

**"MÉTIS, C'EST MA NATION. 'YOUR OWN PEOPLE,' COMME ON DIT":
LIFE HISTORIES FROM EVA, EVELYN, PRISCILLA AND JENNIFER RICHARD.**

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in collaboration with
Eva, Evelyn, Priscilla and Jennifer Richard**

**Submitted to
the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 1993, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples contracted the writer to gather life histories from three generations of women from a francophone Métis family and to present the strategies used by them to maintain their Métis identity. A review of archival life histories from the Archives Board of Saskatchewan was undertaken to provide a community context to the life histories collected by the writer.

The purpose of conducting a life history study was to contribute to the understanding about the Métis. Research on the Métis has been insufficient and is particularly lacking on Métis women. The marginalization of women's expression has resulted in incomplete histories of both the Métis and the First Nations. The study is an attempt to redress the imbalance of previous scholarship on the Métis. The four Métis women whose voices are presented, express the events and sentiments that are important to them rather than aspects of more conventional forms of history. For example, in the narratives, very little is said about the Resistance of 1885 though much is discussed about health care. The study serves to develop our knowledge of francophone Métis women through the presentation of four life stories.

The stories gathered were narrated by Eva, Evelyn, Priscilla and Jennifer Richard from St. Louis, Saskatchewan. Their testimonies serve to illustrate the experiences of francophone Métis women. The stories express the cultural identity of these women, their ability to survive great hardships, their commitment to their family and their hopes and aspirations as they reflect on the past and plan for their future. The four life stories span three generations of the same family and reflect both changing and enduring characteristics of Métis culture.

Many aspects of the narratives presented here will not appear to be different from the experiences of many rural prairie women. It is because Eva, Evelyn, Priscilla and Jennifer are Métis, however, that they have lived and continue to live the lives they do. The Richard family is Métis in every way. They are recognized formally as members of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan and, as illustrated by their stories, still practice many of the traditions of their ancestors. The Métis persona, as demonstrated by these life histories, is at once common and distinct.

As generations are born, customs continue to be adapted to meet the needs of the younger members of the group. The fact that the Métis persist as an identifiable

group suggests that their traditions are alive because those traditions enabled them to proliferate and not be subsumed by another group. Some of those customs are described by the women in their stories. One must also be aware that at one time discrimination against the Métis, forced them into isolation and to rely on their cultural practices to survive.

One can see the changes in Métis history as one reads through the stories from generation to generation. Priscilla and Jennifer's assertions that they have not suffered from "being Métis," may reflect a lessening of racist attitudes among non-aboriginal people. It can also mean that both Priscilla and Jennifer perceive discrimination differently than their mother and grandmother do. The important issue is that the Richards women self-identify as Métis. The Métis culture persists because a group of people continue to identify themselves as such. All four women defined Métis as being half Indian and half non-aboriginal. Eva and Evelyn used the term "Half-breed" as their original name for the Métis. Eva struggled when questioned about the details of her society's past because to her "on est ce qu'on est." Métis is not much different from being Indian, she said. Priscilla stated that being Métis is about history. She also said that you are not Indian or English; you are in between.

The women, whose stories are told herein, demonstrated their pride in being members of the Métis nation. Formal institutions for the preservation of Métis identity are also available to the Richards and have been identified by them in their narratives. To the collaborators of the study, the family is paramount in the maintenance of the Métis identity. The Métis family serves as both a formal and informal ethnic maintenance institution.

Although all the women are members of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan, Inc., Evelyn was the most politically active. All the women, however, were keenly aware of the need to have a group to fight for equality rights for the Métis. Evelyn and Jennifer both spoke about self-government. Evelyn's experience in Métis politics made her more cautious of the potential pitfalls of self-government.

As with many Métis families, the Richards experienced poverty. They have struggled to feed, clothe and house themselves. At times, Eva and Evelyn remembered being teased by other children and spoke of how they did not have the educational opportunities others had because they could not afford materials that were required. They felt that they were discriminated against because of their poor financial

situation, a possible result of their being Métis. Evelyn stated that the Métis have had to fight all their lives and will likely continue to struggle. She indicated that many non-aboriginal people's attitudes are changing but that the wider Canadian society had a long way to go.

Eva, Evelyn, Priscilla and Jennifer Richard have shared their life stories because they are proud to be Métis. The narratives are testimonies to the pleasures of life and the struggles witnessed by Métis women. There may be a temptation on the part of the reader to endeavour to ascertain how representative the Richards are of the Métis in general. To attempt to demonstrate their representativeness would deter from the essence of life histories methodology and the importance of the women as individual beings. More important than how typical they are, is where they fit in the Métis culture. The place in society taken by the Richard family is evident in their life histories.

The Commission members can use this information to determine their recommendations. The least of these recommendations should be that politicians, policy makers, legislators and the general public begin listening to what the people have to say, no matter how long the stories and reports are. Any programs, services or transfer of power and jurisdiction must be based on what is heard from up close rather than what is guessed at from a distance.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Scope of the Study

In January 1993, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (hereafter RCAP) contracted the writer to gather life histories from a three generation family of francophone Métis women and to present the strategies used by them to maintain their Métis identity. A review of archival life histories from the Archives Board of Saskatchewan was undertaken to provide a community context to the life histories collected by the writer.

The purpose of conducting a life history study was to contribute to the understanding about the Métis as a distinct aboriginal population. Research on the Métis has been insufficient and is particularly lacking on Métis women. The following study serves to develop our knowledge of Métis women through the presentation of their own life stories.

The stories gathered were narrated by Eva, Evelyn, Priscilla and Jennifer Richard from St. Louis, Saskatchewan. Their testimony serves to illustrate the experiences of francophone Métis women. The stories express the cultural identity of these women, their ability to survive great hardships, their commitment to their family and their hopes and aspirations as they reflect on the past and plan for their future. The study is diachronic. The four life stories span three generations of the same family and reflect both changing and enduring characteristics of Métis culture.¹

Many aspects of the narratives presented here will not appear to be different from the experiences of rural prairie women generally. It should be noted that the routine or mundane parts of narratives are as important to the collaborators'

¹For the purpose of this study, the definitions of culture provided by Gavin Smith and Gerald Sider will be used. Culture is the engagement of the present with the past (Smith 1989) and consists of the changing relationships between individuals and their environment (Sider 1986). Examples of the connection between individuals and their environment can be seen in the politics of history, economics and social networks.

experiences as the more obviously "Métis" stories. The Métis persona as demonstrated by these life histories is at once common and distinct.

Oral history is a traditional method for expression of women's life stories. Until recently, activities in the men's sphere, wars, rebellions, and formal politics, have dominated formal written histories. Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands in **American Indian Women: Telling their Lives** elaborate:

...the subjects of Indian male autobiography are usually figures of some prominence in their tribes: warriors, chiefs, medicine men, army scouts, or renegades. Often they are participants in events critical to the survival of their people and way of life; thus, most Indian male autobiographies reflect the tradition of the memoir with its emphasis on historic context and public event. (1984:6)

Women's stories on the other hand, tend to describe private experiences; those involving childbirth, child rearing, and care giving.

The marginalization of women's expression has resulted in incomplete histories of both the Métis and the First Nations. The study presented below is an attempt to redress the imbalance of previous scholarship on the Métis. Eva Richard, the eldest collaborator of this study, expressed the need to recover women's voices:

Les hommes ont pas d'affaires là dans ces histoires. On a pas trop de chances pour dire nos histoires. Ça c'est la première fois. (Eva Richard 1993)

The four Métis women whose voices are presented here, express the events and sentiments that are important to them rather than aspects of more traditional forms of history. In the narratives, very little is said about the Resistance of 1885. At the beginning of the interviews, the women expressed anxiety at not knowing enough Métis history and felt the need to do background reading to explain accurately the events at Batoche. After discussions with the writer, the women eventually saw the relevance and importance of their own lives. It is important that the reader sees the significance of these women's lives and apply it to an understanding of a part of Métis culture.

1.2 Research Population

Other studies commissioned by the RCAP provide detailed descriptions of Métis populations.² Today, eighty thousand Métis are believed to be living throughout Saskatchewan. In addition to being distinct from First Nations people and Euro-Canadian groups, such as French-Canadians, the Métis of Saskatchewan exhibit regional differences. The Métis are linguistically diverse, speaking any one or a combination of Cree, English, Michif, Dené, or French. The cultural diversity of the Métis can be seen in the contrast between the trapping-based communities of the northern forest, the agricultural settlements of the prairie and urban life. Because of the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Métis, a simple definition of the term "Métis" has remained elusive.

The Richard family are members of the prairie Métis community.³ While some aspects of their lives may be similar to those Métis communities in the boreal forest, Fredrik Barth, in **Process and Form in Social Life**, noted the potential variability of a

²**The State of Research and Opinion of the Métis Nation of Canada** (Métis National Council 1993) and **Métis Society of Saskatchewan Report to: The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples** (Métis Society of Saskatchewan 1993).

³Please refer to Murray Dobbin's **The One-And-A-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Métis Patriots of the Twentieth Century**, Guy Albert Sylvestre Lavallée's **The Metis People of St. Laurent, Manitoba: an Introductory Ethnography**, Diane Payment's **Batoche, 1870-1910** and "**The Free People - Otipemisiwak**", **Batoche, Saskatchewan, 1870-1930**, Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown's **The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America** and Doug Sprague's **Canada and the Metis 1869-1885** for further information on the Métis.

culture in different environments:

...we must expect to find that one ethnic group, spread over a territory with varying ecologic circumstances, will exhibit regional diversities of overt institutionalization behavior which do not reflect differences in cultural orientation. (1981:201)

1.3 St. Louis and Vicinity

In 1991, the Village of St. Louis consisted of four hundred and thirty-three people (Statistics Canada 1991a:97). There are approximately one hundred and forty-six dwellings located on 0,70 square kilometres of land (Statistics Canada 1991a:97). St. Louis is located approximately 30 kilometres south of Prince Albert and 140 kilometres north of Saskatoon.⁴ According to Evelyn Richard, three quarters of the people in St. Louis are Métis although some do not identify themselves as such. The remainder of the community is predominantly French-Canadian. Batoche, the site of the 1885 Resistance, is 35 kilometres west of St. Louis. Most residents of St. Louis, including the Richard family, rely on Prince Albert and Saskatoon for entertainment and shopping. The Richards maintain a connection to the Métis community at Batoche where Eva was born. They attend **Back to Batoche Days** that are held yearly. Many of the residents, including the Richards, go to the shrine at St. Laurent, approximately 25 kilometres away, for the annual religious pilgrimage. The main industry in the Rural Municipality of St. Louis is agriculture with manufacturing and construction following (Statistics Canada 1991b:627).

1.4 Family History

As stated above, the collaborators in the study represent three generations of women from the Richard family. The maternal side of their family, through the Lafontaine lineage, is descended from the American Métis community centred around Turtle Mountain, North Dakota. Eva's American Métis ancestry entitles her to almost

⁴See attached **Map of Saskatchewan** in "**APPENDIX A.**"

sixty acres of reservation land in dense bush in the vicinity of Turtle Mountain. From the United States, the Lafontaine family located in Batoche.

Two of Priscilla and Jennifer's great-great-grandfathers fought in the 1885 Resistance; Callische Lafontaine was killed during the hostilities and Maxime Lépine was imprisoned. While Lépine's period of imprisonment was short, he had to promise on his release to never take up arms again. Eva does not remember much about Callische's involvement because her father was only six when his father was killed.

Eva's knowledge of her own family history appears to be grounded within Métis society. Although Eva can trace her lineage back to Callische Lafontaine's grandparents, she is unsure of the separate European or indigenous ancestors.⁵

1.5 Introducing the Collaborators: Eva, Evelyn, Priscilla and Jennifer Richard

Eva Richard

Eva's grandparents, Callische Lafontaine and Louise Gervais, had three children one of whom was Joseph Lafontaine. Her father, Joseph, married Virginia Gervais, one of Marie Laplante and Alexie Gervais' seven children. Eva was born in 1920. Joseph was about six years old when his father fought and died in the 1885 Resistance. Joseph and Virginia continued to live in Batoche on a river lot which is still held in the Lafontaine family by the widow of one of Eva's brothers. Joseph died when Eva was 19. Eva married Albert Richard in 1949 at the age of 29. She had six boys and three girls, has fifteen grandchildren and one great grandchild.

When Eva speaks of her childhood she says that it was very difficult. She had a lot of hard chores to do. Her father used to transport wood - known as, freighting wood. She had to quit school at a young age to help out around the home and also had to go away to work in other homes to bring in an income. Her main job was cleaning other people's homes. She remembers helping her mother with some herbs but does not recall the details of their use. She remembers them being used on her at times.

Eva discusses candidly the difficulties she has had in her marriage to Albert because he was and remains an alcoholic. Her life as a wife and mother was very

⁵See **Richard Family Genealogy Chart** in "**APPENDIX B.**"

difficult because his contribution to the household was often less than what was required by Eva and her nine children. Eva worked her gardens with her children and brothers, took care of the household chores and held several jobs outside of the home including cleaning the homes of farmers and working at a fish factory in Prince Albert.

Eva was brought up a Roman Catholic. Religion and the church were important in her upbringing but they were not the focal point of her life. She too brought up her children in the Roman Catholic faith but did not insist that they go to church regularly. Today, she attends church ceremonies on occasion when they are accessible. She no longer travels to the St. Laurent religious pilgrimage because it requires too much walking. Due to her weakening physical condition, Eva no longer attends the Grotto⁶ in St. Louis.

Eva is a member of the St. Louis Métis Society Local #28 but is not active. She has attended the **Back to Batoche Days**. She has voted in Métis elections and still does. Eva was never involved in political campaigning nor in lobbying for the rights of the Métis.

Eva tells me she does not care what others think or say, but she is keenly aware of the discrimination toward her and her family because they are Métis and lived in poverty.

Eva consistently speaks of the hardships in her life. She continues to this day to work very hard mainly by caring for her husband. Her health is failing. Eva has no regrets and shows great pride in being Métis and in having worked hard.

Evelyn Richard

⁶According to Evelyn Richard, the St. Louis Grotto is built on the site where le Couvent des Soeurs de la Providence was built some eighty years ago. The convent was abandoned in the sixties and approximately ten years ago the building was torn down. Not long after, Gerard Richard (Evelyn's husband) and his cousin attended the Shrine of Mother Xavier Cabrini in Denver. Upon their return, they made the decision to restore the Grotto at the old convent site for prayer, contemplation and the occasional ceremony. This particular site was chosen because children attending the convent would go there to pray when lonely for their homes. The Grotto is primarily a place attended by locals, though Evelyn has met people from Ontario at the site.

Evelyn was born in 1950. She remembers her childhood as being a difficult one. Playing in the South Saskatchewan river was her and her siblings' favourite past-time though forbidden by her father. She remembers berry picking with her mother and being given "really horrible tasting" herbal medications when sick. She also recalls the use of poultices on cuts. Evelyn's memories of her childhood relationship with her father are characterized by disappointment and bitterness. She speaks of how hard it was for her mother to care for everybody because of her father's alcoholism. She is proud of her daughters' respect and kindness for their grandfather.

Evelyn remembers the fire that burned down their first home in St. Louis. The next day she had to go to school in a see-through dress and all the kids teased her. She recalls being ridiculed often particularly for being on relief. Evelyn feels that because she is Métis, her family was not as well treated as the Euro-Canadian members of her community. Yet, they took pride in being Métis. She remembers being told that her French was no good, resulting in low self-esteem. She states that it took her a long time to gain the confidence to speak in public.

Evelyn married Gerard Richard, her first cousin and close friend, when she was in her early twenties. Evelyn remembers that while both her mother and Gerard's mother agreed to the marriage their fathers did not. The fathers acquiesced after permission for their marriage came from the Vatican.

Gerard is at present a recovering alcoholic. Evelyn said that she may have married an alcoholic because her own father had been one. She feels that both her husband and her father became alcoholics because of their own low self-esteem.

