathroom, and she said, “No, that’s not what you come here for, you just wanted to look under and see what I look like.” She had shocked me. I didn't know what to say. I said, “No, I came in …” I got a strapping. So, you know everything we did. She always had a reason for it, and no matter how we explained it, she won. So, we didn't win.
SD: Would you mind telling that story again about how they stood all your kids up?
NC: Oh well, we didn't know what a savage was, and one day they were talking about a book and peoples’ lives. Then all of a sudden, she had us all pegged out by names. “Stand up!” “We were all Métis kids, and we all stood up. When we stood up, none of the non-Aboriginal kids stood up. Just us.” She said, “Now this is what you call savages.” Well, we didn't know what savages were. So, we thought, “Oh boy.” We

were proud. We must have done something right because they called us savages. Until we got home and we told, my parents and my grandparents were really upset that we were called savages. They told us what savages were. Well, we didn't know what they were. So that's what we endured when we went to that school. Yes, and you know not only me but a lot of them. I used to play hockey with my cousins. This was the thing: Everybody was equal. We didn't know who was male or female. We just played whatever games we did in our community. I used to play hockey with the boys. And after school, it was about 4:30, it was getting dark and the boys said, "Come play hockey," and they threw me a hockey so, I went out to play. Well, they walked out and they saw me. Nothing was said. The next morning, we were going to school, and they locked the side door. They made everybody come up the front. In the front, there used to be a side door. They have remodelled this now, but there used to be a side door to go upstairs. So, we had to go up the front. When we got up there, they called my name, to go up in the front. I didn't know why. I remember Tony Camponi and Merle Hoskins were there. They were only in Grade 7, I think. They were like big brothers because we all grew up together. They said, "Do you know why you're coming in here; you're going to get a strapping?" "No, what did I do?" I was scared. They said, "You're a girl and you're not supposed to be playing hockey, and you were playing hockey last night." I said, "Well, I always play hockey at home with the boys, we all do this." "That's not what you do, girls don't play hockey. Hold out your hand." Well, all these kids were there. I didn't know who was going to hold my hand. And Tony grabbed my hand, and put it down, and said, "No! She's not going to get a strapping." He said, "There's nothing wrong with that. That's the way we were brought up and she's not getting a strapping for this." I was so scared because I was always such a chicken. He grabbed my hand and he pushed them. When Tony pushed them, he got suspended, but I didn't get a strapping that day. They suspended him. He stuck up for me. So, they went and told my mom and the other adults, and they said, "You gotta do something because these kids, we were having a hard time because they were older." But it didn't stop until my uncle stopped it. His girl went to school, and she hit her with a hard cover book and her nose bleed really bad. She had to walk from St. Joseph's School down Broadway and 9th to here, where we lived. It was in the winter and the blood in her nose froze. Oh, was he mad. He went in and he grabbed that nun, and she was saying, "Mr. Trotchie, Mr. Trotchie. Mr. Trotchie." He said, "Don't you Mr. Trotchie me. That's my baby girl. What you did was wrong." And that's when they moved that teacher. That's when that all quit. But that wasn't until the late 40s.

SD: Well one more question along those lines and then we'll move on.

NC: Okay.

SD: Do you have any bad memories about living in a road allowance that you would like to share?

NC: No, I loved my life on the road allowance. I always say that we were rich and we had a good life. I never thought of us as poor people because we always had food. We always had good food, our traditional foods. We had clothes. I remember my mom would go to rummage sales for second-hand clothes. Most of them were sewn as well. We always had warm clothes. We had lots to eat. We had a good life. We always had lots of activities. We had no fear of anything. We never had fear. We didn't know what fear was. The only time we had a fear years ago was when people passed away, we would always wonder what would happen. Until our koohkum explained it to us, then we were okay with it. They never took us to the service not like wakes today. So, we didn't see that. We were fortunate that we had aunties and koohkums to look after us and for teaching us our ways in a kind way. We always had kindness with our grandma. Like our cousins always say, "I never heard her yell at any of us."   If you got out of line, she would sit you down and say, "That's not the way you do things." She always had that kind voice about what was right and what was wrong. So, you didn't rebel back. You never did talk back to them. We were taught that when people came to visit, the older people would sit. If they're in that room and you walked in, all they had to do was just give you that look. That was it: you were out of there because that was respecting the visitors and the old people. Kids were not to go in, not to interfere. You never saw kids walk in front of people or go and interrupt when they're talking unless they were talking to you. We were taught all those things.

SD: How did your koohkum explain when someone passed away?

NC: She would tell us, "You know when you're born, when the Creator brings you to this world. The Creator sets how long you live in this world and when you'll die, and no matter what you do, you are here on borrowed time. You're not here to live forever, but when you leave this world, you're not gone. Your spirit will live on. But there's a reason for everything that the Creator does. Whatever happens to you may affect the goodness of one of your siblings, or one of your relatives, and you'll see this in them. And that's the way the Creator does things. It's always for a reason, she'd tell us. "But it's not that he's being mean," she'd say. "You pray for those people." And sometimes, people would come and they'd bother us, and she'd say, "You pray. Pray and match your prayers." "Sometimes they're not at peace. So, you pray, so they'll go in peace." So that was the way I was brought up, with spirituality.

SD: What are your best memories about living in a road allowance community?

