Road Allowance Interview, Irma Klyne, Marlene Fayant-Racette, Louis (George) Racette, Larry Fayant, Ken Fayant and Albert Fayant

Conducted by Darren Prefontaine with George Gingras
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DP: Okay, it's November 28th. This is Darren Prefontaine and George Gringras. I'm interviewing Marlene Fayant-Racette, Louis "George" Fayant, Larry Fayant, Ken Fayant, Albert Fayant. The Fayants present are all brothers. Marlene is married to Louis, also known as George. The interview is about the road allowance experience of the Fayant family and extended family in the Qu'Appelle Valley. I guess we could start with you, please tell me your name and your home community.
MFR: My home community is Abernathy.
DP: Abernathy, and who were your parents and grandparents?
AF: Mooshom and Koohkom?
MFR: Yes, Mooshom and Koohkom. My mooshom was…
LF: Norbert Racette.
MFR: Joe Cardinal. Yes, Norbert Racette was my dad's dad.
LF: Are you talking about Racette?
MFR: Yes, I'm talking about Racette.
IK: She's got two sides.
LF: And your Koohkom was Flora?
MFR: Florestine Allary.
DP: Florestine Allary, okay, and who were your parents, Marlene?
MFR: My dad was Maurice Racette, and my grandma was Justine Cardinal. Joseph Cardinal was my mooshom. My mother was Lisa Cardinal.
DP: And did you live on the road allowance community?
MFR: I don't remember.
GF: With your mooshom you did, Cardinal.
IK: Yes, her mooshom, but she was living in Indian Head.
MFR: They lived in the valley.
AF: They had to build the house, but it was on a farmer's land.
DP: The reason I started with Marlene because she is married into the family. Her history is a little bit different, but when we get to the Fayant brothers, you have all the same history except you're older or younger, of course. So, I thought we'd start by asking her a few questions because your histories are different because she grew up in a different place so that's why we started with her. Does that make sense? What other Métis families lived in the community that you remember? Do you remember?
MFR: Just a bunch of relatives.
DP: Just extended families?

KF: The people sitting here.
IK: We're talking about, Indian Head?
MFR: No, down in the valley.
IK: Oh, in the valley. Yes, they're all the same people.
DP: The same people. So, no one owned property, everyone lived on the land as squatters? Like did any of your relatives own their land?
MFR: Today, yes.
DP: But when you were little?
MFR: When I was little everybody lived on some rich white guy's farm land.
DP: Ernie Skinner?
IK: Or the road allowance.
DP: So, Ernie Skinner or the road allowance. I heard about Ernie Skinner.
MFR: Okay.
AF: Yes, he was quite a guy. He was only four foot two.
DP: But he was a millionaire.
MFR: I guess so.
AF: He had land from Indian Head to Balcarres.
MFR: But in those days, ten cents would buy groceries for you for a few weeks.
AF: Ten cents will buy you a Chiclet.
DP: What sort of resources did your family harvest? Did you hunt? Did you rabbits?
MFR: Well, my grandpa and my uncles always hunted. They hunted rabbits, deer, and elk.
GF: There was fresh meat every day.
MFR: Yes.
DP: What did the women collect, berries and stuff?
MFR: Oh yes. We make gardens and had chickens and turkeys.
DP: So, you raised animals. How did your families make their living? Like working for Ernie Skinner mostly or?
MFR: Working for farmers, yes.
DP: Working for farmers. So, picking rocks, fence posts, that sort of thing?
MFR: Stooking.
GF: Anything.
AF: Pick stones.
IK: The old ladies would sometimes hook rugs and sell those. My grandma was a hooker.
* Group laughs *
DP: What sort of traditional medicines did the women use? Were there medicine women that were in your family, Marlene?
MFR: They used to go to the bush and get different kinds of twigs and berries.
AF: And the guys would dig some kind of root.

MFR: Yes.
DP: Seneca root?
IK: Oh, that was the other thing—seneca root.
MFR: Weeds to us, but long ago they weren't weeds, but were medicine.
DP: So, seneca root, everyone dug that up?
AF: Lots for sale though.
DP: Did anyone in your family, Marlene, make moccasins or embroider at all?
MFR: Embroidered, oh yes. My mother used to.
DP: Your mother, okay. Were they kept in the family or did your mom sell them out to other people?
MFR: No.
DP: Just for the family?
MFR: Yes.
DP: How did your family celebrate holidays such as Christmas, Easter, and New Year's? Those were big celebrations, right?
MFR: Oh yes, the whole family would come home, all sixteen brother and sisters.
DP: The big celebration was New Year's, not Christmas, right? It was just a mass, right?
GF: Yes.
MFR: Well yes, it was just a mass. Christmas. It was just for kids. New Year's was for…
GF: Everybody.
MFR: The adults.
DP: So, it was a big celebration, lots of dancing and partying?
MFR: Oh yes.
DP: And the women worked weeks to make the food or days anyway?
MFR: Oh yes, everybody would bring something.
DP: So, what was the main thing for the Michif New Year's feast?
GF: Bannock and boulettes
MFR: Yes, bannock and boulettes.
DP: Was that the main course?
MFR: Oh, yes. I still make that. I have a grandson who just moved home the other night from New Brunswick, and that's the first thing he asked for. Saturday at lunch he wants bannock and boulettes.
DP: And cake and stuff like that, it was the All-King's Day cake or whatever?
IK: Yes, they were triple-layered and had silver candies and icing that was thick. It had to last for a long time.
GF: You get a four-storey cake, decorated, with a bunch of icing.
DP: Good cakes?
MFR: Oh yes, it's like…
DP: Better than a Duncan Hines mix?

MFR: It's like, somebody made their four-storey cake, and the neighbour would try to make a nicer one. They were all competing.
IK: It was competitive.
DP: To see who had the better one?
LF: And also rum.
IK: Yes, rum soaked.
DP: Oh, that would be a tasty one. Do you speak Michif? Did anyone in your family, was that the language they spoke?
MFR: I was brought up aen Michif.
IK: Namon kee peekishkwew l'anglay. She didn't speak English until she was older
DP: So that was the language?
MFR: I didn't go to school when we moved to Indian Head. I lived in Indian Head with my grandma and grandpa in 1953. We lived down in the valley. My mother passed away when I was two years old. In those days, they didn't bring welfare to grab the kid. It was the aunts and uncles who looked after the kids.
DP: That was quite common, aunts and uncles and grandparents looking after the kids?
MFR: Oh yes. I had an older brother, Harris, my aunt and uncle looked after him. My grandma and grandpa raised me. And my sister, who was just born when my mother died, the Grey Nuns took her and looked after her in Regina.
DP: The old people, when they spoke, did they just speak Michif or did they speak Cree and French and all the languages?
MFR: All of them, Cree, French.
DP: The whole works, Salteaux?
GF: It was all mixed in there too.
DP: So, they mixed the languages, but they could speak the languages on their own, too?
MFR: Oh yes.
DP: But amongst the kids, they spoke Michif?
MFR: You never heard English. When I started school in grade one at Indian Head, I was twelve years old and I had a hell of a time to speak English.
DP: Do you know any traditional Métis stories like Weeshahkachahk, Roogaroo, Nanabush or Chi-Jean, is that the right term?
MRF: Weeshahkachahk, I heard a lot of those.
DP: Those were quite popular?
MFR: Chi-Jean. These guys know stories about Weeshahkachahk.
DP: But they were told a lot to kids, right?
GF: 75-years ago.
DP: What are you best memories about living on the road allowance? What do you remember the best?