Evelyn is employed in Home Care. With Home Care, Evelyn attends to persons who are unable to do household duties due to physical disabilities and illness. Both Evelyn and her husband visit hospital patients as volunteers. She helps with church fund raising and recently contributed to a project which acquired an elevator to make the church wheelchair accessible. Gerard's contribution to the church is through manual labour. He helped break the ground where the elevator will be built.

Evelyn and Gerard are deeply committed Catholics. They attend church weekly and say prayers at the St. Louis Grotto nightly. Her home is filled with religious artifacts, including a three foot high statue of the Virgin Mary with her mother and crosses above every doorway in the house. She attends the St. Laurent Pilgrimage every year. Evelyn does not force her four children to attend church but insists on saying Grace at the supper table.

Evelyn often talks about the difficulties of living with an alcoholic. Gerard, who is recovering from his addiction, can now freely discuss his alcoholism with the members of his family. Evelyn and Gerard are anxious for their daughter Priscilla who they feel has a drinking problem.

Evelyn has been involved in Métis politics for twenty years. Recently, she became vice-president of the St. Louis Métis Society Local #28. She has been asked to run for president of the Local but declined. Evelyn said that she will run when she retires and can give the position her full attention. She is unhappy with some Métis politicians because she feels they do not listen to the people they have been elected to represent. She considers that Métis people may not be ready yet for self-government because they often do not work together.

Evelyn feels that several people in St. Louis would never have admitted to being Métis without the introduction of special funding programs. A noted Métis elder, she claims, was one of those people. As someone who has always been proud to be Métis she resents those who would not self-identify as Métis. She states that many of those who would not identify as Métis were relatively well-off and tended to identify as French-Canadians in order to assimilate into the non-aboriginal society.

Evelyn uses the term "native" to describe "Indians," although she is aware that Métis people are also considered native and aboriginal. Evelyn grew up with an image that Indian people were to be feared. She is not sure where she got this though she remembers being told not to laugh at an Indian person or they would cast a spell with bad medicine. As a child, Evelyn was troubled when she was called "an Indian." She would always respond by saying, "No, I am Métis!" Today she stands in solidarity with other aboriginal people.

Priscilla

Priscilla is twenty-one years old. She lives at home with her family but would like to move out and live in Saskatoon. Priscilla state that there is very little to do in St. Louis and travels to Saskatoon often. She wishes there was more to do in her community and feels that a Métis youth group could provide the youth of St. Louis with organized activities. Priscilla recently attended her Grade twelve graduation but has more courses to complete. She does not enjoy high school yet wishes to go to college in order to be certified to work in Home Care.

Although she is still a Catholic, Priscilla has not attended church on a regular basis for the past two years and has stopped going to the Grotto for prayers with her family. Priscilla did not go to the St. Laurent Pilgrimage this year although her mother had hoped that she would.

Priscilla is proud to be Métis. She feels distinct from other aboriginal people. She cannot understand why others do not like "natives." She remembered going to the bar with a Métis friend who made derogatory remarks about Indians. Priscilla says that she herself has never been discriminated against for being Métis but has seen others suffer. She is a member of the St. Louis Métis Society Local and has attended some meetings. Priscilla attended a Métis Youth Conference in Saskatoon and intends to establish a Métis youth group in her community.

Priscilla is trying very hard to finish high-school. She enrolled at a school in nearby Duck Lake to complete her remaining courses and is enthusiastic about it. Priscilla is considered by her mother and other family members to have the ability to console others. She is a good listener and is perceptive. Her sensitivity to the feelings of others allows her to understand some of the problems people face. Priscilla can also be persuasive and clever, according to her mother. Her tenacity unveiled itself when she edited her life history. She carefully read through it and made changes to entries she thought should not be discussed and requested elaboration on those areas she felt should be expanded.

Jennifer

Jennifer is nineteen and also lives at home. She graduated from Grade twelve last year. She works in the local café as a cook and a waitress. She would like to study social work, justice or management. When I explained to her that she could combine all three she was happy to know that her ideas were not scattered.

Jennifer's view of religion is similar to that of her older sister Priscilla. She has faith yet attends church infrequently. She no longer goes to prayers at the Grotto and did not go to the St. Laurent Pilgrimage.

Jennifer also feels that there is little to do in St. Louis but does not want to leave her community. Jennifer is also proud to be Métis but is not involved in Métis politics. She feels she has never suffered any discrimination and has not witnessed racism. Jennifer states that there are qualified Métis to fill the jobs of a Métis government.

Jennifer is a shy, soft spoken woman, and sometimes unsure of herself. She is also proud about being Métis.

2.0 METHODOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS

2.1 Oral History

Kristina Minister's "A Feminist Frame for Interviews" states that while oral history methodology blossomed in the 1940s it did so within a male centred discipline (1991:31). Academics used oral history method to recover the history of those who did not leave a documentary trail but continued to overlook the contribution of women in their scholarship. Recent scholars have made a strong case for the integration of women into our understanding of the past (Gluck and Patai, Eds. 1991).

Julie Cruikshank, in **Life Lived Like a Story**, stated that in the past, life histories in anthropology were used as supplements to other forms of ethnographic collection techniques (1992:1). The functional approach led anthropologists to use the information from life histories to explain structures and connections: classifications and relationships the narrators may not have intended through their stories.

Cruikshank dismisses this use of the method and describes a model that is based on life-history investigation: "...taking seriously what people say about their lives..."

(1992:1). Freda Ahenakew and H. C. Wolfart's **Kôhkominawak**

Otâcimowiniwâwa / Our Grandmother's Lives as Told in Their Own Words

(1992) lends support to Cruikshank's approach as it uses stories from Cree grandmothers as evidence of their cultural and historical experiences. This is not a new method of gathering information but it is only recently that this approach to its presentation has been maximized.

It is not the goal of these life histories to present the Métis culture. Life history methodology and presentation centres on the individual not the group. It attempts to present the life of someone from a particular culture in order to have a detailed individualized observation rather than generalized macro or micro examinations. Sociological theory and method has tended toward macro techniques whereas anthropology attempts to understand a culture through micro analyses (Kelley 1978:3). Neither tend toward the representation of individualized life stories. At least not without strict paradigms to order the material and structure the analysis. Although life histories methodology is considered to have stemmed from culture and personality studies in the discipline of anthropology it is "...far from being fully exploited as an anthropological tool" (Kelley 1978:3).

Life Histories methodology relies on the individual's words to convey what that person knows, feels, understands, remembers and tells the recorder about her culture and the world around her. It is because of the subjective nature that this method has not been exploited by academics. It is precisely its subjective nature that makes it essential to employ. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' has requested life histories be conducted among the Métis, First Nations and Inuit in order to understand who they are and what is needed to improve their quality of life. This is not an objective task because we are dealing with human beings. Human beings are not objective beings. We all experience the world through personalized processes as well as through a collective approach. Through the life histories presented here, the reader will learn about four people who are also women, Métis and francophone.

Renato Rosaldo in **Doing Oral History** illustrates the dialectic nature of the relationships inherent in the oral history method:

Doing oral history involves telling stories about stories people tell about themselves. Method in this discipline should therefore attend to "our" stories, "their" stories, and the connections between them. The process of reconstructing the past, in other words, required a double vision that focuses at once on historians' modes of composition and their subjects' ways of conceiving the past. (Rosaldo 1980:89)

The writing of life histories involves a complex mediation of a minimum of three levels of interpretation. The primary level of consideration is the subject, the person providing their own life story. To the subject, the creation of one's own past is a process of personal reflection often consisting of impressions or feelings rather than a journalistic recounting of events. A person's perception of their own experience may change as their own attitudes and emotions develop over time. Rosaldo states, "Doing oral history first and foremost involves reconstituting the past" (1980:98).

The second level of mediation is that of the researcher whose agenda attempts to fulfil the parameters of the study. The life history project presented here contains a francophone component, a Métis component, and a women's component, as well as a framework for looking at ethnic identity. The divisions imposed by the author may or may not be seen as important to the collaborators.

The interview process is neither passive nor neutral. According to L.C. Watson, as cited in Gelya Frank,

Personal resources used by the investigator to formulate questions, structure situations, and come to understandings are themselves part of the data. (Frank 1979:89)

The introduction of academic theory, or of historical research to what may appear to be incomplete narratives by the researcher, grafts an external and perhaps separate meaning to the life story. However, the recording of a life history is a social activity, according to Cruikshank: "It is the collaborative product of an encounter between two people, often from different cultural backgrounds, and incorporates the consciousness of an investigator as well as that of a subject" (1992:x). It also has symbolic qualities, explains Cruikshank, that reflect the dialectic nature of the present and past (1992:x).

The third level of mediation is the reader. According to Gelya Frank in "Finding the Common Denominator: A Phenomenological Critique of Life History Method," the reader uses a filter to understand the story:

In the back of the reader's mind, the reader's own life provides the most immediate and natural framework for sifting through the reported experiences of the life history subject. The material may always be read in such a way as to provide an answer to the question: 'In what way is this person like, or unlike, myself?' (1979:73)

The initiator of the study, RCAP, may attempt to integrate these and other life histories provided by collaborators into a wider context when it produces its own final report. This adds yet another layer of interpretation.

2.2 Making Contact

I began making contacts for the Life Histories Project in January 1993. I approached Claudette Lavergne of the Métis Society Local of St. Louis. Ms. Lavergne suggested that Evelyn Richard, the vice-president of the Local, and her family would be suitable candidates for the project. When I first spoke with Evelyn she felt that the study was interesting but that she was not qualified because she did not know the information she thought was required for such an interview. As I spoke with her about her life, her shyness passed. I realized that her family would be well suited for such an undertaking because they possessed the main precondition for the collection of a life history, that is, a sense of self. Jane Holden Kelley in her study **Yaqui Women: Contemporary Life Histories** explains:

A basic precondition in collecting a life history is that the subject have a pronounced sense of his individuality, a view of his past life as one distinguishable from other lives, and that he perceive his life as worth recording. This syndrome has been called a sense of self, which is probably an unfortunate phrase, since all "normal" individuals presumably have a sense of self. But the sense of self is not evenly expressed around the world because of psychological and cultural factors. (1978:7)

Based on a review of archival oral histories, I noted that the Richard family was both unique and representative of the experiences of the Métis community. The problem of whether the collaborators selected are 'typical' has been addressed by Kelley:

Representation is not an issue "...so long as where he or she fits in society is spelled out" (1962:28).⁷

With my encouragement and her growing understanding of the project, Evelyn gradually realized the relevance of her story. She agreed to discuss the project with her family. Her mother, Eva, was also shy and modest about her life story but eventually felt comfortable with me and agreed to participate. The daughter Evelyn

⁷The Richard family's position in St. Louis is addressed under the headings "Research Population" and "Stories From Their Lives."

suggested for the study, Jennifer, is one of three. Jennifer also felt she had very little to contribute and suggested that her older sister, Priscilla, be involved. I decided that both would be integral to the project because they would exhibit the differences in experiences that can occur within the same generation. The entire Richard family became very enthusiastic about participating in the study.

During fourteen visits over a period of seven months, I spent approximately one hundred hours with members of the Richard family. In addition to formal and informal interviewing⁸, participant observation was employed in this project to gather both qualitative and quantitative data for background information. According to Russell

Bernard, by participating in the activities of a study population, ...you try to **experience** the life of your informants to the extent possible; it doesn't mean that you try to melt into the background and **become** a fully accepted member of a culture other than your own. (1989:182)

The mediation process is used in participant observation because the researcher is scrutinizing for cultural, linguistic, or societal signifiers. As discussed above, the researcher looks for indications of the subjects being francophone, being Métis, and being women and so risks delineating symbolic divisions where none may be experienced by the study group.

I attended a St. Louis Métis Society Local #28 meeting to present the details of the project and obtain the support of Evelyn's community. The Local members asked a few questions, such as, "Will we be able to read it?", "Will you be doing this in other communities?" and "How did you chose the family?" The Local President, Oscar Regnier, asked if the members had any disagreement with the project. The answer was unanimous: "no." A motion approving the project, therefore, was not considered necessary. Because I work for the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research Inc., I also participated in discussions about education programs for

⁸Formal interviewing consists of capturing the stories on tape cassettes while informal interviewing involves un-taped discussions about events in the subjects' lives.

their community. In this context I was at once an observer and a full participant in their consultations about education.

Priscilla Richard invited me to attend her high-school graduation supper and ceremonies. At this event I was able to participate in a large family gathering (approximately 50 relatives) by assisting in the preparation of food and by sharing the meal. I declined an invitation to sit at the head table because I felt uncomfortable attempting to participate as an immediate family member. Instead, I sat with extended family members and was able to converse as they did. I attended the graduation ceremonies with the Richard family and I became emotionally involved in the celebration of the students. The most emotional part occurred when Priscilla gave her mother and father gifts of thanks for their support. At the end of the ceremonies, Evelyn told me she was grateful that I had come. She did not explain why, but I felt that I was accepted as a friend of the family.

On many occasions I had lunch and supper at Evelyn's with her and her family, including Priscilla and Jennifer. At times we talked about the research project, but most of the time we engaged in general 'dinner table' topics, such as the Stanley Cup Finals, the Progressive Conservative Party's leadership race, and the weather. On one occasion, while recording stories from Eva at her home, she decided to treat both Evelyn and me to a meal from the local café.

During these meals the Richards asked questions about my life including "What does your husband do?", "Why didn't you change your name when you got married?" and "Where did you grow up?" Thus, I was engaged in another form of mediation: interacting on a personal level and contributing information.

As part of my work for the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research Inc., I helped organize a segment of the **Back to Batoche Days**. The **Back to Batoche Days** is an annual cultural and political event held at Batoche, Saskatchewan and is sponsored by the Métis Society of Saskatchewan (now known as the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan). The event lasts three days and attracts Métis from Saskatchewan and across Canada. Robert K. Thomas describes the culturally symbolic nature of the **Back to Batoche Days**:

When in 1975 I visited the festival at Batoche, Saskatchewan, memorializing the national heroes of 1885, it seemed clear that Red River jigging and certain manners of dress, such as the wearing of the traditional metis sash, were visible signs of metis identity. Moreover, the

very presence of Batoche as a place and the important events which occurred there must certainly be viewed as both historical and cultural reminders of the distinctiveness of the metis as a people. (1985:248)

Back to Batoche Days is one of the most significant events of the year for the Métis of Saskatchewan. Evelyn Richard said that she has never missed the event since it first started in the early seventies. Eva, Evelyn, Priscilla, and Jennifer planned to attend this year but Eva and Priscilla were unable to. As an organizer and participant I had the luxury of observing the Richards as they participated in political discussions, cultural events and entertainment.

Those observations were intended to become the base for the description of the environment in which the Richard family lives. However, since the focus of this report must remain on their narrations, my ethnographic perceptions are considerably limited.

2.3 Interviewing

Interviews were carried out in the language of preference of each woman. Individual interviews with Eva were conducted in French. When Evelyn joined us, stories were told primarily in English with occasional switches to French. Evelyn narrated in English as did Priscilla and Jennifer. Although Eva is able to speak English it was integral to the authenticity of her stories for her to be given the opportunity to speak in her mother tongue. Ahenakew and Wolfart explain why:

Even those of us who are fluent in a second language typically rely on our first to talk about our memories and about what is most important to us; when one tries to deal with such things in another language, it is easy for fine distinctions to be glossed over, nuances and emphases to be lost and the right word to remain elusive. (1992:17)

Although Evelyn's mother-tongue is French, she chose to narrate most of her life stories in English. At times she switches to French especially when she asks her mother to clarify a memory from her childhood.

The formal interviews were captured on audio cassette. The women showed some discomfort at the beginning with the use of a tape recorder but adjusted to it. They were occasionally reminded that they were being recorded so that they could chose to have the machine turned off. Many discussions, that could be considered

informal interviews, were not recorded. They are, however, represented in the texts. One of Jennifer's narrations is provided in written format.