NC: I loved it because I didn't have to worry. We had a pack of people who were our people, and you were free to do things. If I wanted to go and chop wood, I'd go and chop wood. If I wanted to go and weed a garden, I did that. Or if I just wanted to go out into the bush, to do just whatever, I did that. If we wanted to go out and go with the horses and ride the horses, we jumped on the horses and we did that. So, you know, just the freedom we had. And I guess why I feel that way is because when I

moved into the city that changed. We couldn't do those kinds of things that we were able to do when we had our road allowance. We had a good world. When we left it seemed like everything, we did changed. We never had electric lights or had any power. It was always something you had to pay for. The old people were still the law. I can remember my uncles when they had too many drinks, they got carried away. Those old people brought them in and they were told, "This is not how you act. This is not the way that life is." They were told, and they were told in a good way. And those people listened to those old people. I remember them sitting in their circles and talking and you didn't interrupt. The mooshoms talked and the koohkums talked and then sometimes they'd get together. If there was an issue or dispute, those old people, if it was out of hand, they would correct that. It was just like correcting your kids. So that's something.

SD: Even though they were adults?

NC: They were adults, but they were told that's not the way we do things. I think that was why we had harmony within our community.

SD: When did people leave the road allowance community and why?

NC: We were asked to leave our land in 1953. We left in 1953 and moved into the city. When we left 2nd Street, we moved about three blocks from where we were. Oh, I'll never forget that. We had one of those electric lights that you run with the old long cords with one bulb, and we thought, "Oh my goodness, we are rich," but we still had the outside toilet.

SD: think you already mentioned this but where were your parents and grandparents originally from?

NC: On my father's side, they were from Lewistown, Montana., and on my mother's side, my grandfather was born in Havre, and my grandmother was born in Great Falls, which was like Prince Albert and Saskatoon in Montana. They all immigrated back in the early 1900s. They left because of the 1885 Rebellion. They lived here in the 1900s. After 1885, they all went to the States. They settled in Round Prairie, Saskatchewan.

SD: So, did they come to Round Prairie before the Rebellion or after?

NC: After, they stayed on their way back. They were on their way back and that's why they settled in Round Prairie.

SD: They were on their way back after 1885?

NC: And they settled in Round Prairie.

SD: Was your family involved in the 1885 Resistance?

NC: Yes, my grandfather Ouelette.

SD: What happened to your family after 1885 Resistance? They moved to Round Prairie?

NC: They moved to Round Prairie, yes. Then they moved to Saskatoon, and some lived in Watrous. Some went to Alberta.

SD: What made them move from Round Prairie to Saskatoon, do you know?

NC: Well, let's see, my mother was born 1918. She was 14 when they moved to Saskatoon. And they too used to have their New Year’s. My mother used to tell me that because I used to ask them about that. I said, “How did you guys get around for your New Year’s?” She said they had a sleigh with a little caboose and everybody that had one had a little stove in it. They’d pick everybody up and then they had a driver. I said, “Oh was he a designated driver.?” She used to laugh. “Yes, he wasn't drinking because they'd all have their little jug of wine.” Then she said, “We’d go house to house.” And well they'd go five days after Christmas. It was tradition, after Christmas, Boxing Day, to the day after New Year’s. It was when it ended because they brought in the new and they took out the old the day after New Year’s.

SD: So, the thing between New Years and Christmas was visiting?

NC: Yes.

SD: Did or does anyone in your family serve in the military?

NC: Yes, I had a cousin who died overseas. I had uncles that served in the war. I had great-uncles, too. So, I had family that went into the armed forces.

SD: So, World War One and World War Two or?

NC: World War I and World War II.

SD: Wow, okay. Do know their names?

NC: Clarence Trotchie. They're in the book here.

SD: Okay, fair enough.

NC: Yes, I have them all in a book. Actually, this is the fellow here that…this one. There's my grandpa, and that's my uncle.

SD: Oh wow.

NC: That's when he was in the army. This is my other great-uncle in the war. And this is him. He wasn't even 18 when he enlisted, and they sent him back. The day he turned 18 he went. And he went over. Yes, and this is my other aunt. She’s a Short. These are all our people. I thought she was so cute walking around there. Yes, see these ones here, the Dumonts. There's my uncle and my aunt. He served in World War I. And this one here, he got killed overseas. And this one here is my cousin. He served there. This one here, he served there. So these are all relatives. There are a lot of them.

SD: Was anyone in your family involved with the Métis Society?

NC: Oh yes from day one, 1940. It was in the ’30s that they formed the first Métis local here in Saskatoon. My grandpa and my uncles and others did that. The Ouelettes and the Landrys. Yes, they formed the first local then it kind of died off. After the war, it kind of picked up. And then we started our local here and Gabriel Dumont Local 11 on November 3rd, 1969. We started our first local and it didn't really take off until ’70. So, we started in November and we went into 70 and that's when it kicked off. It was the 11th local in the province of Saskatchewan.

SD: Do you have anything else that you would like to share about living in a Métis road allowance community?

NC: Not really, other than the fact that it was nice to have our families together. I think what was important to me was living in such a close-knit Métis community with all our families and relatives. I was rich in learning my identity, my culture and who we were as a people. I think that's lost now with our young people, especially our languages. We understood who we are as Métis and we hide pride in being Métis. I think that's something that was instilled in us since we were little kids. Some of our young people don't have that. That's been lost and that saddens me. I think we were very rich in history and culture. To me that was the most important thing. Of course, we were taught values. We were taught that if you want something you have to work for it. You don't expect anything to be given to you for nothing. You also have to learn respect. You don't take things that don't belong to you. You always be prepared to help the next person out and be generous. Those were the things that we learned.

SD: Okay, thank you very much.

NC: No, thank you for having me.