MFR: I don't know. You had to work for what you wanted in those days. Nowadays, you poke a button, and you have the microwave heating up everything.
IK: So, you'd miss having that kind of stuff?
AF: Cook stove was all wood.
MFR: Sure, you'd have to go outside and chop wood to heat up your house. Now you turn your thermostat, and you have your heat.
AF: If you pay for it.
DP: So, if you wanted chicken you had to break the chicken's neck, pluck it and gut it?
MFR: Oh yes, that was the best.
DP: So, it wasn't like going to Superstore now.
MFR: Now you can go to the store and buy your chicken.
DP: Already cooked.
IK: Yes, I know. There's nothing like the reward of a cooked chicken after you have plucked it.
LF: When did they quit selling rabbit at Safeway?
GF: I don't know, but it wasn't that long ago.
IK: But they were tame rabbits.
GF: There was a big rabbit farm in Moose Jaw. The rabbits got some kind of disease, so they thought "get rid of them all." So that's what they were going to do.
MFR: Yes, they used to sell tame rabbits. They don't taste...
DP: Not the same.
MFR: Like a real rabbit.
DP: Like eating domesticated deer. There's just something not right.
MFR: Yes, like even the deer meat. Now, any kind of wild meat. The farmers spray all over the place and everything doesn't taste as good as it used to.
DP: When we interview elders, they often say that a fish caught in the lake 60 years ago was a fish. Now we're not sure what it is.
MFR: It's something else now. Yes, it doesn't taste the same.
DP: So, everyone here believes that. Were there any bad memories that you would want to share that you remember? You don't have to. But in terms of like racism, did you encounter racism growing up or did your family?
MFR: No, I don't think so.
DP: When did your family leave the road allowance?
MFR: When?
DP: Well, when did you move into town, I guess?
MFR: In 1953.
DP: 1953. Is that when a lot of families around you started to move to town?
MFR: Yes.
DP: Were any of your family...
MFR: '50s, '60s.

DP: Were the local Métis forced out or is that more towards Lestock?
IK: No, nobody was forced out down there.
MFR: I think just because my aunts and uncles wanted to go find work.
DP: More opportunity in the city and in town?
MFR: Yes.
GF: Most of them worked for the town.
MFR: Like everybody, all the guys mostly they were all in the war anyway.
DP: Did you family live in the valley for a long time? Did they originally come from Red River or?
MFR: No, not that I...
DP: At least 125-140 years in the valley?
KF: She wouldn't know.
IK: Because she left there when she was very young...
DP: Was anyone in your family in the 1885 Resistance or some people say Rebellion? Did you ever hear stories of family members fighting at Batoche?
MFR: No.
DP: Did anyone in your family serve in the military? You mentioned the men.
MFR: My dad.
DP: Your dad, was he in World War II or I?
MFR: Two.
DP: With the army overseas?
MFR: Yes, he went to England, France, and Germany.
DP: Was anyone in your family involved with the Métis Society?
MFR: I used to go to meetings myself quite a bit, but I stopped. Not any more.
DP: One last question Marlene, do you have anything you would like to share about living on the road allowance? You mentioned that the food and the land were clean. Does that strike you as an important thing?
MFR: Yes, we used to have coal oil lamps and not the light switch to turn the light on.
DP: Was it important to live in a community where everyone was your family member and everyone spoke the same language? Was that a fond memory?
MFR: I think so, yes.
DP: It's different now. When you get together as a group do you speak Michif or do you speak English, or do you switch?
MFR: Well, we do both. Like in the house mostly George and I will talk Michif. The kids come home and we talked to them as they were growing up in both, English and Michif. And now they grew up talking English mostly, and now they teach their kids to talk English as well.
GF: What happened was mom was Cree and dad was French, so we had to learn or we would mix them up.
AF: Well, the younger kids they didn't want to speak English, they're, I don't know.

MFR: But you talk about those kids in Michif so they don't understand what you're saying. They'll think you're saying something about them.
DP: They'll know.
MFR: Oh yes, they understand, they know.
DP: I sometimes say something to my wife over the head of my little five-year-old in French. I'm not very good at speaking French, but if I have to say she was being bad today or something, I can see those little ears are clicking. She's picking it up. Sometimes, she'll say something bad towards me like tabernak or something.
IK: Only the French people ever said that.
DP: Enfant chienne was the Michif swear, right?
IK: Oh cripe; there are so many…
DP: But that's one.
IK: Haven't enough time…
DP: Oh, I know. Okay, well thank you Marlene. We'll switch to the Fayant brothers. Louis, known as George, Larry, Ken, and Albert. Now at any time Marlene, you're part of this family, you can interject as well if something comes to mind. Please interject. The focus will be on the Fayants, but if you remember something as they talk, please add your voice too. So don't feel as though you can't speak any more. I'm going to send this question out to the four of you. And whoever wants to answer it, please do so.
GF: We were all in the same house anyway.
DP: Yes, see this is why I structured it this way.
IT: You have the right to fight, too.
DP: But one brother might know something that one brother might not know or vice versa. Okay, misters, messieurs Fayant, could you please tell me your names and your home community?
LF: Larry Fayant, Balcarres.
DP: You're all Balcarres?
GF: Abernathy.
DP: Abernathy for you Louis, and Larry?
IK: You did Larry already.
DP: Oh sorry, Ken.
KF: Balcarres.
DP: Balcarres. Albert?
AF: Abernathy.
DP: Where did you guys grow up?
LF: I can remember about three-years-old, three-to- four and a half I guess, a place called Pugsley Farm.
DP: Pugsley Farm?
LF: Yes, that was my first memory.

IK: Before that all the other boys would probably remember.
AF: Before that we all lived in the valley.
KF: Half a mile from Marlene's place.
DP: So courting was kind of easy. if she's only half a mile away?
IK: Well, she was older than that.
AF: That's where they owned land.
IK: Little then.
GF: About six miles down the valley.
LF: About six miles. So close, but I don't remember my first time living in the valley. I was too little.
IK: But they went back to the valley.
DP: So, you say the valley, just east of Katepwa Lake?
LF: Yes, all where these names are.
IK: Everybody. These were all Michif on the land, but these were all Michifs and a few had signed.
LF: And you'll find a name here, it says Ken Davis. Yes, there.
IT: Yes, from there to there.
DP: And this was all the Fayant-Racette-Desjarlais extended family?
IK: Klynes.
DP: All inter-related, all cousins?
GF: Amyottes.
IK: Pelletiers. There were some Pelletiers.
MRF: Pelletiers
IK: Well, the Pelletiers lived on a farm, but they were up on a hill.
GF: Beyond the lake there, it was called "Dog Town."
IT: Dog Town.
DP: Yes, I've heard of Dog Town.
LF: Yes, sometimes, that's where her name is from...Joanne.
IK: Joanne.
DP: She was an Amyotte, though, right?
IK: There were Amyottes and Pelletiers here. The same family, but half of her siblings are Pelletiers and half are Amyottes. That's a big family, too.
MRF: We used to make up a song sitting in the back of somebody's van when we used to go to a meeting in Saskatoon or PA. There'd be me, Joanne, Margaret Harrison, and Mary Denomie. And we'd sit back there and sing songs. And Joanne used to sing, "She was a bilingual baby."
DP: Okay, brothers Fayant, who were your parents and grandparents? Who were your mom and dad and who were your koohkom and mooshom?
LF: Take that picture down there.
KF: Fred Fayant was my dad.

LF: Jeanne Racette was my mother.
IK: Her parents were Norbert Racette and Florestine Allary, and his mom and dad were Alexandre Fayant and Liza Klyne.
GF: Lots of empty houses on it.
LF: Every Fayant house has one.
IK: Yes, every Fayant house has one.
DP: Those are nice pictures. When I look at those pictures, those old people on the road allowance, you know everyone was poor, but I can see the pride.
IK: Oh yes.
DP: Everyone had pride. They looked like very strong determined people. You know when I look at that picture I see the same thing.
IK: It is.
LF: They didn't know they had nothing. They were rich with when they had a pair of shoes.
DP: What do you think those old people who lived back then, would think of the waste our society has? They would be appalled, wouldn't they?
LF: They're the ones that would have done something about it.
IT: You're right. My grandma would have a fit. She never threw a damn thing away.
MRF: This picture was taken…What year is on here?
IK: Oh, '43. '41 or '43, somebody changed the one to a three.
MRF: And it had to be older than that.
LF: I thought they were still living on Skinner farm, in the valley.
MRF: Yes.
GF: Harris standing there?
IK: Harris. That was her older brother. That was her older brother standing on that chair.
MRF: And Harris was born in 1941.
ET: Well, he would have been two years old there. So that's forty-three.
MRF: Because I was born 1942. He was born 1941.
IK: I bet that's why somebody changed it to a three and said, "He couldn't be one day old here."
MRF: No, more like 1940.
GF: '45 maybe.
IK: No, I think '43 is right because if he was born in 1940 then in this picture, he would be about, or '41 you said, well then, he looks like he's about two. So, this is '43, I think.
DP: What other Métis families lived in this road allowance community?
IK: Well…
AF: This community, just Fayants, you mean?