At the onset of the project, a detailed questionnaire was planned for the interviews. As the relationships progressed, however, it became apparent that a formal questionnaire would limit the flow of conversation and the topics the women wanted to discuss. Although the questionnaire was discarded in favour of the women directing their stories, some questions about being a francophone Métis woman were asked at the beginning of the interviewing process.

2.4 Transcribing and Writing

A professional secretary prepared the verbatim transcriptions of the English narrations while I transcribed the French stories. The life stories are presented in the languages spoken by the women and their grammar is retained.

One of the quandaries of the study was how to turn the stories into texts without losing their intended meaning. Presenting verbatim transcriptions to the RCAP may describe accurately what was said but would not be conducive to economical reading. The format primarily employed was one that removed the interviewer's voice from the texts and recreated each story as an ongoing narration. Cruikshank also uses this method (1992:19). Eva and Evelyn's shared text is presented as a conversation. Although it is lengthy, separating the two women's stories was not possible nor fitting. Some subject areas may be repeated by the narrators but are delivered either with greater detail or in different contexts.

Priscilla and Jennifer's texts from each of their oral narrations are presented separately. Jennifer also chose to express herself through the written medium.

Both Cruikshank (1992:18) and Ahenakew and Wolfart (1992:32) discuss the losses when the spoken word is recorded and converted to the written form. The spoken language is usually enhanced by facial expression and body movement and cannot be captured in a recorded and subsequently written text. One of the casualties of transcription is humour. The words "*hee, hee!*" have been placed at the end of those stories which the women audibly laughed at. Ahenakew and Wolfart describe these as occasional stories "about oneself" which lets the audience laugh along with the narrator about some misfortune she suffered" (1992:19). Minister elaborates:

There is an abundance of laughter and joking, but these are not jokes used competitively; they are humorous anecdotes and personal narratives, some of them self-deprecating. The jokes seem to reinforce communal bonds. You realize that women enjoy telling jokes for women in private contexts, but women's jokes don't necessarily develop by formula to the "normal" punch line. (1991:33)

Sadness, too, cannot be easily conveyed in written text.

2.5 Editing

Each of the four collaborators edited their own narratives. They were sent a draft copy of their stories after the writer had turned the verbatim transcriptions into text. They were given instructions to read their stories through for accuracy and to make any necessary changes. They were then asked to consider the implications of their narratives and to omit parts of or entire stories if they were considered unsuitable.

The women made changes to inaccuracies. Stories considered repetitive were deleted. Names and places were omitted when reputations were at stake and libellous remarks were made. At times, grammatical changes were made to the text by the women. Due to time constraints, the writer joined Evelyn and Eva during the last few hours of their editing. The writer did not influence any of the decisions but did help re-cast some sentences when invited to do so.

During the editing of their documents, Eva and Evelyn's comments ranged from: "I can't believe this is how we talk! But it's true, this is how we sound. *Hee, hee!*"; "This is boring stuff."; and "He's passed away and I don't want to say bad things about him. The story is here without saying his name."; "I can't say this in public!"; to, "This is really strong stuff but it has to be said because it's true." They both laughed showing again their sense of humour about themselves.

Involving the women in the editing process is crucial to the credibility of the study because of the private nature of the narrations. Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack in "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses" state,

The researcher must always remain attentive to the moral dimension of interviewing and aware that she is there to follow the narrator's lead, to honor her integrity and privacy, not to intrude into areas that the narrator has chosen to hold back. (Anderson and Jack 1991:25)

Eva, Evelyn, Priscilla and Jennifer have the right to privacy and had to be given the opportunity to omit portions of their stories or recast statements to protect their integrity.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Consent forms which explained the scope and purpose of the study, including the rights over their stories, were provided to each of the women. Each had a witness present to sign and ensure that everything was properly understood. At every interview the women were reminded that they were being taped. They were also informed that they would have full editorial control over their texts before submission to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Information that was eliminated from the narrations has been done so on the advice of the women and will remain in my confidence. Community consent was obtained on May 31st, 1993, at a St. Louis Métis Society Local meeting, as discussed above.

The Richards were consulted about the secretary I proposed to engage for the verbatim transcriptions. Based on my description of her professionalism, the women agreed to her hiring. All information learned by the secretary is held in strictest confidence.

Cruikshank acknowledges the story tellers in **Life Lived Like a Story** as collaborators. In **Kôhkominawak Otâcimowiniwâwa / Our Grandmother's Lives as Told in Their Own Words**, Ahenakew and Wolfart call themselves simply editors and translators. Both provide credit to the narrators as recognized authors of their stories. In the current study, Eva Richard, Evelyn Richard, Priscilla Richard and Jennifer Richard participated not only in the story telling, but in the direction of the interviews and the editing of their stories. They are indeed collaborators and are recognized as such.

3.0 LITERATURE DISCUSSION

3.1 Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity, "is the sum total of feelings on the part of the group members about those values, symbols and common histories that identify them as a distinct group," according to Anya Peterson Royce in **Ethnic Identity: Strategies of Diversity** (1982:18). Ethnic identity consists of what the individuals in the member group feel, think, and say it is as well as the material aspects they generate and must contend with.

Ethnicity is primarily a subjective experience. It can be defined through the recording of the subjective definitions as well as by observing the activities of the ethnic group members. Barth contends that membership standards provide members with ways to recognize and accept its members. They create a boundary that differentiates them from others and:

...implies a recognition of limitations on shared understandings, differences in criteria for judgement of value and performance, and a restriction of interaction to sectors of assumed common understanding and mutual interest. (Barth 1981:204)

Although such a boundary is recognized by the members it is not always respected by strangers.

Members can develop other kinds of boundary markers in the form of institutions. Institutions developed by ethnic minority communities to maintain their language and identity have been considered by a number of social scientists. Of particular relevance to the francophone Métis community of St. Louis is Raymond Breton's model of institutional completeness as described in "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants" (1964). Breton suggests that informal structures of ethnic social organization can consist simply of membership ascription. Members join networks and develop interpersonal relationships with others from their group (1964:194). A more formal network of institutions can be developed:

Some have organized welfare and mutual aid societies. Some operate their own radio station or publish their own newspapers and periodicals.

The community may also sustain a number of commercial and service organizations. Finally, it may have its own churches and sometimes its own schools. (Breton 1964:194)

The Métis of St. Louis have access to many of the formal institutions listed by Breton. Institutional completeness for an ethnic group, as well as their participation and activity in the institutions, is considered by Vallée and Shulman, in "The Viability of French Groupings Outside of Québec," to be an aspect by which the strength of an ethnic group can be measured (1969:87).

One of the institutions not mentioned by Breton, although possibly assumed by him, is that of the family. Group strength can also be measured by the size of families, endogamous marriages and regular participation in familial activities.

Enculturation is a process by which human beings learn and pass on the traits of their culture from one generation to the next. Group identity is preserved this way. In Métis society, as in many others, the primary enculturators are women. This study concentrates on the institutions and mechanisms used by four francophone Métis women from three generations of the same family to retain their identity and language and to secure the future of their family within their community.

Language is considered by many to be the heart of any culture. While a strong institution for enculturation, language is not the only one. Language establishes links between the speaker and concepts such as the individual, group, society and state, contends Harold Haarmann in **Language in Ethnicity: A View of Basic Ecological Relations** (1986:6). Yet, Haarmann warns socio-linguists against establishing language as a central factor in ethnicity because of the variability of one's environment (1986:257). The importance of language to the ethnic group will determine its role in maintaining ethnicity (1986:258). He does suggest that language is a function of ethnic boundary marking but is not crucial to the ethnic group's development (1986:260-261). Haarmann's counsel is warranted, especially in light of the cultural strategies presented by the Richard family in their life stories.

3.2 Archival Oral Histories Review

To offer the reader some historical and ethnological context to the life histories presented below, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples requested a review of the approximately 150 Métis oral histories held in the Saskatchewan Archives Board.

Seventy-five interviews were reviewed, based on their potential relevance to the current life histories project. Interviews done in St. Louis and surrounding area, primarily those of women, were chosen.

In 1973, Carol Pearlstone, then with the Indian History Film Project, conducted interviews with forty-nine Métis. That portion of the Project was entitled **The Metis**. The interviewees lived throughout central and northern Saskatchewan. The tapes have been transcribed and some have been summarized. Both the verbatim transcriptions and the summaries carry commentaries by the Saskatchewan Archives Board. The following comment identifies the lack of respect the Saskatchewan Archives Board held for the narrator, including the Board's sense of time regarding eyewitnesses to the Resistance of 1885:

Although the technical quality of this tape (both sides) is excellent, it is on the whole disappointing in terms of its content. For Mr. Boyer was not an eyewitness to the major historic event which takes up the greatest portion of the interview -- the Rebellion of 1885. What we get are echoes from someone whose grandfather died in the Rebellion ... The rest of the statements and answers in regard to the Rebellion and its aftermath are generalizations, opinions, speculations, guesses... (A803)

The **Metis History Research Project** was carried out in 1982-83 by the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research. Forty-two interviews were conducted with Métis women and men in southern Saskatchewan, by a team of individuals made up of Métis and non-Métis: Joe Beaudry, Sharon Gaddie, Margaret Jefferson, Don McLean, Cindy Paley, Connie Regnier and Joe Ross.

The Saskatchewan Native Women's Association (currently known as the Aboriginal Women's Council of Saskatchewan), did the **Metis Oral History Project**

with fifty-six women in 1984. Many of the interviews reviewed were conducted by Alma Roy and Vicki Polsfut, both Métis women; I was not able to identify the others.

For the purpose of the current study, five observations can be made. First, the Archival Oral Histories Review has provided an overview of the area surrounding the communities of St. Louis and Batoche. Secondly, Eva Richard is a generation younger than the majority of those interviewed in the 1970s and 1980s. This has provided insight into the lives of those who would have been the age of Eva's parents. A third observation notes the similarity of experiences talked about with many of those depicted by Eva and Evelyn. A fourth observation concerns the variety of interviewing techniques. These provided the researcher with ideas for questions. Lastly, interviewers themselves often clearly demonstrated ways of how **not** to conduct interviews when they themselves did more talking than the interviewees.

Of the tapes reviewed the majority of the recordings are audible. Several interviews were held in Cree - some with interpreters, others without. On occasion, two people would be interviewed simultaneously, likely as a result of an unexpected visitor. At times, debates followed different recounts of events. Most interviewers began with simple demographic questions, generally about birth places and childhood homes. Questions then tended to surround family life, historical events, such as the Resistance of 1885 and the depression of the 1930s, political involvement and Métis identity and traditions. Of the few Métis men sampled in the review, most were more predisposed to discuss public events and their occupations outside of the home. Métis women's stories, on the other hand, tended toward personal experiences, including their occupations both outside and inside the home. The following is a brief description of some aspects of Métis life, primarily through the stories of French-Métis women, from central Saskatchewan. The majority of the people were in the eighty to ninety year old category (there were some exceptions such as a seventeen-year-old) when recorded.

In answer to the question, "What was it like growing up as a Métis person?" the respondents had generally said life was hard but that other Métis had it worse. Most everyone was proud to be Métis although the term "Métis" was considered to be a relatively new one. The majority grew-up using the term "Half-breed." Many of the respondents felt that perhaps they felt pride in being a "Half-breed" because they lived in ethnically homogeneous communities and did not encounter racism from other ethnic groups. Some women said they were ridiculed in school because of the condition of their clothing although they did not specify whether a particular ethnic group laughed at

them. Some stated that they could not attend school because they did not have the appropriate clothing for winter travel. In school they were taught to speak "proper French" and were discouraged from speaking "Métis French." Of course, Cree was not spoken within the school although some children spoke it among themselves. Many of the French-speaking Métis learned Cree also, either through a parent or from their friends. Most could still speak French but stated that they would have trouble reading and writing. Some wished they had taught their children to speak French so that they would have better employment opportunities. Many, because of large family responsibilities, did not graduate from high school. They felt that this was regrettable and they did not want the same thing to happen to their children and grandchildren. They said that they strongly encouraged them to stay in school and go on in their education after high school.

Many of the men were employed in "freighting", the hauling wood or other goods with a horse and trailer. Women tended to affairs closer to home such as gardening, berry picking, child care and cooking. In some cases, when the girls were old enough, they took jobs in factories, cooking in the bush for the labourers or working in the homes of successful farmers. Some felt that they had been mistreated in farm homes because they had to work under extreme conditions which included long hours, hard labour and low wages. The factory workers did not feel that way although they indicated that they were not paid for their overtime. When asked if it was hard for the Métis to get jobs they tended to say that people had to try harder to get work and get educated. There was no intimation whether they had to try harder because they were Métis or because they had not been trying at all.

Some remembered travelling on sleighs, called "carrioles" or "banneaux", for winter travel. Many remembered picking seneca root with their mother or grandmother but either could not recall what it was used for or never knew in the first place. For most, natural medicines were no longer being used at the time of the interviews. Many of the interviewees either had grandmothers or mothers who had been midwives or had been born with a midwife in attendance. Some remembered parents scraping hides but were themselves not taught how. One remembered her father wearing a Métis sash and leggings. Her grandmother wore high moccasins and did beadwork but she did not learn how to sew and bead.

The question, "What does it mean to be Métis?" could not be answered directly. With some probing, the question was answered through stories about living in log

houses on river lots, berry picking, working on farms, farming cattle, planting large gardens and stories about the extended family unit. Parties were held sometimes every night for two or three weeks, in one person's house and then the next one's, where people jigged to the fiddles until dawn. The priests, they said, were not happy with these parties and tried very hard to stop them. Although the priests had a great deal of influence, they seemed unsuccessful in their attempts to curb this form of socializing.

Many said that their fathers or grandfathers had fought in the 1885 Resistance at Batoche. The women who experienced the conflict as children told them of hiding from the soldiers and of their escape to a French-Canadian settlement, St. Isidore-de-Bellevue, 20 kilometres away. The respondents did not know much more than this about the Resistance. When asked why the 1885 Resistance took place they all said they were not sure but they thought it had something to do with the land. They felt that the Resistance fighters were trying to get scrip and that they were probably successful because they did get Half-Breed Scrip⁹. It seemed that there was little understanding of the reasons for the Resistance. In fact, more people knew of Gabriel Dumont than of Louis Riel simply because many personally remember having seen him in church and around town. The interviewees said that they had not been interested when their grandparents or parents spoke about the events surrounding the 1885 Resistance because that was 'grown-up talk.' In many cases, the children were told to go away while issues were discussed. One woman noted that it seemed that more people were interested in talking about the Resistance at the time of the interview in 1973 than earlier on in the century. This statement reflects a growing awareness of Métis history in the early 1970s, possibly a response to the commemoration of the centennial of the Red River Resistance of 1869-70.

An interviewer asked several people, "What would life have been like had you been White or Treaty?" They replied that life would have been pretty much the same. One woman, however, added that the life of a woman is harder than that of a man's - a sentiment echoed by both Eva and Evelyn Richard.

When the interviewees were asked about the importance of religion, all responded that religion was and continued to be a highly valued aspect of their lives.

⁹Half Breed Scrip was a certificate redeemable for land or money. It was given to people of mixed European and Indian ancestry - "Half-breeds" or "Métis."

All of the interviewees were Roman Catholic and most continued to attend church regularly. Many were displeased with their own children for not continuing to value the Roman Catholic religion and attend the church. Some felt that this lack of devotion has contributed to the problems young people faced in the 1970s and 1980s.

Regarding political parties, many were sceptical of the commitment of pre-election visits by politicians because of their lack of accountability after successful campaigns. Most said that they voted Liberal as did their parents. They felt that perhaps the Liberals did more for the Métis than other parties. When it came to the Métis Society of Saskatchewan or the Association of Métis and Non-status Indians of Saskatchewan, most had never been involved. Some had been members of a Métis Society Local but they were not active in the political struggle although many remember attending the **Back to Batoche Days** where the Métis elections were held. Most described lives in which they were too busy working in and outside of the home to be involved in politics.

When asked, "Have you ever suffered discrimination?", some said that the nuns had been very mean to them. Almost all of those interviewed, however, said that they were not treated badly by the clergy; however, the priests and nuns tended to visit non-aboriginal families more often. When a Métis priest was resident he would visit Métis families often.