IK: Yes, but I mean before when all the Michifs lived there. Cecile was talking about you know even Joe Racette lived over here and when Grandma Mariah came to live with grandma and grandpa.
AF: She came later. She used to live in Ituna.
IK: Yes, but I mean they're all…
DP: That's your koohkom and great-koohkom.
IK: Great-great.
AF: Where's Balcarres?
IK: Balcarres is right, right here.
AF: Right in the bottom there, there's Bill Desjarlais, his brother Peter and Sam Klyne. With a hundred guys there, they lived in a row.
IK: They didn't all stay in the same place all the time because some houses burned down, and so they moved and went to work for Skinner. They moved onto a farm and they didn't all stay in the same place forever.
AF: We were the only ones, I guess.
ET: Yes, you guys were, yes.
AF: It was good hunting there.
IK: Well, you had a really good place there.
MFR: Somebody went to build a house and all—
AF: They started one, then another.
IK: Everybody helped to build.
DP: Did any non-Métis live with the Michifs such as First Nations or white people?
LF: There was an old German lived here someplace.
IK: Billy Bahr.
AF: Billy Chocolate Bar!
LF: Billy Bahr, somewhere east here.
DP: So, he got along with the Michif people?
LF: Well, yes. He kept to himself. He was an old bachelor.
AF: But he used to go to all the dances.
LF: That's what I was telling her.
IK: He tolerated the Michifs, but when they were bad. They used to taunt him unmercifully.
AF: He used to bring homebrew.
DP: So, when did your family move off this road allowance community?
LF: I wasn't around when they moved.
GF: I wasn't either.
LF: I was gone already.
AF: Everybody was gone.
DP: Was it after World War Two or was it before?
IK: Their family was there until the '60s.

GF: ’60s.
AF: They bought a house in Abernathy.
IK:’62.  Something like that.
MRF: I was just thinking more like’63.
IK: ’4.
LF: When did the school start in Abernathy?  You guys went there.  That was about the year they moved.
AF: Well, they started the school about three different times. The very first time I don't know.
LF: What year did Maurice pass away,’63?  No, ’64, ’65, ’66.  They were in town already, probably ’64. They were taken there, I think.
AF: I was married after that.
LF: Well yes, a couple years before.  You got married about three years before they moved.
IK: And when did you get married?  What year?
LF: He doesn't remember.
IK: Oh.
GG: Or doesn't want to remember
LF: They had to be there a good three years when you got married.
DP: Did any of the Michif people around here own land or did everyone live on the road allowance?
LF: The Amyottes were the only ones that owned land.
DP: They were the only ones?
AF: But both Jasmine and down in the valley there.  Joe Amyotte was the only one that had money and he bought that place for about…
KF: A lot of money and a jug of wine.
AF: It was very cheap at that time because no one had money.
KF: Cheap, but so was the road allowance.
AF: Yes, wouldn't even pay taxes.
DP: You mentioned not paying taxes. For those that were born after, I guess the mid-40s, did that mean you couldn't go to school? Was there a school you could go to or? Were you allowed to go to school?
GF: We had three different schools we could start off to Katepwa, Blackwwod, and Kenlis
AF: You went to Tipperary?
GF: Yes.
IK: Tipperary, yes.
GF: That's where I graduated grade three.
DP: The Michifs who lived on the road allowance were allowed to go to school?

IK: Well, you could go, but where you were, but it wasn't easy to get to and when you were eleven you went to work.
DP: I mean in theory.
IK: In theory, nobody told people that they couldn't go to school.
AF: They made fun of us.
IK: They made fun of you, of your lunch and your clothes, and everything else. So, it was pretty hard to go to school. My mom never went to school. My aunty Yvonne Weeshta (got) to grade three like you guys.
GF: She went with us.
IK: When we lived on the farm.
LF: The white man used to laugh at your bannock sandwich. Now they'd steal it.
DP: Some of the white men who used to laugh at Michifs are now Michifs.
IK: Yes, they didn't know.
DP: But there was a lot of discrimination?
AF: That was part of it.
LF: That's why these white people come to our family do every summer, they don't want to quit because they have too much fun.
IK: Those people were never mean to Michifs, though. They were always friends of Michifs.
AF: Well, we worked for them.
IK: Yes, the Emersons.
DP: There were certain families…
IK: They embraced Michif.
DP: There were a lot of white people who didn't though.
IK: Lots that didn't, yes. But the reason is because these people valued the Michifs' way of life and their work ethic. They were MacGyvers who could fix anything with nothing.
LF: Depends on where they went to. The white people around here were good white people because they needed the Michifs.
IK: They needed the Michifs.
DP: They respected certain things. The Michifs were good with horses. So, they would respect you for knowing how to work with horses?
IK: Oh yes.
DP: There were other communities close by that really discriminated?
GF: Cheap labour was another thing.
IK: They didn't openly discriminate. I don't think anyone openly discriminated or said, "Get the hell out of here you little Michif!"
KF: They didn't come to your face and say that.
IK: But you can tell by the attitude. They walk around you, six feet.
GF: I've never seen one go that way.

IK: I've never either well because I don't care.
KF: The girls were really mean to me then.
DP: So, the day the Klan burned the shrine at Lebret, were there any stories the old people told about that?
IK: You know I've never heard any, but I do know about it, the old church, shrine.
LF: There were quite a few. I think the hospital was burned down. They always talked about Ku Klux Klan, but you know there used to be a great big farm just going out of Lebret where that hallow, where the Indians now have that little town. Remember there used to be a big farm there, two big barns and everything? They came and burned that down because they didn't want anyone to be successful around Lebret.
IK: I just remembered something. This is the replica of the homestead, the Fayant homestead.
LF: The Fayant homestead.
KF: There were 18 kids in there.
KF: Here we had to sleep one on top another.
IK: They slept up here and they had to come down the stairs.
GF: You had to go up and clean the chimney once in awhile.
KF: There were two rooms there.
IK: No.
LF: Yes, this was the bigger part of the house.
GF: The kitchen.
IK: That's the kitchen, yes.
LF: Lots of windows.
DP: And people woke up and found their hair was frozen to the wall?
LF: Yes, they'd go to the barn and go and warm up.
IK: With the horses because they were warm all night.
GG: Was this an addition here afterwards?
IK: No, it was all one, but that was the kitchen. It was made low and small, so it would be, stay warm.
LF: If you had a low ceiling the house stayed warm.
DP: So how did your family and other Métis families make a living on the road allowance?
GF: Hunting.
IK: Well, they didn't need a lot of money. They hunted and they had big gardens.
GF: We had pigs, horses.
LF: Lots of weasels, squirrels.
IK: Quit it. Gophers.
LF: No, no, for money.
IK: Oh, for money, yes, yes, yes.
MRF: The women did all the canning. They didn't freeze stuff like you do nowadays.

GF: Mom used to can 300 quarts of Saskatoons.
DP: So, it wasn't too expensive to buy the quart sealers back then?
IK: Yes, the old lady farmers would keep them.
LF: They got a lot of sealers from farmers that they worked for who didn't can so much any more.
IK: But you can't find lids.
DP: So largely for Ernie Skinner and other farmers?
LF: All kinds of farmers.
AF: We never worked for Skinner. He was too cheap.
IK: Oh, he wasn't cheap.
AF: But everyone that worked for him he gave them a place to live.
IK: That's right
DP: So, picking rocks, fence posts.
LF: Yes, fence posts, pickets.
DP: Stook wheat that sort of thing. Were any of you involved in building grain elevators and that sort of thing?
LF: These guys did, but not me.
KF: Later on.
DP: After your time on the road allowance?
GF: Back in the '70s, we stared on the elevators. Other than that, I was on the farm most of the time.
DP: So, you mentioned resources, people ate a lot of deer meat? Like white tail deer, mule deer, that sort of thing?
LF: They were the hunters.
AF: No mule deer. At that time, there was none around.
LF: All that was around were rabbits and white tail.
DP: That's what people mostly ate. So, when they made the boulets, they were generally with deer meat or were they able to get pork or beef?
LF: They were able to get beef. There was always some farmer butchering.
AF: Prairie chickens, partridges.
IK: Oh yes, lots of partridges.
DP: Fish from the Katepwa Lake?
AF: We used to walk to the lake and go fishing.
LF: Oh yes, river fish.
GF: In the spring there are lots in the river.
DP: Did you guys cut ice from the lake to use as well?
GF: No, from the river. We were too far from the lake.
GF: It was only half a mile to the river, and it was about five miles to the lake.
IK: Yes, it's on that little county map there.
AF: Yes, it wasn't far. I know I used to walk there and back.

ET: People used to walk to Indian Head for the show for God's sake.
AF: I did that many times, too.
DP: What sort of traditional medicines were used in your family? Did your mom use traditional medicines or were there any other in the community who did so?
IK: Who was the midwife? That old lady?
AF: That's my grandmother Racette.
IK: That one there, in the picture?
AF: Yes.
ET: Yes, she was a midwife, and she would go around to all the places and deliver all the babies.
DP: Did she do healing, too or I guess every mother did?
IK: Some. Yes. I don't know.
LF: Pretty much every mother did. Back in that time, they knew what kind of weed to pick.
AF: My old granny there. She knew every root and weed in the ground and how to make medicine.
IK: And it's too bad nobody knows.
GF: And that was the drug store then.
IK: There was a certain one for making kids stop wetting the bed. There was one for stomach aches, there was one for headaches.
MRF: One for diarrhoea.
IK: One for diarrhoea. Yes, that's right.
AF: There was a cure for everything.
GF: The heart.
IK: Oh yes, the heart.
LF: Some kind of red root.
GG: Hawthorn.
LF: Hey?
GG: It was hawthorn.
IK: Yes, hawthorn.
DP: Did the people smoke any kinnikinnick at all or did they smoke?
IK: No, they just smoked tobacco.
GF: Uncle Louis and John used to.
IK: Yes, Uncle Louis and John. Well because he was like next to the reserve, next to the reserve right. And he lived on the reserve.
GF: He lived on the reserve after.
IK: Yes, he did.
GF: Star Blanket?
IK: Peepeekisis wasn't it? Well, that was her name.
LF: It's the last one north anyway. Black Bear.

IK: Little Black Bear.
LF: Yes, that's the farthest one north where Uncle John lived
AF: I thought it was straight south from where we lived there?
GF: Just over the fence.
AF: Just beside Uncle Frank there. I forget what that is.
IK: Isn't that Peepeekisis?
LF: Peepeekisis is over here.
IK: Star Blanket!
AF: Star Blanket could be Star Blanket.
GF: There's Peepeekisis, Okanese, Star Blanket and Black Bear is the last one.
ET: Right.
DP: Were the relations with the Michif and the First Nations good? Did people inter-marry?
IK: Yes, they were just talking about one, yeah. Yes, people intermarried, but there was still a little bit of animosity between some of them. Because I...
AF: Yes, they think they deserve better.
IK: But no, when they come by to go to town or whatever else they would stop by here where all the Michifs were and they'd set up their tipi and visit for a couple of days and then take it down and carry on.
DP: Did people make their own alcohol?
IK: No, we can't tell.
DP: Can't tell that. Well, I think there's amnesty in terms of that.
IK: Well, there probably is. Well then, yes.
LF: Yes, I know people that did, even back in my younger days.
KF: We called it "medicine."
LF: It smartened you up.
DP: People were more likely to make their own or buy from someone who made it as opposed to buying it in a store? Is that accurate?
LF: I guess it was better stuff.
AF: A lot made it for their own use.
IK: Yes, they didn't just make it to sell it. The bootlegger bought it to sell it. I'm not mentioning any names, they're not here.
LF: We used to steal that. What's that stuff? It was not made out of wheat. What do you call that, rye?
GF: Bran, hops?
IK: From where, you're a thief?
LF: From a big crock.
AF: Brandy.
LF: That was only a New Year's thing though. That was only done at New Year's.
DP: So, drinking regularly was never a thing until after then?

LF: No.
IK: Yes, it was only after.
DP: Whenever I've interviewed people who talk about old Michif people, it never happened. They say after World War Two it picked up.
IK: Well, the stories that mom used to tell me were like Josephine, because my mom was going to be 90, right. So, she's with a little bit older generation and they would go to somebody's house. Who the heck was it? Margaret, you guys know. And all the kids would go there on a Saturday afternoon, and they'd empty out the living room, and the old man would sit there. Well, you're an old man. You sit in the chair, too and you'd fiddle all night.
DP: Anyone in your family make beaded or embroidered moccasins? Was there someone who embroidered?
LF: Not that I can think of.
DP: No, your mom, koohkom, no one?
GF: She made mitts out of old wool.
DP: So, she made them out of wool and stuff, the mitts?
GF: Yep, woollen socks and blue jeans. Woollen socks for liners
MRF: Everybody stitched.
GF: But the mitts were always worn.
LF: But a lot of beadwork. Everybody was proud of making fancy pillow cases and...
MRF: Fancy scarves.
IK: Fancy scarves, yes.
GF: They did crocheting.
DP: The men liked nice hankies, and the women liked nice scarves, right?
IK: Well yes. I don't know that they liked. Nice ones because they sure as hell didn't look nice when they came out. I wouldn't have wanted to wash them by hand, but they were.
MRF: I used the wash boards.
IK: Yes, they used the wash boards.
LF: Your old man's hankies, you had to go out and scrape them off first.
DP: That's something young people would not comprehend. I still remember older people with their polka dot handkerchiefs.
MFR: Oh yes, and initial embroidery.
LF: The government is trying to bring back rag diapers.
IK: Landfills are getting too full.
LF: All my kids were raised with that.
IK: Well, mine too. There was no such thing as...
LF: Their mom used to go buy flannel by the yard.
MRF: All kids used to have rag diapers.
DP: So old flour sacks and that, did they recycle into diapers?

IK: Well, the flour sacks were made into diapers, slips and underpants, you know those kinds of things, but people would buy flannel.
LF: They used to make bed spreads. Mom used to make bed spreads out of flour sacks.
IK: They dyed them and embroidered them.
DP: So, when people talk about recycling, everybody recycled 70 years ago.
IK: Everybody.
DP: No matter whom you were?
IK: My mom waited until the day she left her house and I'm telling you, I threw away...
DP: Lot of ice cream pails and stuff?
IK: Tons, containers.
LF: Recycle years ago, I guess they made bed spreads out of flour sacks and then when those were getting worn out, they cut them up and made pillow cases out of them. And then from the pillow cases, they made diapers out of them. So that's how you recycled.
DP: When they butchered in your time, did they save the fat to make soap? Or was that a bit earlier?
LF: They remember.
IK: My grandma used to talk about making lye.
DP: The rendered fat?
MRF: Oh yes. They used to make hard bricks.
GF: Hard as a rock that darn stuff.
AF: Yes, but don't ask me how.
DP: Was it just hog fat or any?
GF: Beef fat.
IK: You have to use hard grease, la gres jeur.
GF: The beef fat it comes from the insides.
IK: From the kidneys, la gres jeur.
IK: That's hard grease. That has to come from a cow.
GF: It was hard.
IK: Pancreas.
MRF: And that was the best kind of medication for a cold, if you had a piece of hard grease in your throat.
IK: Yep, you'd heat it up.
DP: Did they put like mustard in it or was it like, just a plaster?
IK: No, you eat it.
MRF: Take a spoonful inside your throat.
DP: Oh, I see. I thought rub it.
IK: Eat it.
LF: Depends what kind it was.

IK: If it was your chest and your lungs and stuff. Then you put a mustard plaster or something on it.
LF: This old German guy, Bill Bahr, we were talking about would take wool socks and fill them up with white ash. Then he'd piss on it and he'd tie it around here. He'd inhale that I guess.
IK: Well…
DP: Well, there might be some madness to that because in World War One, the Germans used mustard gas for the first time on the Canadians. And the Canadians urinated on their hankies and that saved them from getting gassed. So, who knows, that old German guy might have known something?
IK: Well, it was like that.
LF: Rene Amyotte was telling us that one time. He said that's how that guy clears his throat.
AF: He tried everything.
IK: But I know but, in the valley, mom said somebody cut themselves and they couldn't go to the doctor. So, this old woman told them to pee in a basin and stick your foot in it.
DP: That's probably why he was a bachelor.
AF: I don't know.
GF: Well mom used to, I remember, put muskrat hide.
IK: Oh yes!
MRF: I did that for my kids. Used to rub them with Vicks then use the muskrat hide, the fur.
IK: Well, the inside. When that's still bloody is the best because of its viscosity. Something in the muskrat hide on the inside is medicinal.
GF: I thought there was going to be lots this spring, muskrats all over. I see a single one at the junction already
IK: Holy crow.
DP: How did your family celebrate special occasions and holidays such as Christmas, Noel, Easter, would you say li Paak?
IK: Yes, li Paak. You had to go and make them. That was going to communion, confession and communion.
DP: And the big one was New Year's, right? That was the big one, New Year's?
IK: Li Zhour di Lawn. That was New Year's.
DP: So how would the day play out for Christmas and New Year's? Like Christmas was just a mass?
IK: Well Christmas, there was midnight mass. Always midnight mass.
DP: No presents or anything, just midnight mass?
IK: The kids maybe got one, a little something.
GF: We used to get gifts from school. The school gives gifts.