Many felt ashamed of their language because they were told that their Métis French was not "real French". Most of the interviewees said that they had been treated well by teachers, priests, nuns and employers. Some said because they had light-coloured skin they never had any trouble obtaining employment. Others said they were only treated differently when they went to the bigger towns or the cities.

Respondents generally did not feel discriminated against personally but often related that other Métis had been. The interviewers tended to probe and pressure the respondents to admit they had been racially discriminated against. The form of questioning used was leading and resulted in either the respondent agreeing with the interviewer by saying "yeah, I guess so" and showing little interest in pursuing the topic or by becoming irritated.

These questions and responses illustrate a growing awareness and changing definitions of discrimination between the 1920s and 1980s. It also indicates a wider acceptance of changing situations and challenges by the Métis which were met with adaptive strategies. The archival interviews illustrate how difficulties and challenges

confronting the Métis throughout most of the nineteenth century, including the First and Second World Wars and the Great Depression, were met.

Eva Richard, although a generation younger than most of the narrators in the review, could easily have been one of them. Some of her stories, which follow, are similar, especially those about her childhood, her father's freighting, her responses to questions about discrimination and her views about the youth. It is interesting to note that Eva Richard mentions that she was approached by someone to do an oral histories interview but was subsequently turned down because she was not old enough.

With the similarities in life histories, one can venture to state that the respondents covered in the Archival Oral Histories Review could have descendants living lives similar to Eva, Evelyn, Priscilla and Jennifer's. The uniqueness of individual lives, however, cannot be overlooked.

The central element of the study, chapter **4.0 STORIES FROM THEIR LIVES**, now follows. The reader is advised to read the stories for their intrinsic value. Comparisons, generalizations and theorizing can be performed once the initial reading is completed.

4.0 STORIES FROM THEIR LIVES

4.1 Eva Richard

Métis, c'est ma nation. "Your own people," [les siens] comme on dit. Il y en a qui se pensent plus hauts que nous à cause qu'ils sont Blancs mais on s'habitue, on n'en fait pas trop de cas, pour moi toujours. Ça me bothre [ne m'ennuie] pas, pas moi.

Ils n'y a pas trop de jeunes qui vont dire qu'ils sont Métis. Les jeunes d'aujourd'hui, ils aiment se parler tout en anglais et se passer comme Anglais. Les enfants de ma plus vieille ça ne fait pas de différence, mais pour d'autres ça en fait. Comme l'enfant de mon fils, est-ce qu'il va se passer comme Métis lui itou [aussie]? On ne sait pas. Sa mère est une Anglaise. Il n'est pas encore assez vieux encore. Il faut attendre qu'il va à l'école pour le savoir cela.

"Métis," c'est "Half-breed" [métissé] à cause des deux parents différents. Mais, si un Anglais marie [épouse] une Canadienne ou bien donc une Française, leurs enfants sont "Half-breed." D'abord qu'ils sont mariés des deux sortes de nations, leurs enfants sont Half-breed. Ils ne sont pas Métis comme nous parce qu'il faut du sang Indien. Il y en a en masse qui se passent comme Métis quand il y a de l'argent, par exemple. On ne connaissait pas si ils sont Métis, mais il y en a en masse des enfants qui ont une mère ou bien un père qui est Métis mais qui ne veulent pas se passer comme Métis. Comme notre voisin! Quelqu'un buvait et il a dit à notre voisin: "vous êtes Métis!" Il se choque et a dit: "nous-autres, on n'est pas des Métis!" Il a quasiment s'est fait battu pour avoir dit ça parce que pour lui, c'était une insulte! Mais, quand il a vu que les Métis pouvaient avoir de l'argent pour faire ci ou ça, bien, tout d'un coup, il était Métis, lui itou! Bien c'est vrai qu'il est Métis parce que sa mère était une Métisse. Il ne voulait pas se passer comme Métis, avant, mais, après ça, il a eu un job où il faisait beaucoup d'argent (et tous ses voyages payés) pour faire des affaires de Métis. Il y en a en masse comme ça. Surtout ceux qui ne veulent pas dire qu'ils sont Métis, mais le parraissent ... *hi, hi!* Ça ne sert à rien de se faire passer pour une autre nation. On est ce qu'on est.

Les Métis, c'est du monde travaillant pareil. On dirait qu'aujourd'hui ils ne sont pas aussi travaillants qu'avant. Avant, il fallait travailler à deux bras; hé bien aujourd'hui, c'est tout à la machine. C'est de plus l'ouvrage qu'ils avaient dans le temps. C'est la même chose avec l'ouvrage de la maison. Il fallait laver le planché à

deux mains; c'est ça que ma mère faisait. Aujourd'hui, ils ont tout: ça pèse sur un bouton, ça amène le switch [courant] et tout marche. Ah oui, les jeunes d'aujourd'hui, ils n'ont pas la moitié de la misère qu'on a eue.

Ça, je l'ai dit souvent. J'ai travaillé fort toute ma vie, moi. Quand j'avais onze ans je babysittais [gardais les enfants] quand ma mère travaillait: ma petite soeur, que ma mère avait eue et le petit garçon, que ma mère avait adopté. Ma mère travaillait avec mon père. Il faisait les foins, puis elle les stockait. J'ai fait beaucoup de différentes affaires pour gagner notre vie. J'ai fait du housecleaning [ménage], aidé dans des jardins et lavé des murs. J'ai fait [gagné] trois piastres [dollars] par jour. J'ai faite du crochet et je le vendais pour faire quelques cents.

On avait une ferme un quart de long - ce n'était pas long cette terre de rivière - et un autre quart de terre. C'est encore dans notre famille. Ça appartient à ma belle-soeur parce que mon défunt père a fait son Will [testament] lui et il l'a laissée à son seul garçon. Il y avait deux autres garçons, mais ils sont morts. Ma belle-soeur avait une armée chez elle après que mon défunt père est mort: sa mère, ma mère et leur famille. Henri, mon frère, est mort là. Ma belle-soeur et mon frère ont eu qu'un garçon; la terre sera à lui. Je fais des visites deux ou trois fois par année.

Je suis venu au monde dans cette maison. J'ai resté là jusqu'à quand j'ai eu vingt ans, et après ça, j'ai parti travailler. Ma mère a resté. On est tous venus au monde là. Ma mère a eu une vieille pour l'aider. Elle s'appelait Fricasson - une autre Métisse. Moi, c'est Madame Lépine qui m'a aidée, avec Marlene, ma première. Après ça, c'était une nurse [infirmière] pour les deux et les autres je les ai eus à l'hôpital. J'ai été à l'hôpital parce qu'il n'y avait quasiment plus de vieilles. Pour moi, c'est plus easy [facile] d'avoir des enfants dans la maison. Je n'aime pas l'hôpital. Mais, enfin, il fallait aller à l'hôpital parce qu'il n'y avait personne à venir me servir. Dans le temps, les vieilles étaient les docteurs, mais quand les docteurs sont venus les vieilles ont arrêté. D'avoir des enfants à l'hôpital, c'est changé, aujourd'hui. Mais dans le temps, bien, il n'y avait quasiment pas de docteurs. Comme ma belle-soeur, elle avait rien qu'un à l'hôpital, et elle a eu douze enfants. Tous les autres étaient nés dans la maison. Ce n'est pas pareil aujourd'hui. Avant, les docteurs venaient une fois par semaine. Moi, j'ai été au docteur à Wakaw quand j'ai eu mon petit heart attack [crise cardiaque] et un peu de pneumonie. Les docteurs et les infirmières ne venaient pas à la maison, d'habitude; juste quand on avait des maladies. Il n'y avait pas de dentistes non plus. On avait des vieilles, des bonnes. On en avait qui étaient bien

bonnes, comme des docteurs. Elles étaient des midwives [sages-femmes], des vieilles à accouchements.

Je me souviens quand ma mère est partie à l'hôpital: j'avais quatorze ans. On pleurait quand elle a eu son opération, parce qu'on avait peur qu'elle meure. Mais, elle est revenue. Elle a été au Pilgrimage [Pèlerinage de St. Laurent], juste avant que ça commence, en formalité. Elle a demandé au docteur pour sortir de l'hôpital et, après ça, il a dit: "Je suppose que tu vas dire que c'est Pilgrimage qui t'a guérie et non pas moi?!" Ça, c'était après la naissance du plus jeune.

J'ai été à l'hôpital pour quatre opérations. Il y avait des bonnes infirmières qui me parlaient mais il y en avait d'autres qui étaient bien haïssables. Je ne sais pas si c'est parce que je suis Métisse ou bien si elles pensaient que j'étais Indienne. Il y a toutes sortes de monde! J'ai été à l'hôpital pour deux jours à cause d'une pneumonie et une semaine à cause du heart failure [d'une faiblesse cardiaque]. J'ai eu de l'arthrite en masse. Je ne peux pas me mettre à genoux et mon bras a mal. Quand j'étais petite, j'ai tombé droit dessus et j'ai toujours eu mal. Mais, j'ai du bon stuff [quelque chose de bon] pour ça: "Icy Blue" ointment [onguent]. Je prends des pillules rien que pour le rhumatisme et high blood pressure [hypertension]. Aussi, moi, j'ai mal aux jambes. Je prends des pillules, mais ça n'aide pas trop. J'utilise mon "Icy Blue" ointement pour ça aussi. C'est bon, mais si je marche trop ou fais trop d'ouvrage, l'après-midi arrive, et c'est tout! J'aimerais savoir aujourd'hui ce que ma mère avait comme herbes médicinales. J'en connais en masse pour le diarrhée, mais je n'ai jamais eu trop de pratique.

Des fois, les docteurs ne sont pas bons. Mon petit garçon était malade et ils ont donné des pillules sans savoir ce qu'il avait. Ça arrive souvent, ça! Ma fille a eu trois heart attacks. Quand elle a eu sa troisième, moi, puis Evelyn on l'a amenée à l'hôpital à Wakaw et la femme docteur lui a donné du Tylénol seulement! La fois quand c'était sévère, elle était passed-out [avait perdu connaissance], mais le docteur l'a mise sur la machine. Elle n'était pas supposée travailler fort, mais elle a coupé son foin et elle a eu son heart attack.

On ne sort pas tant que ça. Moi, je vais voir les enfants, mais pas trop. Je n'aime pas trop sortir. J'aime voir les enfants. Les enfants viennent tous me voir. A Noël ça se ramasse tous ensemble. Ça fait une couple d'années qu'on va au Hall [Salle locale no.28 de la Société métisse]; on est trop petit chez nous. Ça coûte cher, mais on se met ensemble. Je vais aller au souper de graduation de Priscilla. J'aime

ça, quand les enfants graduent. La fille de Marlene est une maîtresse d'école. Elle a fait ça au SUNTEP [Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program] à l'Université de la Saskatchewan et, après ça, elle a fini son terme à Prince Albert. Elle est une sub [suppléante] là. C'est la seule. Mon garçon a gradué, mais, après ça, il n'a rien fait. Il est rentré dans la construction et il est resté là. J'ai deux gars à Edmonton - une année, on en avait quatre là-bas. Ils sont partis pour travailler et un s'est marié là.

Les hommes n'ont pas d'affaire là, dans ces histoires. On n'a pas trop de chances pour dire nos histoires. Ça, c'est la première fois. Ça ne me fait pas de différence quand quelqu'un vient pour m'interviewer. Je dis ce que je connais toujours.

Bien, une femme est venue une fois pour me demander des questions, mais elle voulait du monde plus vieux qui connaissent plus du passé. Je ne suis pas assez vieille pour connaître ce qui s'est passé durant la Rébellion [révolte de 1885]. Il y a des vieux en masse qui ont été interviewés ici à St. Louis. Ça fait dix, douze ans qu'ils ont questionné. Ils ont été à Duck Lake aussi. Ça c'est passé à la TV [télévision]. Les Soeurs de St. Louis ont parlé et Mederic McDougall aussi. J'ai connu Mederic McDougall. Il a travaillé pour la cause métisse. Clovis Regnier aussi. Il était voisin ici. Il a travaillé en masse, lui itou. Il a fait sa part. Le nom de Mederic est sur la barrière, au cimetière. Vers sa fin, il a travaillé beaucoup pour mettre des noms sur les tombes non marquées des Métis.

Dans le temps, il y avait beaucoup de trafic avec le train - avant que ça ferme. It goes by Howie now [ça passe par Howie maintenant]. L'économie n'a pas trop changé quand ça a arrêté à venir. On voyageait par train, mais pas à-cette-heure. Il n'y a quasiment rien comme différence. C'est pareil comme les chars [autos] et les autobus, sont tous pareils. Il n'y a quasiment pas de monde qui va en autobus à cette heure. Ils ont tous des chars.

Il y avait un ferry [traversier] à Batoche, mais plus à cette heure. Là, il y a le Pont de Gabriel. Je ne sais pas quand ils ont mis ce pont à St. Louis. Je me rappelle quand mon défunt père et ma mère ont été à Duck Lake et ça a pris deux jours pour retourner! Mes parents étaient chez ma grand-mère quand ils ont été pris comme ça. C'était en cinquante-cinq. La rivière a monté et ça a floodé [inondé]. Le pont était quasiment parti, cette fois-là. Notre maison n'était pas floodée mais mon frère a eu de l'eau jusqu'à sa table! De l'autre côté, ça a monté jusqu'au highway [autoroute]. On n'avait pas grand-chose pour s'aider, dans ces temps-là. C'est sec, aujourd'hui.

Ça fait plusieurs années que les lignes de téléphone sont mises. Après ça c'était le gaz et la TV. C'était dans les [années] cinquante; après, que le power [électricité] est venu. Ça n'a pas été toujours rose dans la vie, *hi, hi!* Mes deux enfants, les plus vieux, ont travaillé en masse. A douze ans, ils charriaient les gros bois sur leur dos, parce qu'on n'avait pas de chevaux - on n'avait rien. Ça travaillait pour les fermiers aussi. Ils coupaient le bois et des affaires comme ça. Tout était fait à la main, par bras. Aujourd'hui, c'est tout fait par machine.

Virginia, c'est ma mère, et Louise, c'est la mère de mon défunt père. La mère de Virginia était Marie Laplante et je ne me rappelle pas, en ce moment, qui était son mari.¹⁰ Je ne les ai pas connus parce que j'étais jeune quand ils sont morts et mon défunt père est mort jeune - ses parents, j'ai rien connu d'eux. Ils sont arrivés, je suppose, quelques années avant la Rébellion. Quand il y a eu la Rébellion, bien, c'est là où il s'est fait tuer - Elexie Lafontaine. Mon père n'avait que six ans. Je ne sais pas quel âge ma grand-mère avait quand elle est morte. Elle a mové [déménagé] chez son frère Napoléon Gervais. Elle est restée là avec les trois enfants: mon père, mon oncle et ma tante. Mon défunt père et sa famille venaient des États. Ils avaient un morceau de terre où leur grand-mère restait. C'était à Turtle Mountain, North Dakota. Après, mon défunt père est mort, et mon frère est mort; bien, j'ai écrit là-bas pour savoir combien de terres on avait. Là, il nous restait rien que trois filles. Ils m'ont dit qu'on avait quatorze point soixante-neuf hectares. Ce n'est pas tout à fait une acre, ça. J'ai demandé si on pouvait vendre ce morceau de terre, mais ils m'ont dit qu'ils en avaient trop. Mes cousins ont été aux États et ils ont été en passant. Ils ont dit que c'est dans le bois et qu'il y a des buttes. Ils ne pouvaient même pas le renter [louer].

Ça doit être aux États où les Français sont venus et mariés, parce que c'est la défunte grand-mère de mon père qui était Indienne. Ça, c'est la mère de Callische. Son mari aura dû être un Français, parce que "Lafontaine" est un nom français. C'est comme ça qu'on est devenu des Métis, nous autres. Je ne connais pas leur nom, mais j'ai des papiers qui expliquent un peu.