IK: Everybody would bundle up and get into the wagons and whatever else kind of transportation they had and with jingle bells on the horses and drive to church.
DP: So, the feast would happen after mass?
IK: Well not on Sunday, not on Christmas. No big feast, you just went to church. It was a day of prayer. It was the Lord's Day.
DP: So, there was not like the Canayen thing where there was a feast waiting after mass?
IK: No, the feast was New Year's Day.
DP: New Year's, the big one?
IK: And there were lots and lots of desserts, pies, cakes and fancy desserts and lii bouletttes and bannock.
MRF: The table was set all day long.
IK: You fed everybody.
DP: So, the women were preparing for a long time?
IK: Well, a long time for them, but for some of them, not really. The cake was the biggest thing because it had to rest, and it took three months to make a cake.
DP: It was a competition?
IK: Well, they didn't, nobody said so, but they'd say. "Did you see Mary's cake?" You know, "Did you see…"
DP: How would the day begin? Was there like a benediction? Did the dad and grandpa bless the kids and kiss them?
IK: Oh yes.
MRF: Yes.
IK: Dads and grandpas. This was pretty much standard. I mean, we're a very touchy-feely, loving kind of family, you know? Everybody, even if you didn't see somebody for a week you'd give them a hug anyway. You'd do that all the time.
DP: The "Kissing Day" was New Year's?
IK: Kissing day was New Year's, absolutely. Everybody got kissed.
DP: Do how do you say that in Michif?
MRF: La Bon Anee!
IK: La Bon Anee! Happy New Year! Yes, "Happy New Year!" and you get a kiss. Everybody gets a kiss and food. You can't go anywhere without food and a little drink.
AF: And people would have a little shot of brandy.
IK: You'd go from house to house. Well, the younger people would go to the older peoples' houses, and everywhere, they'd stop and they'd eat.
MRF: You could not refuse.
IK: No, you couldn't refuse, and you had a little drink and moved onto the next house and by the time
DP: This involved all the families and extended families?
IK: Yes, family and extended family. Yes, they didn't go to strangers' houses.

DP: The fiddle playing and the jigging, did that carry on?
ET: All day. It depended, the night before is the night they jig, the night before New Year's.
DP: Did any Fayants play fiddle? Were there any good fiddle players?
IK: Oh, their dad was excellent. He was the best.
GF: He was supposed to go make some records one time.
AF: But he was shy.
IK: He was shy.
LF: He only wanted to play, back at that time in the '40s. They only wanted to pay two or three cents a record.
IK: Three cents.
LF: But he didn't know there was millions involved.
IK: That's right. He would have been a millionaire.
LF: Would have had a record.
IK: And then Andy Desjarlis comes along, right? And they said, "Dad could play better than him."
DP: So, your dad was the best fiddle player around?
GF: Oh yes.
IK: I would say so.
GF: He played at every dance down in the valley.
KF: Weddings.
IK: But there were more than him. I mean there were others.
DP: Like jamming. Like someone—
IK: Someone plays the guitar and my grandpa was the one who played the button accordion. He had an old button.
GF: And also, the mouth organ.
IK: Yes, and my Uncle Beans was really good with the mouth organ, too.
DP: And when they sang, the old people, they did it in straight French, the old French songs?
IK: No.
DP: Cree songs, Michif?
IK: Michif, English. They liked the really old ones, like "Wildwood Flower." Those kinds of old songs that come from the 1920s.
DP: They liked blue grass? The Carter Family, that sort of thing? Stuff like that?
LF: Oh yeah, they like the Carter Family.
GF: That wasn't brought north too much.
IK: Not really, there. Mostly, it was just fiddling, and it was Michif music.
DP: Fiddling, jigging, square dancing?

IK: Fiddling, jigging, square dancing, lots of…Every married couple had to have at least three bridesmaids and three best men because at every wedding, the bride and the bridesmaids and all the best men would have to do a square dance.
DP: What would happen if there was someone who was clumsy or couldn't dance? Was he ostracized?
IK: They weren't in the wedding party. You picked your wedding party according to who could dance in a square. My mother was a bridesmaid for twenty-one women because she could dance really well. Actually, I don't think it was twenty-one, I think I made that up. But it was somewhere around sixteen.
DP: And I'll get back to the wedding party, everyone was Catholic? It was all Catholic?
IK: Pretty much.
DP: No one did the old Indian religion at all, or no one talked about that?
ET: No, there weren't any Indians around there.
GF: There were no Indians there.
DP: So straight Catholic?
IK: There was no smudging only holy water.
LF: There were a few Indians because of Koohkom Merrance
IK: Koohkom Merrance (Emmerance) was a Bellegarde yes, and she did that. She was traditional. She had the best medicine knowledge after the rest were gone, but nobody encroached on anybody. Like it wasn't a big deal, but it wasn't a small deal. That's the way she was. This was the way we were. She would still participate in things. She was in the family, I mean she was.
DP: And Michif, everyone here speaks Michif?
LF: Yes.
DP: That's the language you speak when you're with each other and that's what's spoken?
LF: When we're with each other, we speak about nine words of English.
IK: Tawpway.
DP: So that was the language everyone spoke amongst the families? Michif? Your parents and grandparents, they would know French, Cree, and Saulteaux?
LF: Yes, dad spoke French.
IK: Their dad spoke French.
DP: So that was his main language? You said your father?
LF: Well, I don't think it was the main language.
IK: Main language was Michif, English.
LF: A lot of Michif had to lie about what they were to go to school years back. So, they went to French schools.
IK: Yes, because if you were a Michif you were not allowed to go to school. You had to say you were something else or the school had to pretend you were something

else. And they would do that and let these kids go to school. Really it wasn't until the mid '60s, until you know, the White Paper that…

DP: So, in terms of the teaching, it was nuns and priests, right?

GF: Yes.

DP: What was the relationship with the church? Was it a hard relationship or mostly good?

IK: That's a really good question for these guys.

DP: Or does no one want to answer?

IK: Well, you see the priest used to come around and he had authority, the priest. He was the priest, right? If people weren't coming to church, he would come in the wagon. It was a long way to the church, so he'd go and collect them all the kids and bring them to church.

DP: So, they listened to the priest?

IK: Yes, they listened to the priest.

LF: Once you found out what time he was coming, then you might as well go—

IK: Then you went and hide. But tell him that story about those drunk guys who went past the church on their way home. You don't have to say who they are. But they were drinking all bloody night apparently, and they went past the church honking the horn during mass and the next Sunday, he ran into them sometime and said …

LF: No, they came to church that Sunday.

IK: You know, you have to work and they came to church and I don't remember how it went.

LF: They went to church. When the priest preaches, you know just preaches away there.

IK: The sermon.

LF: He said, "Last Sunday, I went and I stopped and asked these guys here and these people come to church." "Yes, I'll be right there Father." And half way through mass, because our little church was right on the road allowance, they'd be flying by here tooting the horn. That big black dress of his would go flying. That was Father Guy.

GF: He was a big man that guy. His hands must have been that wide.

LF: But these people were sitting in the front row, and he was talking about them.

IK: And they knew it.

GF: He slapped Jakealoo on top of there and took his hat off.

LF: That wasn't Father Guy. That was McMath at Indian Head. That was the one who lost his big toe. He ended up getting gangrene and they had to cut it off.

GG: Is that Father Guy Lavallée?

IK: No, Guy was his last name.

LF: We had two Father Guys.

IK: Two Father Guys, yes. One was in Lebret and ….