Le film à Batoche nous explique comment ils sont arrivés et où ils ont bâti à l'église de Batoche. L'église est pleine de trous. On peut aller à Batoche et ils vont nous montrer où sont les tranchées et où Gabriel Dumont est enterré. Il y a des

¹⁰Voir **Richard Family Genealogy Chart** dans "**Appendix B.**"

tranchées en arrière de chez Robert Carron. Ils ont arrangé la maison pour gardé ça comme souvenir. Je pense que ça se cachait dans des maisons durant le temps. La Rébellion était plus au sud. On restait dans la maison où mon défunt père restait quand il était jeune. Aujourd'hui, c'est ma belle-soeur qui reste là. La maison approche les cent ans. Elle est vieille. Je sais ça parce que c'est dans cette maison-là où on est venus au monde.

Mon défunt père faisait du freighting [charriage du bois]. Il charriait le bois. Il n'y avait pas de chemin de fer, dans le temps; il y avait seulement des frets, ça fait que, ça frétait. Il y en avait qui coupaient le bois et des autres qui le charriaient. Quand on était jeune mon défunt frère charriait le bois avec des chevaux à Rosthern. Des fois, il s'est rendu à Rosthern et il ne pouvait pas le vendre. Il fallait revenir et descendre le prix et le vendre à trois piastres la corde. Mais, avec trois piastres, dans ce temps-là, on pouvait acheter de la farine, et trois, quatre autres affaires. Ah oui, trois fois par semaine, tous les deux jours, il vendait des cordes de bois. Ça se vendait plus en hiver qu'en été. Il faisait ses cordes de bois au printemps, et, après, ça séchait tout l'été. L'automne, il commençait à vendre, parce que le monde commençait à faire leurs feux.

On charriait le bois pour notre vie. Ça, c'est tout de suite après la Rébellion. Mon père avait six ans quand il a commencé à vendre, parce que son père s'est fait tuer durant la Rébellion. Il était jeune à commencer à travailler dans le bois. Moi, j'ai charrié du bois en masse: quinze, vingt cordes dans le printemps pour l'hiver. J'ai fait des foins aussi, stocker. Aussi, il fallait que je marche en arrière ou à côté des binder [les courroies], pour fouetter les chevaux quand ils étaient fatigués, quand ils avaient de la misère à faire de la récolte, ou si un tombait en arrière. J'ai fait ça avec mon défunt père et mon défunt frère.

Dans les [années] trente, on était jeune, mais c'était difficile. Je ne m'en rappelle pas trop. On faisait des affaires dans le jardin. Ma mère nous a couvrir en faisant le beurre. Elle l'a vendu à quinze sous [cents] la livre et, après ça, elle a vendu de la graisse, du saindoux. On avait des cochons, poules et boeufs: une chance qu'on avait des animaux! C'est comme ça qu'on a vécu. On était pauvres pareil. Les années trente n'ont fait pas trop de différence. On était toujours pauvres. Aujourd'hui, ça me bothre [m'ennui], pas parce que je reçois des chèques. Quand il y avait la Rébellion, ils ont acheté le terrain des Indiens quasiment pour rien et puis eux-autres étaient bien. Ils avaient acheté du terrain pour farmer [cultiver] et bien nous

autres on n'avait rien. Dans le temps, mon défunt père m'a dit que, quand ils sont venus ici, il n'y avait quasiment pas de Blancs. C'étaient seulement des Indiens. C'est pour ça qu'ils se sont battus: pour le terrain. Ce n'était pas comme aujourd'hui: c'était tout du bois, dans le temps.

Mon frère était callé [appellé] pour la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale, mais il n'était pas fit [en forme]. Mon mari était dans la guerre, mais il n'a pas été overseas [outre-mer]. Quand c'était le temps d'y aller, ils l'ont droppé [laissé tomber]. Il n'était pas fit lui itou. J'ai connu du monde qui s'est fait tuer en guerre - comme le garçon Ste. Germaine à Domrémy.

On ne se bothre pas trop, aujourd'hui, quand des affaire comme la guerre arrivent loin d'ici. La bombe sur le Japon n'était pas juste, mais c'était dans le temps d'une guerre. A-cette-heure, des bombes empoisonnées ça me fait peur. Si jamais une grande guerre se fait déclarer, il restera peu de monde: tout le monde va se faire tuer.

Il y avait beaucoup de monde avec le t.b. [tuberculose] dans le temps. Aussi, il y avait un gros flu [grippe]. Ma mère a perdu deux enfants à cause de ça dans deux semaines. Il y en a un qui a eu la polio [poliomyélite]. Nous autres, on était chanceux: on n'a rien attrapé. Quand les enfants de ma soeur étaient malades, ma soeur était malade. Ma mère a fait du créosote ou créoline (c'est noir), pour les désinfecter. Elle mettait ça dans l'eau et sur le poêle. Moi, je faisais ça quand j'avais un poêle à moi. Tu mets ça dans toutes les chambres et tu n'attrapes rien après ça. J'ai fait ça et mes enfants n'étaient jamais malades.

Il y a beaucoup de maladies. C'est même épeurant d'avoir une opération, parce qu'on ne sait pas ce qu'on peut avoir. Aussi, la pollution nous donne des maladies. Il y a beaucoup de cancers et ça tue beaucoup de monde, pareil comme le coeur. Supposé que ça vient tout du manger, que mon livre me dit. Personne ne devrait manger de viande rouge ou ça ou ci. Le monde devrait manger des légumes, des beans [fèves] et des fruits. Mais, le monde aujourd'hui mange des fried chickens [poulets frits] et puis toutes sortes d'affaires. Et le monde ne fait pas d'exercice; ils n'ont rien à faire. Pas comme nous autres, on avait de l'exercice en masse. Il fallait courir icite [ici], courir par là et puis marcher par icite, par là. Et aujourd'hui, ça se promène tous en char, *hi, hi!*

Les femmes, d'habitude, faisaient tout, incluant la maison. Nous-autres, on avait des enfants aussi. Il fallait aller les chercher loin: trois, quatre milles, et tous les

jours. Mais, pas durant l'hiver parce qu'on les a gardé dans le corral [enclos]. Il fallait tuer les vaches aussi. Ma belle-soeur n'a plus d'animaux. Elle les a tous vendus. Elle en avait une bunch [groupe], mais il n'y a plus rien. Elle est trop vieille là: soixante-seize. Moi, j'ai pêché aussi et on mangeait ça comme ça. On y allait souvent. On mangeait plus de Goldeye dans le temps, mais aujourd'hui, ce sont des Jackfish. C'était bon!

J'ai un gros jardin. J'ai des patates [pommes de terre] pour tout l'hiver et il en reste en masse au printemps, et, on a beaucoup de carottes. On enterre les carottes pour l'hiver et les laisse dehors. Les patates viennent dans la maison.

Quand on parle français, nos enfants nous comprennent. Aujourd'hui, les jeunes se parlent tous en anglais. Bien, nos gars, quand ils viennent ici, ils parlent tous français, mais, la plupart du temps, ils parlent anglais. Les filles de Marlene se parlent toutes en anglais - c'est tout! Si elles étaient capables de parler français, j'aimerais mieux ça, c'est certain. C'est notre langue. C'est pour dire, on était élevé à parler français. Les jeunes aujourd'hui, ça apprend l'anglais à l'école - toutes leurs classes commencent en anglais. C'est leur langue, le français; je ne comprends pas pourquoi ça ne parle pas français. Nous autres, on parle français toujours, même quand on est avec d'autres qui ne parlent pas français. Mon français est bien pratiqué. Je regarde la TV en français. Des fois, c'est bon. Des fois c'est comique. J'aime bien écouter cela de Montréal. C'est bien rare que j'écoute la radio. Je ne parle pas un bon français comme d'autres, mais j'essaie, *hi, hi!* C'est comme ça qu'on parle! J'aimerais ça si mes petits-enfants parlaient français. Comme mon neveu qui est rendu à Montréal, bien, quand il vient nous visiter, son garçon est capable de compter jusqu'à dix en français. Sa mère est contente. Elle dit: "I want him to speak more French than mommy." S'ils lui montrent, il va l'apprendre. Il répète tout ce qu'il se fait dire. Ça, c'est Rock et Lorraine. Ils parlent français et anglais ensemble. Il faut parler français pour ne pas le perdre. Jennifer et Priscilla comprennent un peu le français. Mais elles ne veulent pas le parler. Moi, je leurs parle en français. Il faut toute bien l'apprendre. Elles ont besoin du français pareil comme d'autres choses. Si elles parlaient cri, elles auraient beaucoup d'emplois. Comme à Batoche, il faut parler cri pour être maîtresse d'école. Ce n'est pas gênant de parler cri. Je n'ai pas d'amis aujourd'hui qui parlent cri. Je travaillais dans le magasin Boyer et les Sauvages venaient et ont parlaient cri ensemble. Je comprends plus que je ne peux parler. J'aimerais ça avoir quelqu'un pour parler cri avec. Mais, il n'y a personne aux

alentours qui parle cri. Ils ont commencé une classe pour l'apprendre. Evelyn y avait été mais je ne sais pas ce qu'est arrivé. Le professeur buvait souvent, ça fait qu'Evelyn a lâché.

Les Métis et les Indiens, ça boit beaucoup. Les autres boivent beaucoup aussi, mais ils ne boivent pas en public comme les Métis et les Indiens. Il y en a en masse des Canadiens, les Français, les Anglais, qui boivent autant, mais à la maison: c'est caché. C'est pour ça que ce sont les Métis et les Indiens qui se font poigner [attraper] par la police. Il y'en a en masse qui boivent pas, mais il y en a qui boivent eux itou en public.

Le rôle des femmes a changé en masse depuis le temps de ma mère. Il n'y avait pas de femmes qui travaillaient en dehors; ça travaillait pour soi-même. Aujourd'hui, toutes les femmes travaillent dehors. Elles sont quasiment obligées de travailler. Sinon, elles ne peuvent pas arriver avec leurs finances pour la maison. Ça dépend de combien d'argent le mari fait aussi. Il y en a qui ne font pas gros et d'autres qui font en masse. So [ainsi], quand il ne fait pas grand-chose, c'est difficile. Ils payent leurs bills [factures], mais il n'y a rien qui reste.

Je pense que c'est okay [correct] que les femmes et non pas seulement les hommes aient le droit de voter. Ça fait longtemps que les femmes votaient, parce que je me souviens que ma mère a voté. On avait le droit quand on a eu vingt-et-un [ans]. Avant, on était trop occupé pour lire avant de voter. Dans ce temps-là, les politiciens nous visitaient pour avoir notre vote. Quand les femmes ont eu le droit de voter, elle ont voté pour le droit de rentrer dans les beer parlour [brasseries] et boire. Il y avait beaucoup de femmes qui ne buvaient pas, avant ça. Moi, je n'étais pas pour ça. Ce n'est pas depuis si longtemps que ça: vingt-cinq ans, toute bien. Parce que, je me rappelle qu'on n'avait pas le droit d'aller dans les hôtels et, tout d'un coup, on a commencé à parler de ça. Ça ne buvait pas comme sa boit aujourd'hui. Dans le temps, ça buvait deux, trois bouteilles de bière, mais aujourd'hui, ça sort de l'hôtel toute soûle! Pas dans St. Louis; mais à Prince Albert - en masse!

Pour moi, la politique, c'est plus pour les hommes que pour les femmes, on dirait. C'est ça que je pense toujours. Regarde McLaughlin [Audrey], on dirait qu'elle va mourir. Elle est rendue maigre, puis c'est trop dur sur elle. Campbell [Kim], va voir. Elle va rentrer là-dedans et elle va commencer à travailler fort et ça va être dur. Les hommes sont plus forts que les femmes.

Je votais dans le Métis Society [la Société Métisse de la Saskatchewan, Incorporée], mais pas dans les dernières années. Je suis trop vieille et je ne peux pas aller aux meetings [assemblées]. D'après moi, ils n'ont pas besoin de faire tout ça pour les Métis. Comme fournir l'argent **Back to Batoche**. Ce n'est pour rien, ça. C'est de l'argent gaspillé. Sure [Sûr], c'est pour le bien du monde, mais il y a beaucoup de crocherie. Mais, aussi, il y en a beaucoup qui en ont besoin. Il y a beaucoup de monde qui n'a pas d'ouvrage. Ils devraient créer des jobs [emplois] en place [au lieu], parce qu'il y en a bien qui veulent de l'ouvrage. **Back to Batoche**, c'est du fun [amusement], mais pour moi, ça doit être de l'argent gaspillé. J'allais tous les ans à **Back to Batoche**. Des affaires comme L'Institut Gabriel Dumont, ça aide. C'est bien commode pour instruire les jeunes à être des maîtresses. Mais là, il n'y a pas de jobs. C'est ça, ce que je dis. Le gouvernement coupe des jobs et donne son argent à des folies. Ce n'est pas juste. Il ferme des hôpitaux aussi et d'autres jobs sont perdus.

Evelyn va connaître plus que moi. Elle comprend plus que moi, parce qu'elle sort pour des meetings et des affaires comme ça. Ça fait qu'elle apprend en masse. Moi, je n'en connais pas trop quand même. Je connais ce qui s'est passé dans ma vie, mais je ne connais rien que des misères.

4.2 Evelyn Richard

My first language was French. We were brought up strictly French. Even in school we took English but we talked French. Some of my brothers now hate to talk French. Rock is here from Québec and my brothers don't like to speak their French. They are not really using it. They'll understand everything but they don't like speaking it. Growing up, though, dad wouldn't allow us to speak English. We were teased for the way we spoke French. We'd get up to make a speech or something and first thing you know, half the class was laughing at you. This is where maybe that holding back and staying in the background came in. When we'd get teased they'd say "What the hell are you saying?!" We couldn't explain any better because we didn't know any better. I don't think I took French when I was in elementary school. Mostly just grade six and seven. I was in grade seven English and I was taking grade ten French. I was up there. I don't know if I could write a letter today but I sent a card to Rock and Lorraine there and I wrote it in French. They were pretty pleased about it. Like I wrote quite a few things down. They moved here, more or less, to be close to my mom because it's the only aunt Lorraine has left. Mom and Lorraine both got heart trouble so I think they both figure maybe they didn't have much time. I finally thought I could learn literate French but I might need the dictionary so the reader could understand it.

I wouldn't write down my words unless I was writing to another Métis person. Conjugating verbs and all that doesn't bother me, it's the words. Like for mattress we say "matlot." A matron there, is "mère de famille." Well a "mère de famille" for us would be a mother, not a matron. I always thought a matron was kind of the head of something, like a matron of a hospital should be the kind of the head of the housekeeping, whatever, but not a mother. "Mère de famille" for us is a mom. For us "le ménage" was washing the walls and doing your whole house. The heavy work. Lighter housekeeping for us was "samedi", like Saturday. Once a week on Fridays was our cleaning day. We would pronounce it "samdgi." Instead of "de" we say "dge." When we were growing up we couldn't leave the house until "samdgi" was done. That meant washing floors, dusting, dishes, beds, linens changed, windows washed, and all the whole shibang. Not walls though. My brothers didn't help out really. They had their chores like hauling water then bringing in wood, chopping it. When we started having gas and water they didn't do much. They had to weed gardens. I imagine they would have had some yard work then. I made them work. It

was the boys who had to take the dirt out of the basement so we could put the furnace in. In the winter time they had to shovel snow all around the house up to the foundation. It was just a kind of insulation we used to do.

A lot of the words we say are the real French but they are not pronounced right. This is where a lot of the real French people have trouble. It's the same with us. Like even somebody from Québec, they pronounce it so well that they have a hard time understanding us. My cousin had come down from Montréal twenty years ago and she said "Va donc en haut chercher ma bérette." So then I went upstairs and was going through the suitcase and I was looking for barrettes. I came down and she laughed her head off, laughed and laughed and she said "I wear a hair piece," a "péruques." A lot of people used to wear hair pieces, like a partial wig. We'd just add a little piece here or there. We had all these curls that were long and we used to wear those. We had short hair and we'd buy this long piece, a pony tail. We tried everything.