GF: Father Guy and Father Greer.

IK: Well, no. One was his first name, and one was his last name.
MFR: Father Greer was at Indian Head.
LF: Then he went to Regina and said mass there for quite a while.
DP: Now we're onto traditional stories.
IK: Oh yes, right.
DP: Did they tell the traditional stories in your family, like Chi-Jean, Wiishakaychaak, Nanaboosh, and li Jiab?
IK: We never had Nanaboosh, but we had li Jiab.
LF: We told them to ourselves. I can't remember.
IK: But your parents, you had to hear them from somewhere.
LF: Uncle Bill Desjarlais used to...the thing is he had a deck of cards with these little, what you call them...
IK: Clowns.
LF: Clowns.
IK: Jesters.
LF: And those were the ones we thought Wiishakaychaak and Chi Jean chi pooce because we always used those two jokers. So, we would tell stories to ourselves. But I can't remember the elders.
GF: We were four or five-years-old.
DP: So, you, Wiishakaychaak—
IK: But they would use people to scare you, to get you in the house before dark or you know?
GF: Roogaroo.
IK: Yes, roogaroo was a big guy. That was a big one, roogaroos.
DP: So, roogaroos, you believed in that?
IK: Absolutely, they did.
AF: That's why we went to church because of the roogaroos would come bite me.
IK: And people at Lent, they had to sacrifice something.
DP: Forty days.
IK: Forty days, yes. And in the old days, during Lent, every bloody night, we'd kneel down, and the whole family would say the rosary.
AF: Yes, we used to too. Mom made sure of that.
LF: And anybody that came to visit.
AF: Especially at Lent.
IK: Oh, another great big holiday really was Corpus Christi Sunday. I never knew its name back then. We called it "Procession Sunday" because the whole church would go in a procession way up the hill to that cross at the top and we'd have a mass and then we'd all follow and come back down again. And then along the lake there in Lebret by the graveyard, there'd be a car and a car, a truck, and a wagon with horses.

There'd be no tables, but blankets and whatnot on the entire way. They're all Michifs and we just had a heck of a good time all bloody day there, after mass, of course.
DP: Getting back to Lent, you had said, "La Karem?"
IK: La Karem.
DP: The roogaroo stories would lead up to that or were they told during the whole time?
IK: Yes, the roogaroo stories were told all the time. You couldn't be outside after midnight. Even if you went to play cards someplace and there's no place to sleep, you'd sleep there anyway.
DP: So, a bad Catholic like me would be a roogaroo?
IK: Well yes, I guess so.
DP: Because I don't go to mass.
LF: We were always told seven years was the deadline. If you didn't go to church for seven years you got anything the devil threw at you.
DP: But that's what they believed, if you were a bad Catholic and you turned your back on God, you could be a roogaroo?
LF: Yes.
IK: No, no, just a bad Catholic.
GF: When you don't go to communion, it was good for three years.
IK: I think you made that up George.
GF: No, the priest said that.
IK: Did he?
GF: He said it in Latin, but I understood.
IK: Well, everybody understood Latin when we went to church because that was the language of the church.
DP: So, the priest talked about the roogaroo, too? Do you think they used it for control?
IK: No, the priest never talked about it.
DP: Or it was just a joke? It was just a Michif thing?
LF: It was just a family thing.
IK: Just a Michif thing.
LF: When somebody would talk about it, it was like supper time, just about ready to go to bed.
IK: "You can't go to so and so's, the roogaroo will be out!"
GF: And everybody believed.
DP: There were definitely people that believed there were roogaroos.
IK: Oh absolutely. Oh yes, they'd talk about them. I mean I remember stories. This old lady got a visitor at night, and it was like that story. She ran out of something; she needed some beef or some darn thing.
DP: The woman ran and got it.

IK: Yes, and like, there and back and all she saw when she looked out the back door was a black dog.
MFR: And that was old Édouard.
IK: Old Édouard's dog. I don't know what it was.
LF: Yes, somebody would say, "I knew he was a roogaroo. I needed some cigarettes and stuff. It was eleven and a half miles to Indian Head, and he went there and back in an hour and a half. I looked around the corner, and he rolled on the snow and jumped up and he was a horse and away he went."
DP: They said they could turn into horses, pigs, whatever?
IK: Whatever.
DP: Men and women too, right?
IK: Yes.
LF: Yes, men and women.
IK: And the only way to, you had to bleed them apparently
DP: Cut them.
ET: Yes, cut them.
LF: You couldn't show them.
GF: They gotta bleed.
IK: Yes, they got to bleed.
LF: But nobody ever caught one.
IK: No, nobody I ever heard of ever caught one.
DP: They talked about? Li Jiab?
IK: Li Jiab was another big thing. Well, that's all you heard at church, too. The priest was, oh my goodness.
DP: Li Jiab was talked about. Everything was li Jiab to him and li Jiab to the Michif.
IK: That's right.
IK: Li Jiab. "You're going to hell!" That's all they used to say.
LF: "You'll go to hell before the roogaroo catches you!"
IK: The priest never said that.
MFR: Kiya la mess itouhtayeni ka li jiabiwapayin. (If you don't go to mass you will turn into a devil.)
IK: That's right. You'll turn into the Devil if you don't go to mass.
DP: Oh boy.
GG: You're screwed man.
KF: Then you'd have to carry a board around.
LF: You have to make sure nobody shows you a cross. Oh, that's not a devil, that's...
IK: Werewolf.
LF: No, the one with the stake in his coffin.
IK: Vampire. We don't even know what we're talking about.
LF: He's a different one.

DP: One thing I noticed is laughter. We were talking about li Jiab and there's humour tied to it. Everyone had a sense of humour about these things.
IK: Well, you, only after you grow up.
LF: Only because we didn't see it. We didn't experience it.
DP: But my lead into that is convoluted. Laughter, humour. Michif people are very humorous, fun-loving people. Did people tell jokes a lot? Did that carry on? Were there pranksters who did practical jokes?
IK: Oh, all the time.
LF: The nice thing about Michif is you see the story. You don't just hear it. You visualize.
IK: Somebody tells you something in Michif, okay tell it.
LF: This friend of mine, Mason Hawlek, he comes from north of Saskatoon. When I'm working with him, I always say something in Michif all the time because I'm used to speaking Michif. Then I forget he can't understand, so I have to change it. We were going to Regina here last summer, and he said, "Tell me some stories in Michif." I said, "Did you ever see that guy" Chiwaar una natay ka uhpochikwanipyi chahki tahkishikikapukamishik ati pushiko oohpiw—ka ti timbahtat. (He fell down, got up and ran away.) "How was that? You know why English is so boring… Why, because he fell down, got up and ran away." Not funny at all.
IK: But funny in Michif. In your head, you see some guy tumbling ass over tea kettle because that's what you're saying.
IK: Well, that's right because in English he fell down and he got up.
LF: Yes, because English is a boring language.
IK: Well, compared to Michif. That's why people laugh all the time when you're speaking Michif because they see what you're telling them.
LF: In other languages, a lot of people are interested in listening to French. People are interested in listening to Italian. You know they say Italian is a sexy language.
AF: They talk too fast for me.
DP: And I was going to ask, the big thing that I've encountered are traditional Métis nicknames. Do you guys all have nicknames for one another?
LF: Not really.
DP: But you did when you were kids? Was it a community thing?
KF: Some of them were swear words, though.
DP: Well, that's why you can't share them, but that was quite common though?
LF: But in Michif, I'll go and see anna li cheu. (that arsehole).
DP: So that was quite common?
IK: Oh, heck yah.
KF: Or else, la vyay crut (the old turd).