When I talk to my cousin sometimes her husband has to ask her a lot of the words that I'm saying and I have to ask him, so we get along good. He won't laugh at us and say "That sounds silly." In fact, Rock appreciates it. If he was down here for ten years, he'd probably speak like us and be accustomed to us.

When I speak to my mother and other family members about business it's in English. Gerry and I talk in both languages but when it's about the kids we talk in French. Actually, pretty well everything, even for shopping or something or if we need anything done I'll say it in French, like, "wahshti garbage," how would you say that in French? "Wahshti" sounds more like Cree. "ça l'a prit," would be more like the slop pail that we use to have for pigs to drink. Also, "ça la maudit salop," means "you pig." That's the word for pig, "salou."

My mom reads but she doesn't always understand what she reads especially big words. She's not accustomed to speaking English. She has a hard time with a lot of words in English. I even get a kick when she makes me her little notes in English when she wants me to get certain things for her. I think she'd have a hard time writing French. She just speaks it. She also has more of a problem speaking English. She's more accustomed to French. Well, most of my relatives all speak French. Even myself, I go to mom's, I speak French, well, our French that is. It's the same with Gerry's mom. It's French with the older people. It's just these younger kids here who don't speak French. In a way now I wish they spoke more French. I suppose it's never too late. I could still teach them, eh?

We probably didn't speak French when we went out amongst friends because they used to laugh at the way we talk. I think this is where we probably never taught our kids to speak French because we maybe were kind of ashamed deep down. So we just learn English rather than make them learn our French. I would think that I wouldn't want them to go through what I went through 'cause I'm sure if they are to speak our French today, a lot of them would be laughed at, or not understood a lot of times. Nothing makes you feel sillier than when you are talking to somebody whom you don't understand and you are supposed to be talking the same language. I even used to hate hearing myself on tape, I still do because I sound more Native than I am. I don't know what it is. It's not that I really don't like it but I don't know what bothers me more. Maybe it's just the fact that Natives are still too discriminated against and I don't want to pass off as a Native. I used to like singing, well I still do like it. I used to tape my singing and play myself back and I thought "Oh God!" I felt terrible, it's even in my singing. It has to be the French accent that's in there, because like, I can't see any other reason. 'Cause you have Native singers that don't have the accent and here I'm not Native and I have that accent. So it's got to be the French. I've been told already "Oh you're French, you can tell by your accent," but I can't see it that way. I mean to hear myself. I do speak French but the Métis-French. Well, it's still French. I'll never deny that I'm Métis. I always say I speak French but I'm Métis. I speak the Métis-French, not the Michif-French, but it's our language. It doesn't bother me at all to go to Bellevue to speak French. If they don't understand me or if I don't understand them, I just ask them to repeat. Bellevue will ask for me to go work there because I speak French and a lot of people from Bellevue [St. Isidore-de-Bellevue] have a problem speaking English also. They'll specify that I go. It must be because of my French.

Our mass is one week in French and the other week in English. The only French part is the first reading, second reading, out of the Bible and I don't get much out of it because they talk in the real French. I just follow along in my Eucharist book. We say our rosaries a lot of times in French, with our parents, our older people. We say all our prayers in French. In fact, I didn't know my prayers in English until maybe two years ago. I only knew them in French. Finally you know you go to say the rosary, you go any place at all, they are all saying it in English and I thought 'Well I've got to learn.' So I just learned maybe two or three years ago, my prayers in English. It was easier for me to pray in French. When I am talking directly to God, I talk to him in

English. I feel like I can get my point across better. I've never tried in French, to tell you the truth. I don't think I have. When we go say the rosary now, we say it in English because there's some that don't speak the French. We have one couple that's Métis; they're our cousins. He likes to say it in French, so we just carry along in French. A few years back they had this statue that was going around from house to house to catholic families that wanted it. We had it here for a week. You invited people to your home to come and say the rosary. It was said in French.

All my schooling was in English except core French. It was usually in the morning around ten or ten thirty. Catechism was mostly in English. Now the francophones are really strong. They're winning all their rights. I suppose they've got their point of view if they don't want to lose their French. But what I don't like to see is sending your kid to a French school and you speak English at home and this is what a lot of people do. This is a lot of what's happening with families in Saskatchewan. They send their kids to a totally French school. Bellevue is totally French now. Some mothers don't speak a word of French yet their kids can carry a conversation in French like you wouldn't believe. But not with their mothers. So if those kids are home they are going to lose that French down the road.

I went to secondary school through upgrading. I got sponsorship through NSIM [Non-Status Indian and Métis student grant program]. It was available and I took advantage of it but otherwise I'm sure if I would've paid from my own pocket I wouldn't have went because there was only Gerry working in construction. He worked maybe six or seven months of the year and the rest of the time he was on unemployment: seasonal work. So I'd probably be sitting at home raising my kids and not doing anything. First of all, I got my grade ten. It took me about eight months. Then I took eleven and twelve after I moved to St. Louis. And then I thought, 'Well now I've got my grade twelve, I've got to do something.' So this is when I went and applied to Home Care. I didn't realize that you had to take another course down the road. This is why I tell the kids "It's hard once you get older to even learn." But I don't want to see them get their grade twelve either and just sit around doing nothing except raise a family.

I wish twenty years ago I'd a had the determination that I have today. I would have furthered my education and maybe taken public speaking. I'm now at the point where I can't learn anything. I don't know why. It would almost seem that my brain is fizzled out and nothing stays with me. It's probably 'cause I've had too much on my mind. Too many concerns, too many worries and then too preoccupied with myself,

with personal things. I know for awhile there I almost got to the point where I said "To hell with everything!" I couldn't handle all these things that I was going through because I was taking in too much. My job is pretty stressful at times. You're not supposed to bring it home with you but a lot of times you can't help it. We do have some very difficult times. I had one auntie here - in fact she just went to a home - where we couldn't even go to her house to do visiting `cause she'd phone all over the place and accuse us of stealing this and that. Oh, that was a tough situation. They were telling me not to quit going there and just to ignore her. She's Gerry's auntie and he treats her like gold. That's his auntie, and we respect our Elders. I respect her also. I don't know if she did this just for the sake of it or if she was going a little senile or if she just did it to be mean once in awhile. Once she gave Gerry a key to her place and then two days later she asked for it back. Gerry brought it back and her son next door took the key. She tends to lock herself out once in awhile. Last year in the dead of winter here she was locked out and we had just had this big snowstorm. Cars couldn't even get out of the yard. They were just getting stuck. I saw her over there and there's no way I could make her walk through two feet of snow to come here. So, I got the car and I was going to go around and pick her up `cause I could see she was freezing out there. All she had was a sweater on. I got to the corner and sure enough I didn't go any further, I was just stuck. I had to plough my way there and then bring her to the neighbours `till she could get in the car. Finally we got this little kid to climb through her window to open her door. He got through the bathroom window and then we got her in her home.

I was working at someone's house this summer and I was with this other lady doing the cooking and cleaning and this man's brother comes over and starts yelling at us. He says "You f'n freeloaders" and "You f'n Indians." That really hurt me. I was actually crying on the way home. You spend four hours there just scrubbing and scrubbing. I feel sorry for his brother because it's his brother that's going to suffer not him. He's kind of scared of him but I think the shape that his brother was in that day he could've got a gun and shot us. So we phoned the office and we were told just to pack up and get of there. We were done mind you but I just didn't expect that from him. That was a racial remark he made. Actually the other lady I work with is pretty upset too. She's telling me she will even take him to court but I don't think I could go that far. Not when he's drunk. Sober, if he still has the same attitude, maybe then I'd think seriously about it. There's no reason for us to be slandered. The Lord knows it's not

giving a good image to Home Care either. That was down right slander. For a minute I said, "You're upset, you want to tell my why?" He just, oh, his eyes could've killed me. If looks could kill, I'd have been dead. It's the first time he's ever been that way. That's why I was totally shocked because I've seen him before and I've always gotten along with him. I've known him for the last twenty years. I don't know what his problem is. I have to talk to him sober. I couldn't really say anything today because I was on the job. I just left him and said "I'm sorry you feel that way but I will talk to you again." He would like to get a housekeeper. I was talking to Priscilla about going because she gets along good with seniors. She'd probably get along good with him.

Twenty years ago in St. Louis they used to get into fist fights. One would call each other a Métis and the other one would call the other a Métis. There were literally brawls in the hotel. They were Métis but they wouldn't acknowledge it. In those days you weren't called "Métis" you were called "an F'n Half-Breed." And, you know, it was a racial remark actually. The way it was said, ignorant like. I think people would be more friendly but the way it came out. Maybe a different tone of voice would have made a difference. A racial remark and an insult are two different things - you know the difference. If you go and sit in a bar and all of a sudden you hear, "You're nothing but an F'n Half-Breed" and there you go after you have a few drinks. Not too much of that goes on today but in Prince Albert there's certain bars people will stay away from because it's mostly Native. I don't know, we've got a long way to go before we're totally accepted. I don't know if it'll ever come about. Some of the areas I think need the most work is jobs and education.

I find that it's sad that even my daughters' little friend quit school last year. She's having so many problems at home. It got so unbearable that she finally quit school and moved in with her boyfriend that she didn't want to be with. She did it just to get out of that atmosphere. She was getting so much static. I feel so sorry for her; she was taking her grade eleven, doing good in school here, and drops out of school. She's living with her boyfriend and she works part-time cleaning rooms. I tried to talk to her, tell her to go back to school.

But it's definitely got to change - the unemployment, the education, everything. And the unemployment, it's high amongst Natives, well it's high all over the place, but more so with the Native population.

It would be nice for them to learn all this self-government and Métis history right from school - you know, right from grade one - than having to rely on the parents to tell

them everything because a lot of times it isn't told. Why do they teach things like Columbus discovering America when Indians were already in America? Gerry and I were discussing that one whole night just about. Couldn't get over that one. And still, Native people they're not changing it. So these kids grow up and they're going to lose everything. People will be Métis just for the sake of it. They won't know anything about their background `cause a lot of these kids already today are Métis and are not acknowledging they're Métis. I'm not against people coming out of the woodwork and saying they're Métis and being proud they're Métis, but not just to use it as a crutch. They say, "Well I can get through school through the Métis" or "I can get a job through the Métis." We don't get our education for free. Métis nowadays have to get funding from somewhere. I don't know where it's got to change but something's definitely got to change, and come around. It's got to start somewhere but I don't know if it would be so much the attitude of White people that's got to change. It's hard `cause I know in Prince Albert right now they seem to think that they can wipe out racism to even fifty percent. That half of the problem will be dealt with but then where do you go from there? Would our people, even if the racism were to disappear, be more motivated? I think a lot of kids drop out of school because they lack motivation. I don't know why. When I was younger it had to do with racism. That held me back a lot `cause I was always scared to go out and I'd always put myself down actually. I probably told myself at the time that it was because I'm Métis I wouldn't be hired. I didn't have the education either. Even today, especially in PA [Prince Albert]. And now they're wanting Cree. If you don't speak Cree a lot of the jobs you don't qualify for. It's not necessarily French any more.

I know definitely when I was growing up, if I wouldn't have been put down so much, I think I would've felt a lot better about myself. Well, then too, I come from a dysfunctional home, from the time that we were born `cause dad was an alcoholic and he drank. This is why I say dysfunctional. I don't know why he was that way. I never talked to dad about that. I know that my auntie talks and she said they were put down quite a bit when they were younger. Even my brothers will talk and they said they used to go to school with bannock and they used to hide. They'd go outside at recess time and eat their bannock because they were ashamed. And all these other kids had all these fancy sandwiches while they had bannock and lard. So instead of being laughed at, I suppose, they'd sneak out and eat their lunch. You tend to withdraw. I suppose we didn't have the opportunities because we were poor too. So we didn't have the

opportunities unless you went out on your own and tried to make it. Even my husband used to play hockey and he said he probably would have made it to the NHL [National Hockey League] because he was a good hockey player but motivation wasn't there or funding wasn't there either. He let it slip away. My husband was a good player. He was a goalie. There's a couple of boys that are Métis that made it to NHL right now but then they had the backing also. One of them is a cousin of ours. He made it through because he had a lot of support. He started off with the Raiders. The opportunity was there and then he went in the NHL and he signed a twenty thousand dollar contract in the first year. Twenty thousand dollars! Some families don't live on that, you know. And last year he signed for two hundred thousand!

We've even been told, "You guys are not motivated to do anything. You want everything for nothing," and I suppose in a certain way they're right to some extent. I notice even a lot of our people, like us for instance, I quit school. I know a lot of our younger kids today tend to just have a baby and live off social assistance and let everybody else worry about them. They sleep `till noon. You try to get through to them. I even have members of my family there who are that way. It's not much of a life living on welfare. We were brought up on welfare so you know you're brought up in poverty, actually. I don't know if that has to do with self-esteem. A lot of our people tend to drink too. Liquor becomes a problem and then all these kids are brought up in dysfunctional homes.

With my relations, especially on my mom's side, it's unreal how they are shy. I notice that in mom's family that they're very, very held back.

I'm happy today that my girls can sit here and say that they didn't feel prejudice and all that because it's really something. I mean, it's starting to show that some people are coming along. It's not like when we were kids because when we were kids, oh boy! I think Gerry has had his share of discrimination. We've never really talked a lot about it. Maybe when you're past the moment when you bring up certain things or certain topics enter your mind you remember them at the time but don't dwell on them. I find for myself personally being brought up the way that I was I don't remember much about my childhood. I really don't remember. I remember the bad things but I'm sure we had good times that I don't remember. It might sound stupid but that's the way it is.

Kids can be cruel sometimes too. After our home burned down, it was the middle of January, and I went to school the second day after. When you have a fire you don't have clothes so you just wear what you get given. So, I was wearing this little nylon

dress - thirty or thirty-five years ago they used to have these little see through dresses. I don't know what type of material it would be - but anyhow, I had this little dress and didn't have no slip underneath. I remember going to school and having all these kids just laughing at me `cause you could see through it. I mean seven years old, you have nipples and everything else, breast, there's nothing there but still. I imagine I had under panties but no slip. I was so hurt at that time. I went and told my mom, "You throw that dress in the garbage, burn it!" Kids that age, six years old, they don't understand. They just maybe didn't know we had a fire. It was often like that song **Coat of Many Colours**, I had to wear all these hand me downs.

When we were young, I even remember one time, we wanted to do something. We decided to make all these ticket books. We bought this ten dollar blanket at the general store. We were going around selling tickets `till finally someone stopped us and asked us if we had a license to sell tickets. That was crazy! We tried everything. We wanted the money to go somewhere, maybe the fair or the exhibition at the time. We paid for our blanket though.

We made an igloo once. We'd pour water on the snow and make blocks. We had running water then, just cold water but that's all you need to freeze the snow. It was pretty darn good. We went in it. We had to try everything when we were kids. We had no money so we created our own things. We built a tree-house down on the river bank and we'd go there and play cards and smoke.

I just love to dress up. Even when I was younger I used to just wish for a Métis coat, you know, with the frills. I've got a pair of boots with the frills now. Métis don't really have a dress now, really. You could dress up like the old Métis. I just envy people that come to **Back to Batoche** and they really dress for it and it looks so nice. It shows you're proud to be Métis when you're dressed up like that. It's part of your heritage. I always used to want that attire but never had it. I'd wear the high moccasins if I had to wear a skirt, but I'd wear a skirt that was cocktail length. We've always been over weight so we wouldn't look that good. Plus, I very seldom wear dresses and my girls don't either. I remember seeing this one woman last year that had this white dress on. Oh my God, the beadwork on it, and the frills at the bottom! It was just beautiful. She had the long wraps there, hair braided and beadwork in her hair. It was really something. I even pushed my girls when they were younger to join up at that **Back to Batoche Days** because they used to have Miss Teen Batoche, years back.