DP: So, say if you had like Fayants right, how many George or Louis Fayants would have been in the valley? Would one have a nickname to distinguish from the other? Did they use nicknames in that way too?
LF: Well, I think that's how we got George.
IK: There were lots of Louis.
MFR: His nickname. His real name is Joseph Louis.
DP: There was a George Fayant. Wasn't he a war veteran, too? The older one?
IK: George? Oh yes.
DP: Related to Bev Worsely right?
LF: Yes, Bev Worsely's grandpa was our dad's oldest brother. So yes
DP: To describe someone, you didn't like you'd have a nickname for them, too?
IK: Oh yes, and you could call them anything within your own family, but you didn't tell it to their face.
LF: Bev Worsley when she was a kid, she was always barefoot, you know. She got real brown feet in the summer, so they used to call her "beaver legs." That was her nickname.
Well, there was that lady here, I could never remember her name, she was a little shrivelled old lady. Carmen's mom. We nicknamed her "raisin."
IK: You nicknamed her raisin.
LF: She was like this. She was a shrivelled up little old lady.
IK: Okay, speaking of nicknames, I just want to throw in my two cents in for a minute. Their oldest sister Josephine who is in the hospital right now with a broken leg, she lives in Russell. Anyway, when I was like very old already, I mean very old for what I'm going to tell you before I realized that these women, that I knew as Josephine, Joy, Binbin, Mrs. Tar, Josephine, Mishchetfwae were all the same person.
DP: All different names.
IK: She's the same person. She just had all those names. Mishchetfwae is what we called her in our household because my grandpa actually gave her that nickname. "Mishchetfwae" just means lots of times. She was answering questions and every time she'd answer them, he'd ask her how many times did you feed the horses? She'd answer mishchetfwae. So, my grandpa used to call her "Mishchetfwae." But she had all kinds. "Binbin," I don't know where that came from. But she was always "Binbin" down in the valley. And in my family, my mom had only three siblings. My mom was "Big Nose," Beans," "Dauchin," and "Bingbing". Those were her brother and two sisters. And who knows where the heck those things came from either. "Dauchin" means nothing. And "Big Nose," my mother's nose is almost, you can't see it. It's so small.
DP: Just the opposite.
IK: The total opposite.
DP: Like calling someone "Tiny" when he's six foot four.

IK: Yes. Like my grandpa, too. His name, they called him "Sam" all his life and when he went to get his old age pension, his name was actually "Toussaint." Yes, that was his real legal name.
KF: His name was Toussaint. I didn't know that.
GF: In the graveyard at Lebret, there's a Toussaint.
IK: Toussaint, yes. Nicknames were prevalent, but like Larry said, see like right here at this junction that's "Chitai Corner." Well Larry said we shouldn't be saying it. Chitai was Albert Racette.
MFR: Oh yes, Albert.
IK: Yes, Uncle Albert.
DP: So, if you have to say what your best memories were of the road allowance, is there anything that stands out? What were your best memories?
GF: The big storm of '47
IK: That was a best memory? That should have been a worst memory.
DP: The big storm.
LF: Out on the farm.
DP: Is that when the snow was like thirty-feet high, the snow banks were really tall?
GF: Even with a two-storey house.
LF: People were able to go play with the…
DP: Anything else stand out?
AF: I don't know about it.
IK: Well, you guys made a party out of everything. There was so many of them. If they'd go out to work, they'd play first. Then they'd cut the ice or the wood. They made fun of everything.
LF: They made lots of fun of everything. In the wintertime, there were big hills to slide on also. In summertime, there was a river deep enough you could go dive in it all summer. People used to gather together and make baseball teams.
IK: Oh, baseball teams were big, and they had the "River Rats." They used to play hockey.
DP: They played hockey, too?
IK: Yes, they played hockey. They made a team. They went to Indian Head. They beat the snot out of lots of people.
LF: There's nothing bad I can think of.
IK: That's the whole thing, people think just because there's no money and you live in the valley, that you're poor, destitute, you never had fun. Bullshit.
DP: Even when you were poor, you had pride. You had your language. You had—
IK: We didn't even know we were poor. I mean, everybody lived this way. Everybody worked and everybody helped everybody. There were specialists in the families.
MFR: Yes, everybody could go and play cards all weekend.

IK: Like these were better hunters, these had the biggest garden. My mom worked for farmers, and she would get butter and cream and milk and all that kind of stuff. And things were shared. And out there, too, in the later part, if you went hunting or even if you went to the butcher in Indian Head or Fort Qu'Appelle, you had to rent a locker to keep your meat in because there's nothing to keep it cool at home. So, you'd have to run to town. I'm telling you, running to town was like a four-hour job.
GF: That's why we had fresh meat every day.
IK: You had to go and get this meat out of the locker for the next day.
LF: Go over the hill and shoot a deer.
IK: Well, we do that.
MFR: Everybody would have a kavroo where they kept all their garden stuff in the winter. A kavroo that's like a big hole in the side of the hill.
GF: Root cellar.
IK: Root cellar, yes. And you'd put boards or something or just leave it flat, and put your preserves in there and your milk, anything that had to stay cool.
DP: What I'm sensing is that there was not a lot of racism or discrimination, periodically. But it did happen.
IK: It did happen. But it wasn't overt.
DP: Systematic.
IK: Nobody ever said anything to your face. They'd just not look you in the face.
LF: It was more I heard he said that or she said that.
IK: Oh yes. But once they get to know you, you know?
DP: Makes it harder to be racist when you know somebody. Do you think it happened more in the city? When people moved to the city?
IK: Never happened to me. No, well because…
DP: You would hear people say racist jokes about—?
IK: I absolutely won't take part in such a thing. I say to them, "I just either can't take part in this" or "I'm leaving" or "I don't ever want to hear that out of your mouth again. I can't tolerate it.
LF: When I was living in Leduc we used to meet in Tim Horton's every morning. And most of the people I knew there of course were of German background. And they used to call me "Chief." And I told them, "One day I'm going to go home and get my bow and arrow and I'm going to shoot every goddamned one of yous. Government called that pest control."
DP: You were fed up?
LF: Yes, it ended up being a joke and they got nothing out of it.
DP: Oh, I see. Well for some people it seems small but over the course of your lifetime it would be quite annoying to be given the name "Chief" or whatever. Michif people aren't Indian people.
IK: No, they're not.

DP: They're their own people. That's frustrating.
IK: But people don't, they don't distinguish them.
LF: They don't know the difference. This friend of mine came over from German as an exchange student and he stayed here. His name is Karl Albert. And everything we did, he would say, "You guys, why don't you have tools like Germany? We got these tools in Germany that work good, you know? These old, slotted screw drivers, you should get better screwdrivers. We got this in Germany." I said, "Pack your goddamned bag and go back to Germany and get off this little piece of ground of mine you're standing on." And then, of course, we would go and have a few drinks, and we'd start arguing because I was married to my wife and she was German. And I'd say, "You think you're so goddamn smart, my uncle shot your dad" because his dad got killed in the Nazi war. One of my uncles may have shot your dad. And he would say, "So what, you guys lost at Wounded Knee."
IK: He didn't even know anything. Anyway, they ended up laughing about everything and that was the end of that kind of conversation.
DP: Well, that's good. Now your family was the last to leave the road allowance, when and why?
KF: There was nobody left. They were all gone.
GF: We were all gone already.
AF: Billy Bahr was.
IK: Even Billy Bahr was gone.
DP: So, Billy Bahr left—
IK: Well, he passed away.
LF: No, he left.
ET: Oh, he moved?
GF: He lived in Indian Head for a while.
IK: Oh, he lived in Indian Head, okay.
DP: 1961 was when the family moved, like your parents?
LF: I don't know what year they moved. I wasn't around.
ET: It was in the '60s, though.
GF: Yes, I wasn't around either at that time.
MFR: Well, we got married in 1960.
IK: And were they still on the road allowance?
AF: They were still on there.
IK: If I had to guess I would say '63 or '62.
DP: 1963 and all the children left to find work and never settled there again, right?
AF: Yes, the old shack is still there.
GF: There were no more rabbits!
KF: Just Albert on the farm.