I couldn't tell you a definition of Métis because we were told all along when we were growing up that we were Half-breeds, not Métis. Now they're saying that we're Métis. It's supposed to be if you have Indian ancestry down the road that you're Métis. You're no longer a Half-Breed because they're finished. Half-breeds now they're saying is half English and half French or, you know, when your mother's pure, comes from England and your father comes from France, then you're Half-breed. You're supposed to be a Métis if you have Indian blood. This is why for a lot of families it's hard to prove down the line that you're actually Métis `cause they don't have the records. We have some families out here that have no blood line. You can't trace no Indian ancestry blood line `till maybe five or six generations down the road. They're still considered Métis. If they can prove down the line that they've Indian blood I'd consider them Métis but I don't know if I'd just take their word for it. There's some people that wanted to purchase Métis cards. We talked to their parents and they just turned blue in the face. They didn't acknowledge. It's tough for kids to try and get a Métis card. When the parents will never admit it and we know they're Métis. They wouldn't pay five cents for a Métis card and yet the kids will. Some parents will even buy the card for their kids but not for themselves. There's this one kid whose parents wouldn't get one for him and said that they'd disown him if he did. People like that are ignorant. I think they're old enough; if they want to get a Métis card they're entitled to get it - if they want it that bad.

The Métis were struggling years ago and they're still struggling and probably will always struggle. A battle even started yet, five years ago. I remember, they were fighting, the Métis people, that they were saying that we were going to have a rebellion again - and that you don't want. Like Oka. It's bad when people have to start fighting and dying. It doesn't have to get to that point. There's ways of fighting, getting along, you don't have to use violence. That's one thing with us, our immediate family, like mom's family and my bothers and sisters, we're a very close family. You know what I mean? Never fought amongst each other as brothers and sisters. I remember mom saying, "I'm going to pray that my kids always get along" and I think a lot of families are not like that. I guess in a way she got her prayers answered, so far anyway.

I know that some of our traditions include things we make. For example, at Christmas my mom makes bangs (beignes) or crooked fingers. It's like a bannock dough that's deep fried. My grandma used to make crooked fingers too and raisin pudding and steam pudding in a canner. They used to make them in cans. I think

that comes from being poor. Most people did a lot of canning. Mom used to make a lot of blankets. In those days it was mostly patchwork quilts out of old remnants that we got. It's hard for her to sew now because her arms hurt. I don't remember mom doing too much crafts. Grandma used to do all that kind of work. She used to do moccasins and nice things. Even my sister Marlene took leather craft a few years ago. She used to do all that beadwork. Auntie Josephine was very good at it. Another tradition is jigging. I don't jig but mom used to and Jennifer tried to jig a few times. You have to be light on your feet to do it. A few years back we tried to find out if we could get our status down in the States because my mom's side is descended from there. If we were to move out there we could get it but not in Canada. We'd be able to move to the States and live on a reserve. Mom still gets those little royalty cheques every once in awhile. Not very much money; it depends how many relations we have there. That's one thing that's sad: we don't even know our relations there. We only found out that we had relations there when I was twenty-five. I don't think mom even knew actually `till she got a letter one day and she started getting these little royalty cheques. Clarence, my brother, went down there to the Dakotas a few years ago. We never had the money to even get out of Saskatchewan. Christopher Lafontaine down in Regina who worked for Gabriel Dumont Institute, that's our cousin. His relations are originally from the States, same with Edwin Pelletier.

My great grandfather fought with Louis Riel and so did Gerry's. Louis Riel got hung. It was the White society that ruled back then too. They hung him for treason without reason really. It's too bad we don't know more history because we could have a lot of history behind us. I never kept up on it, never tried. My mother's maiden name is Lafontaine and she married Albert Richard. In St. Louis the Richards was one of the first families to settle here and people will not acknowledge that. The Richards, like my dad's brothers, they're all known to be alcoholics. They all drank. So the Richard name in St. Louis is mud. It's like people looking at an Indian down the street and saying, "See those drunk Indians" and so they think the same of the Richards. The Richards were never thought much of.

My brother Roy is with a Métis, Clarence is not with a Métis and my brother in Edmonton is not with a Métis. Donald is with a Métis, Bentley is with a Métis and my sister married a Métis also. I married a Métis, in fact, Gerry and I are first cousins. We had to get permission from the Pope to get married. We've been married twenty-two years in December. I left home about eighteen in 1970. I lived in

Saskatoon for awhile. Then I married and lived in PA for a couple of years. I wasn't really ready to leave home when I did. I was just scared and kind of backwards. But once I kind of got on my own it was okay. I don't even know how I got that job at the School for the Deaf, it was just a training job. I don't even know if it was through the Métis Society or if it was through Manpower. Then after I finished the training program they wanted to send me to Rosthern Hospital to work there but I had to live out there with the nuns. No way would I go out there. I wasn't cut out to live that kind of life you know. Not that I was rowdy or wild or anything but that was a little bit much so I didn't accept the job. Rosthern is a very strong Mennonite community so I didn't know if I would have fitted in there so I gave up that opportunity. I was going out with Gerry at the time. That's another reason why I didn't accept the job either because I would've had to move away.

I've known Gerry ever since I was fourteen, fifteen. In those days going out with cousins was taboo. It wasn't accepted very well. It's a funny thing when you start having feelings for another person and he starts having feelings for you and you know the feelings are there but you can't get together because you're cousins. So, we kind of acknowledged it for maybe three or four years before we even got together. I think after we started going out mom tried her hardest to discourage me but like I said when you love somebody it's not that easy. I think after awhile they just knew they couldn't keep us apart so they just accepted us. Then we decided to get married and he got his mom and my mom together and we got them over to our place - we lived together for a few months before we got married. We didn't bother with the two dads because they were always drunk, you know. Our mothers then just said "Go ahead." It worked out fine. I know lots would tell me, "Oh, if you get married don't have kids because of blood inter-related and that. You want to have retarded kids and deformed kids?!" There was a lot of old couples, like Mederic McDougall and his wife, who are cousins. I thought, 'Well if God wants to give me a retarded child...' it can happen to anybody. We just took the chance and prayed. Obviously we were meant to be together because we're still together. I don't know what brings two people together.

People are kind of ignorant. My girls are really, really blond and after they were born people would come up to me and say "Who did you screw?" and "Who did you make love to?" and "How come your kids are blonde, blue eyed?" God, I'm not going to start explaining. Even some of my Métis friends said that. The girls were a lot fairer than I. Gerry is not dark and it goes back from generation to generation. If they

are going to be that ignorant about it, well that's their problem. Most of my family is dark except for maybe one of them is really fair. When we were growing up some always said that it wasn't dad's because he was the fairest out of the bunch and mom's got grey eyes and nobody has her eyes. We were all born with brown eyes and dark hair but Napoleon was blonde and fair. The old people used to think that way, even the Métis people. They used to think if you had one blonde kid out of seven or eight that you had to have been unfaithful. I still have a lock of hair from when my girls were younger. I cut their hair and they were just blonde. As they grew older their hair got darker.

We had a guy out here in St. Louis, Howard Adams. He teaches university classes in Saskatoon once in awhile. He's living in the States now but his family is from St. Louis. He was quite a bit involved in the Métis Society. I think at one time they just about brought him back here because I think they were just about going to start another Louis Riel thing. I think it mostly had to do with that self-government that they're fighting for now. But, I myself being Métis, I don't know if it's such a good idea either. I'd have to really do some heavy studying into it to really get right into it but I don't know if we're ready. I'm not too sure actually even what this self-government business is about but I know it all has to do with land claims and education, like SNEDCO [Saskatchewan Native Economic Development Corporation], where it's all Métis controlled. They wanted all these White people off these boards to stop them from controlling the loan applications. There seems to be a problem even with the Board of Gabriel Dumont and that's all Métis people. People, for some reason, are not satisfied with some of the Métis institutions. We've been known to fight amongst each other. This is what's sad about the Métis Society. I can't really say for sure what the difference is between other governments and the Métis Society. I'm not one that goes into heavy politics. Although, when I was younger I was told to vote this way and that way and now I can vote the way I want, just like in the last election. We didn't hear all the speakers and I kind of voiced my own opinion. I knew who I was going to vote for but maybe twenty years ago, twenty-five years ago, I was told to vote for this one, told to vote for that one, and I would. I know the last election I killed a couple of Gerry's votes because I didn't agree with him. I didn't agree on his choice so I just went on my choice. Most of the ones I voted for got in.

To tell you the truth, Local #28 hasn't been involved in very many things. I know we've been fighting for the last few years to be able to have a say in what goes on in

Batoche Days and the ones that run it won't even acknowledge us. We've written to different organizations saying that we wanted to have a say. Like, we didn't want a beer garden there to begin with and to have some of our people employed there at Batoche: to have a say in how things are run. Every year it's been run the same and we're saying, "You should have things a little bit different." It always seems to be the same little bunch that goes ahead and they plan everything and then if you like it or don't like it, well too bad. Locally, we've did a lot of work with the family program like working, donating. We're donating a lot to the school so the kids can have opportunities to go to all different things. We donated to the **Phantom of the Opera**. We donated for kids to have a playground at the school and then we donated to the Drumheller trip and the Denver trip and the ski trip at Lake Louise. We're trying to get programs going. We're trying to get the Home Care/Special Care Course `cause the job opportunities are there for that course, once you've got it. You can go to SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] to get upgrading if you really want it bad enough and do something with it afterwards. We've had upgrading here and there's been kids that are still sitting at home doing nothing. So what's the point? I mean you've been out of school for ten years; I think if you're not motivated by then well, when? I think this is why Cumberland Regional College won't give us any more upgrading: the majority of them are not using it. So what's the use. We should be on the Board when they chose the students. I know, for instance, there's one girl that wants to go to Home Care now. She's not working `cause she supposedly has a bad back and she wants to take that course. So for her to take that course it's pointless with a bad back `cause she's not going to be able to use it. Not that I'm being prejudice or anything but I don't see any point her taking up that seat for a year when somebody else is really determined. I'd like to take that course too. If we put on the course we could have people come in from surrounding Locals to take it.

Bellevue hasn't formed a Local yet. I thought they were supposed to get organized but I can't see it because I don't think there's even nine members there. I have a few cousins living out there that were married to French fellows. It's not a Métis community at all. We have five members from there now. I think, though, that there are quite a few of them that are not coming out and acknowledging it.

I would like to see our President Gerald Morin sending out newsletters to our Local. As a Local we seem to be doing this and that but nothing is happening. Unless you attend a lot of these meetings and conferences, you are left in the dark. The only

way that we find things out is if at least a couple of members go to meetings and then report back to us. Our Local right now is in the process of being able to say, "Well, here, you guys go to Regina for a weekend or attend this conference." We're not always in shape financially to start sending this one and that one unless the Métis Society itself picks up the tab. You can't always depend on them so it will be up to us to do fund raising if we want to be involved.

My mom and dad have never really been involved in the Métis Society as I can remember. They have their membership and that's about it. They'll go vote. I have one brother involved in the Métis Society and the rest aren't. Some of my brothers don't even believe in what I fight for a lot of times. They say "Oh you and your Métis Society" it's almost the same topic as religion when I try to tell them. For religion and Métis Society they think I shoot a lot of air. To tell you the truth, I think most of my brothers really actually probably wouldn't even take part and yet some will come and vote, but only when it comes to voting. Roy gets pretty involved too. So I guess that's two of them. But my sisters, one of them comes to meetings once in awhile. All my brothers and sisters have memberships but they're just not involved. I think they are too preoccupied with their own little lives. Maybe they figure they can't change anything. That's what they keep telling me, "You won't change anything anyway, so why bother." Maybe they'd just rather take the discrimination and wallow in it and become bitter than do anything about it.

I'd say I was probably the only one out of the family that got involved to a certain extent but not overly involved. I don't know what it is that made me involved. I don't know if it was my pride or just wanting to open up a little more. I think what I dislike most is when I see all these people just being discriminated against. I thought to myself, 'Well maybe somebody can make a difference' but that hasn't happened yet. I was never one to really sit down and talk with my family 'till maybe the last few months. I'd go to all these meetings, I'd come home, and I wouldn't explain to them what I was doing or what I heard. To them, I probably just went to the meeting for myself and that was the end of it instead of coming home and saying, "Well I went to this meeting today, you know what happened?" I should have been keeping them informed but I never did. But I've started to. When I was fighting for this lady with the housing, my family were all for me in there. We were talking about it here at supper. They were telling me to go for it. I had their support. I wasn't just doing it on my own. That whole thing really bothered me because I know for a fact that if she'd been White she

wouldn't have had that problem. It was a pretty heavy time. I was really away from home a lot `cause I was going here and there with her. I had Edwin involved for awhile. I had the MLA involved. We were going to meet with them. We were going up to Saskatchewan Housing in Prince Albert and we just about got Human Rights involved. It almost got that far but they didn't let it get that far. I think they figured when I first went in there they could just scuff us off. Then I started about human rights and their attitude kind of changed. As far as I'm concerned she never had a chance to voice her opinion while they were making all these accusations. She wasn't there to defend herself. If I wouldn't have known her personally, her background, I might have held back a little and got my information from other people who went around her. St. Louis is a small town. I couldn't see why some houses were damaged seventy-five percent more than her house and they were fixing them up with no problem. I couldn't let it go. They told us that eventually she'd have to go to a Saskatchewan Housing hearing but it's been almost two years now and nothing has come of it. They are pretty good now. In fact, the caretaker will go there about every two months now.

I wouldn't mind being the President of the Local if I had the time to devote to it. To not have the time to devote to it, what's the use of me being President? A lot of the meetings are during the day. I can't afford to not work right now and just say, "I'll take the day off and go to this meeting;" not with Gerry's income coming in so slowly. I have to put my family first right now. Even at night, Monday nights I go to Alanon and part of my nights are taken up with my job. For awhile there I was just going to meetings and meetings and meetings. I thought I'd never get a break. I used to take part in choir practice and they changed it to Monday night and then we have our Métis meetings Monday night once a month. So I had to give choir practice up. I was taking a Wellness Program, then I was taking **Bible** study for awhile `till that finished. The Wellness Program is for your mental health. We still meet once a month for a support group. I've been going as part of my job to help myself. My boss asked me to see if St. Louis could benefit from it. I know a lot of our people tend to be depressed at times so I got it going. Gerry and me go to Pastoral Care also. We have a monthly meeting every last Thursday of the month. So much to do; it's crazy! I've gone to Métis Women's meetings but I don't really get involved. If I get a chance I'll go to their next conference. The last meeting I went to was two years ago. I went to the conference in Saskatoon. It was Aboriginal Women more than Métis. The Métis have only organized in the last couple of years, actually when AMNSIS [Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan] divided. I still like Jim Sinclair as a leader. I think he did a lot. He seemed to be on the ball. He kept us well informed. He would come to our meetings. I'm sure he came three or four times a year and would tell us what progress there was or whatever he was working on. I don't know the story too much, why they went and voted him out. I didn't vote against him that time. Actually we were outnumbered. One thing is bad about St. Louis. We used to have these older group. They'd come by and tell you to vote for this one or that one and they'd sway a lot of people by that, especially the older generation.

I don't know too much of what is really going on. I think if everyone could get together and work together they'd get a lot more accomplished. Even the

governments are starting to see that the Métis can't handle their own self-government because of the fact that they're not getting along. You have one Local here that doesn't like this Local. You have PA for instance, there's three Locals there and there's not one Local that get's along. They're all fighting amongst each other. It seems to be that way in the Métis Society itself. I can see the government's point too. They're getting tired of all this back stabbing. A lot of it is the governments' business when it comes to their money. They're funding most of these programs so they should have a say in what goes on. It's not just us going there and saying, "We want this, we want that, and if you don't give it to us well, we'll do this, we'll do that." There's got to be some governing somewhere with rules to follow. We all have rules to follow. To honestly tell you, even Gerry and I talked about it, and to me, right at this time, I would have to say self-government won't work. Not right now. We're not ready. First of all the fighting's got to quit. People have to start working together and not against each other.