DP: There are just a couple more questions, so I thank you for your patience. This is great. If it doesn't apply just say yes or no. Did anybody in your family take part at Batoche in 1885? Any Fayants?
IK: There were some Fayants on that list.
LF: There were Fayants there. A couple of grandpa's brothers went north.
IK: But we don't know those things.
LF: We don't know which ones.
IK: But there are some on the list that are there.
LF: Well, the ones in Onion Lake do. Fayants up there. Green Lake, they married into Bush Cree. They don't speak our language. And Batoche and St. Louis, they went French.
DP: Yes, they spoke Métis-French there.
AF: In Cadillac, just across the river, there are Fayants there but there's no relation. Remember that muffler shop there?
GF: Yes.
GF: They were from Swift Current too?
IK: Willow Bunch, too.
LF: That's where all those Fayants are. I stopped in just north of Denver, Colorado. I used to stay in breakfast places, and I went to the store, I was still smoking then, to get a pack of cigarettes. It was Mary and I coming back from Austin. And there's this half ton truck sitting there. It had Fayant Construction on it.
DP: Oh wow.
LF: So, I asked that girl, "Who belongs to that truck?" "My husband at the back," she said. She went and got him and we were talking. "How the hell do you come down here with Fayants?" "I don't know," he said, "my dad was born down here." And he said, "All I can remember is my great-grandpa came from a town called Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan."
DP: There you go, you would be related.
LF: So why did he go down there?
GF: More money
LF: About the time we had an auntie born in Devil's Lake, North Dakota. Maybe at that time, they didn't need to check in at the border?
IK: Where's that family tree?
LF: It's right there.
DP: I think a lot of people went to the States because the Americans had a lot more money than we did for a while.
IK: And once you get over there, it's not that easy to come back. Today, it would only take you forty minutes to fly over there. But then it would take days and days.
LF: I was down there nine years, and I didn't see very much easy money. I had to work for every cent of it.

LF: I don't know what you want.
IK: Yes, this.
LF: Did you get one of these? That's right up to me. You'll have to scratch my name off and put your own name because they all came on my name.
DP: In Willow Bunch, they spelled your name totally different. The lady that was the matriarch, she spelled it with a "G" just like this, and she was the, I forget her name—
IK: Agnes.
DP: Lived to be well over a hundred, and that's how she spelled the name.
LF: She's in that book
IK: Yes, that's the one.
DP: There's a very striking picture of that one old lady.
MFR: It's written down there like that.
ET: My grandma was a Desjarlais. She, well yes, my grandma was a Desjarlais.
LF: See they changed it. It was after 1882 because Alexander, our mooshom, already had this.
IK: St. Boniface, when it was the North-West Territories, of course. Antoine Fayant. See right here it says "Antoine," that was actually "Fred." Like his name was actually Fred.
LF: So, you just scribble this off and you put "Louis" in there. So, they all came in my name.
GF: Alexandre, they used to call Mooshom.
IK: That's their dad. Not there, down the first guy.
MFR: They used to say, years and years and years ago, you cannot get married to your relative. It had to be a stranger.
DP: The old ladies kept track of how everybody was related.
IK: Well, how closely you were related.
DP: If you were like second cousins or might, but anyone closer no.
IK: Well except, the old ladies knew what kids actually belonged to whom because sometimes, the people that grew up in the same house as brothers and sisters were far-removed cousins, and they could get married.
DP: And that happened.
MFR: When George and I met each other, we went together maybe two months, and we got married. The scary part is my mother-in-law is my aunt. He's my cousin. My dad's sister is my mother-in-law.
DP: I think that was actually common.
GF: There's a couple in Abernathy that were—
DP: Just a couple more questions, then we'll finish. Did anyone serve in World War One or World War Two in your family? Korea?
IK: Not direct family.
LF: Uncle Joe Fayant was in the First World War.

IK: He's in the first veterans' book.
LF: And then his kids. Joe, George.
IK: Peter? Yes, Peter.
LF: Peter, and there was another Joe Fayant, Donald, Billy Fayant.
IK: Oh yes, Donald.
MFR: Euclide Fayant.
GF: Two Peters.
IK: Yes, two Peters. Peter Desjarlais.
LF: But Uncle Joe's whole family had something to do with the military.
DP: Was anyone in your family involved with the Métis Society?
LF: These guys were.
DP: You guys worked for the Métis Society?
LF: No, no.
DP: Or you were members?
AF: We were all members. That's all.
IK: My mom was actually a part of that revolution which did road blocks and things like that to get GDI started and to bring housing to the local Métis. Yes, she was quite active.
GF: Housing wasn't working that good, so the government took over.
DP: One last question. Do any of you have anything you would like to share about living on the road allowance? Anything stand out?
GF: Not too much.
KF: If there was power there, I wouldn't mind living there.
IK: Well, it's a beautiful place. It's absolutely beautiful.
LF: Nice summer living.
DP: So in the winter?
GF: Also in summertime, we'd go down to the lake and picnic.
DP: When the snow goes, we should go and video record it.
IK: Okay.
LF: Because there's some, like our old place is half-standing.
IK: You can't go in it, but it's up.
GF: Bears live in there in the wintertime.
IK: Yes, bears live in it.
LF: Part of the Amyotte place is—
IK: Still there.
LF: There was a house. Part of it was still up.
AF: Yes, but now it's all gone.
KF: All gone.
LF: Did they take it all down?
GF: It fell down.

DP: When you have the family reunion, do you do it around there or?
IK: We do it in Lebret on the Métis Farm.
LF: The Métis Farm, it's not in town.
IK: It's on the hill.
DP: No one in your family was on the Métis Farm?
LF: George was.
MFR: We used to live there years ago.
IK: When it was a viable farm, I mean people actually worked the land and had gardens and had animals.
DP: So, when did the Métis Farm kind run its course in terms of productivity?
GF: When they changed it to the Farmland Foundation, I don't know. We had a German guy there. He run that thing beautifully. We were shipping pigs and sheep.
MFR: Chickens and turkeys.
GF: There was a garden there, about an acre.
DP: They had rehabilitation farms for Métis at Lebret, Willow Bunch. There was one at Green Lake. There's Baljenny. What happened was they tried to rehabilitate but they used the term "rehabilitate" right, to teach Métis how to farm but anyway they were mismanaging. The government was very paternalistic.
GF: There was one closer to Moose Jaw?
LF: What's that?
GF: Métis Farm.
IK: Is that the same thing?
DP: Okay, well you know what, I think we can conclude. So, maarsii, thank you very much. This has been wonderful.
LF: Okay, you read these names out to Albert, see if he can remember.
IK: And add some maybe?
LF: And maybe add some?
IK: Oh, there was a brick factory here, who owned the brick factory? Does anybody remember?
LF: Some…
IK: Pelletier?
AF: Yes, some old Pelletier.
IK: Okay, my Koohkom Mariah. My aunt used to live there, Albert Racette, "Chitai," yes. That's Chitai Corner. Charlie Racette, Norbert Racette, and Peter Racette.
AF: Those guys were on the Skinner Farm.
IK: "Yes, are on Skinner land right here?" "Yes" and over here, I've got Joe Fayant, Leo Poitras, There's a lot of Poitras out here, too.
AF: Harry was living there before Leo came along.
IK: Okay Harry.
LF: No, that was a different house. Harry lived up by Uncle Henry Racette's house.

IK: Rene Amyotte.
LF: Just a little bit up by Chaspar (Gaspard).
AF: That's where Harry Poitras used to live.
IK: Who is Chaspar?
GF: Leo Poitras?
IK: Okay Leo, I've got him already, Leo Poitras. Jack Fayant.
AF: I don't know what ever happened to it.
ET: William Desjarlais, Toussaint Klyne.
LF: When Saenpierre (Peter) was first living there apparently.
IK: Fred Fayant.
MFR: Is that Bachiste?
IK: Yes, that's Bachiste. Peter Desjarlais, Frank Fayant, and Fred, of course, and Alex and Joe Klyne. They were brothers, Joe and Toussaint.
MFR: Badoche.
IK: Badoche, yes.
LF: Okay, your grandpa.
IK: Awaana?
LF: No, Cardinal.
IK: Cardinal.
LF: What was his name?
MFR: Joe.
IK: Joe Cardinal. No, no, Norbert.
AF: No Norbert was our grandpa.
IK: Cardinal.
AF: Racette.
IK: Oh, no, no, I'm talking about Cardinals.
MFR: Joe Cardinal.
IK: Joe Cardinal, okay. Who did you say I had to put here?
LF: Cardinal.
MFR: Joe Cardinal.
IK: So where was he about?
LF: Right here.
KF: No, no, no, just a little way from Billy Bahr.
LF: Here, Klyne. They were just down. Here's this little square with no name on it.
IK: It says "Cardinal" right on it but you didn't know his first name. So that's Joe.
AF: I remember that house when it was new.
IK: This was Joe Cardinal, so you can't forget him.
LF: If he didn't know.
IK: Yes, because my grandma's mom was a Cardinal.
LF: But Andrew was a Klyne.

IK: And this woman was a Swan.
MFR: George Klyne's dad and grandma Cardinal were brother and sister.
IK: What other Cardinals were out there?
LF: That's it.
IK: Joe.