There's a lot of squabbling and friction because some people aren't happy with the Pathways Board. Some regions are upset that others get more programming. Some people feel that the Local Presidents should sit on that Board but I think the Pathways Board is fine the way it is. Not all Presidents have the knowledge or the ability to go in there and work on all these issues. The only one that would sway my idea maybe would be John Boucher. He's attending all these meetings in Winnipeg and Ottawa. He's up on all these current issues and he knows more or less what's going on because he's really well informed. John B. is known to come to the meeting and bring up what he knows but he's not there to say, "This one's no good and that one's no good." He keeps his opinions to himself. Not all of them are like that. Some politicians come to St. Louis and just back. They don't always know the facts and they shoots their mouths off, whether they're right or wrong. This is why I was kind of upset a couple of months ago when I saw one of them. He introduced me, "Here's my cousin." I said, "Don't introduce me as your cousin. Lafontaine's are not like you." Maybe he's got a problem but I'm not sure what it is. He had all these big ideas, big plans and a lot people went for it but we were told that he wasn't a very good person to begin with. He did sway a lot of votes because we have these once a year meetings when people come in just to vote. They're easily swayed because they don't know that's going on.

All of this has to stop at the Local level and then start at the Local level. There's a lot of corruption, back stabbing and fighting in the Locals. Somehow we have to join together to eliminate this and bring about unity amongst our people.

The Métis Society does a lot. Sometimes you have to overlook the bad. You can't really blame the Métis Society either. The government doesn't have the funding any more. They don't have the money to give away like they used to have. So we miss all these opportunities when you're poor and can't afford it. Even right now I'm starting to think that my girls might have to go on Social Assistance just so they can go to school `cause we can't afford to send them unless they go for the student loans. From what I hear they might not even qualify for student loans because they are living at home plus the funding isn't there now. I think they're screening their applicants because so many are defaulting on them. If they see you're a good candidate for what program you are going in to you might qualify.

The other night I was looking at the graduates from the University of Saskatchewan. I think there's about fifty of them that got out of there with a Bachelor of Education. Where are those fifty people going to get teaching positions? If there's fifty that come out every year there isn't enough employment for them. Even Loretta and Connie, they graduated from SUNTEP [Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program] and it seems that the only jobs they get is on the reserve. So why is that? That's discrimination. Very few are getting hired in the city. For example, I know personally two people who didn't get hired because they were Métis. Affirmative action where we're concerned is a good thing but then a lot of the times you're fighting politics, you're fighting government. You're just about beat before you start.

We go to church regularly. We go to the Grotto here in St. Louis all the time though, me and Gerry. Not a lot of people go there. The Sisters go there just about every other day. We go to the St. Laurent Shrine a lot though. It's a beautiful place to visit. There's a buffalo pit. I walked down it once and I'll never do it again. I have such a time coming back up. Now the pine trees have all grown in there but that's where they hunted the buffaloes. We have to go and have a picnic there on Sunday. We go to church every once in awhile in summer. In July and August they have mass every Sunday there, right at the grotto.

I don't know too much about the history of the Rebellion where the Métis were fighting for their land. Was that land actually taken away from them or did they sell it

off for next to nothing and then wanted it back for some reason? I've heard stories from older people about their ancestors or grandparents who came from Manitoba. They settled here and they started working on the land and maybe they just took it for granted that once they worked it and broke it that it did belong to them. It would be nice to just take a class on just the Métis culture because what's happening is the younger kids today aren't learning about these things. Even ourselves, we're not that well informed and the Elders that are well informed are all passing away so your losing most of your information unless it's passed on from generation to generation. The kids are not that interested though. They are living normally, as normally as you can with the other population. Kids today take it for granted. It's up to us to get that information or try and learn as much as you can. You take John B. He started off maybe ten years ago really getting involved in the Métis Society and that guy is so well informed today but he's really working at it. He's at every conference. He attends just about every meeting and he's into Ottawa now, he's all over the place. He's really dedicated his life to the Métis Society. He's very interesting but there again, the younger ones have got to start coming to meetings to learn things from him. Priscilla has to get going on the youth group. They'll have ideas that will come up and then they can present it to our meeting. I know it's hard for them though because there's a lot of our older people who think 'oh these kids don't know nothing' but if they come to our meeting and say, "We've thought of this and we'd like to try this" or "We'd like to do this and get that," then they'd be heard. They're allowed to vote at sixteen. I notice the Elders today are really striving for the kids to get involved and let these older people kind of retire.

At **Back to Batoche Days** in 1983 we won the tug-of-war contest. I never worked so hard in my entire life. It was hard work but also the guy that was running that contest didn't want us to win I think. He made us compete five times in a row and you can imagine how after once you need to catch your breath. That work was hard enough to almost cause a stroke, oh my God! It was pretty well our whole family; it was a St. Louis team. Constance was there and Loretta: She was the big one and she was the anchor woman. She was right down on the ground!. Oh God, there was no way we should've pulled that hard, not five times in a row. It's a good thing we had a good cheering crowd that cheered us on. That guy must've had his own team there. Someone later came up to us and said "This is crazy. He's trying to kill you's." I believed it too because once I got out of there I was so darn weak and I had a

headache and my heart was just a pounding. We won, though, because we had the weight on our side. Yeah, that's probably how we won.

You know, it's too bad you don't get to hear from the whole family, like from the boys and all. Each has a little bit of the story to tell.

4.3 Eva and Evelyn Richard

EVA: I worked on a farm when I was a girl. We lived in. We were well treated. They have to if they want to keep us there, otherwise we wouldn't stay. There was lots of work then. They follow me all over the place. Some of the farmers were Métis, some were French. Like I work for Boudrier's and I work in St. Denis for three summers and Vonda. There were Métis there too. I worked with some Métis there. Then my mom was sick so I went to work in PA [Prince Albert]. Now I was getting a little bit more wages. After, I got married to Albert Richard, like to ruin my life again `till now, *hee, hee!* I raised nine kids: six boys, three girls. I have either sixteen or seventeen grandkids, I think.

EVELYN: Marlene four, me three, that's seven, Trevor eight, Troy nine, Cory, Colin, that's eleven, Clayton and Candace, thirteen. Lynn and Lorie, fifteen, that's all. And two great grandchild. How old were you when you got married mom?

EVA: I was old enough, twenty-nine. I didn't get married really young. Not me, I was too busy working. I was twenty-nine when I had my first child, in 1949.

***¹¹

We speak French. We learn more French in our time than now they are learning at school. They haven't got much French and us we talk with French. Always, they talk French, my mom and dad. I learned a few words of Cree.

EVELYN: I thought you said when you were younger you could speak Cree pretty good?

EVA: When? Now, I forgot quite a bit. I can't make any sentence too much. Like saying the words like that, I know lots. I understand quite a bit. I learned to speak Cree when I used to work for people who had a store, Boyer Store. The Indians from the reserve, they used to come there and they were talking Cree all the time. That was in Batoche. There was only houses, you know. There was houses here and houses

¹¹The *** shows a change in subject brought on either by the narrators or the interviewer. Subject changes also occurred between story telling sessions.

there because the land's over there, they only have five "from a five chain wide" they called that. So there was one house here, the other one was over there. It's not like here. Here they got a whole quarter of land but over there it's only five chains. Let's say maybe five hundred yards, one thousand yards, or something wide and then after that there was no other neighbour. Those land they have two miles long.

EVELYN: Actually, Batoche is almost always the same, eh? Scattered. It was never really a village or anything.

EVA: We just had the school there and the church and houses right there.

EVA: I had a little heart attack, once. Two years ago. Going on two years, maybe.

EVELYN: That was when Eileen [Evelyn's sister] had hers also. Just over a year. In fact there's two. One brother got a mild heart attack and my sister got a massive one. In fact she went into cardiac arrest when she got to the hospital. She was only thirty-four. So, it's hereditary. It really doesn't help 'cause we're all over weight and most of us smoke except for a few of us. It's a minus for us.

EVA: I tried smoking when I was younger once to do like the rest would do. I didn't appreciate it. Never did.

EVA: I used to haul wood by hand here. Me and the boys. Hauling my water. Well not here, but over there, we used to live west of here and the house burned down. So I had to haul water. The men had to haul wood too. Haul wood here too but not for too long after. We'd go in the bush and pick it up and then hire a truck and they haul it for me. We payed the truck with money. Well, I have a little bit money. Then I had my family allowance and stuff like that. And sometimes we'd go in the bush with the boys and saw wood in the bush. One of my cousins came and pick it up. She charged me four bucks. Just enough for the gas. It didn't cost me much. Oh yeah, I had a hard time.

EVELYN: You must have hauled some by wagon too?

EVA: Yeah.

EVELYN: `Cause Gerry says he remembers seeing you pass with wood. Gerry is nine years older than me, so he'd remember.

EVA: We borrowed horses and cart. And after wood came gas. Must be twenty-five or thirty years, eh?

EVELYN: Well how long have we been here?

EVA: We've been here, well Eileen was born here.

EVELYN: So, Eileen's thirty four so it must be thirty-five years then.

EVA: In `61 we got the water.

EVELYN: `Cause I was six, seven, when we burnt down.

EVA: In `61 I have the water anyways. We still didn't have gas yet. Must have been around `65 when we had gas.

EVELYN: We had water but just one tap, cold water coming in. That was it.

EVA: We took our bath in a tub.

EVELYN: We used to bath outside in the summer. What the heck was that little building there? A piece of a train or what? Outside there?

EVA: I don't know what.

EVELYN: Wasn't that a box car, at one time? I'm sure it was. It was a box car from a train and dad moved it here with you and used it as a shed. We used to fill up the tub there and bath. People would pass by, *hee hee!* It was summer time. Probably we would have bathed in cold water. It was just like swimming in those big galvanized

tubs. They weren't that big, mind you, because we were big kids then. We used to have an outdoor toilet there and use catalogues. Sears and Eaton's catalogues came in handy.

EVA: Could be, that's what I say.

EVELYN: I must've been twelve, thirteen when I was cooking bread here. The stove pipes caught on fire and I was so terrified of fire, eh. Down the river my bread went. Mom was all upset when she got home. There was no way I was going to start up the stove again! Once the bread rose, it had to be cooked or else it was no good. When gas came in we just converted the wood stove to gas. But we had what you'd call furnace heaters. Those plumbing techs came in and converted it.

EVA: To change it we went to the welfare to help us. No, I'm wrong there. I borrowed money, I got five thousand dollars and then if we sell the house before five years, we had to pay back but if we didn't sell the house within five years, they'd give it to us. That's how I had my furnace in my basement fixed. There was only a little hole here, so we had to dig and take out the dirt by pail to put the furnace in.

EVELYN: The house was already put up here, so you couldn't very well dig any other way.

EVA: We had to dig and haul it out by pails.

EVELYN: Pail by pail to widen the basement, like to make it bigger.

EVA: Now there's just a small basement. Half the house maybe I'd say.

EVELYN: Not a full basement.

EVA: For electricity we had coal oil lamps.

EVELYN: We had power when we moved here though, eh? Power was installed right after we moved in. We bought the house from Domrémy.

EVA: East of Domrémy and it was moved here for us.

EVELYN: Cheap houses.

EVA: It wasn't fixed like this. We have to fix it after. It was just some kind of a logs between and mud between the two-by-fours. We took all that down and then we put some plastic and insulation in the middle and put plastic board and then this stuff on top, panelling. It was lots of work. I was still having children while I did this. Well, actually I think I start work back in PA after they were all old enough. Bentley was only three years old, eh?

EVELYN: Yeah. Well, they were old enough to babysit them.

EVA: I work for Frank Moore in the garden first and then after I work the fisheries. I worked two or three years cleaning fish in the fisheries. It was mainly womens. A few men there. They were young but they still worked a bit. We drove there. We used to travel back and forth with Margaret.

EVELYN: Like there was quite a few working from St. Louis in those market gardens. So we'd all go together in a truck. I don't know what I was doing in `65. I quit school in `67. No I didn't work in `65.

EVA: No, I don't think so.

EVELYN: I left home. I went to babysit in Redberry Hill here and that family was so ignorant that I quit my babysitting and I went back to school. I was seventeen years old in Grade seven. Good God! It was time to do something and get out of there, so I went back for another year, and I flunked Grade seven again. So I quit. I think I went to Saskatoon then. I worked at the School for the Deaf for six months then. I did more babysitting jobs. We were babysitting already at eleven, twelve hours for two or three dollars a day. Cleaning the whole house and all.

EVA: I'd get my kids ready to go to school. My mom was living not far from here. I would bring the rest, the ones that weren't going to school there so we could work all day. Of course the pay wasn't as high as today. You could buy a lot more for three dollars. The people's houses I cleaned weren't rich, they were just people who could afford to hire somebody and to pay.

EVELYN: Yeah, but they were a lot richer than us.

EVA: Well, yeah, they were a lot richer than us. Well, better off than we are.

EVELYN: Yes, than we were.

EVA: They were mostly older people if they have their pension already. I work for a woman that had a store there - Miss Daniele you call her - for nineteen years. We used to go wash her floors and do her house cleaning. Wash window three or four times a year. Not too many weekends off. And then I have to work here after. When I was working in PA I used to do my washing on Sunday and making bread and everything for the week yet. I think I make about thirty-two loaves for one week. After it's got to rise first and then you kind of knead it and then you fry it in lard. I make bannock too. Bannock doesn't need to rise. I make it whenever, sometimes at night, when I'd come home from work, have a little bit of time, make a batch of bannock. When we were working at the gardens there, at five o'clock we'd quit, so six o'clock we were home. But when we work at the fisheries, sometimes we'd stay there `till eight o'clock. We wouldn't get paid overtime. Just straight wages. I started at ninety cents an hour and after awhile I got one dollar and ten cents.

EVELYN: Even us at two bucks a day we were rich. We'd go to a movie and go out for supper on two dollars. There was a movie theatre years ago. They used to have movies in the building right next to us. That used to be our old hall. They used to have movies there but that was before my time. By the time I was old enough to go to the movies they weren't showing them at the hall anymore.

EVA: I've went a couple of times I think, that's all. I seen that one they have made in Batoche there. What do you call that? **Down Yonder**, I think eh? Is that the movie they call it, **Down Yonder**? I think so, yes.

EVELYN: I didn't know they had movies about Batoche back then?

EVA: But it wasn't really in Batoche. It was towards Bellevue here. The mountain there, they used it, the wagons were coming down the mountain like.

EVELYN: I seen one just the other night about Batoche. It was all about the Rebellion.

EVA: That time they were showing that when they killed the buffalo there in that show I'm talking about, they were fighting, shooting.

EVELYN: Well, I think the one I just saw mostly had to do with the soldier - what's his name? - and his army there - Middleton. They were passing off the Métis as crazy idiots. Donald Sutherland I think was in there. He was the RCMP. I think it was in colour.

EVA: How many years is that they made that? Must be maybe fifteen, twenty years ago. That one come in PA. That movie there, I think it's **Down Yonder**, they call it. Not too sure. The cops were all dressed up in red anyways. And there's a woman that has a baby in there.

EVELYN: That's the same one I seen, me too. There was a girl, she gave birth on that movie.

EVA: She gave birth in the bush. Just like the Indians do.

EVELYN: But there was Indians involved in that movie also.

EVA: There wasn't a big difference between Métis and Indians. To me, not that much. I'd say we're more friendly with Indians than the White people. Lots of White

people, they won't talk to us because we're Métis. They just think, 'Oh those Métis, they're no damn good.'

EVELYN: See, the thing about it too is probably in Batoche you were more with the Indians than the White people, too. There were mostly all Métis and Indians there. Didn't have a chance to have too many White families living there.

EVA: I talked English with my Indian friends. We used to go to dances. It's not far from One Arrow Reserve where we used to live. We used to go to Indian dances also.

EVELYN: You probably didn't speak much English in those days? Mostly French?

EVA: Yeah, mostly French. But nowadays, well all the kids all hardly any talked French, eh? We went to quite a few dances on the reserve - pow-wows. They'd make a fire in the middle there and then he'd play a drum and then you hold hand and go around. It's not like today. Today they dance by themselves but then we used to hold hands and go around in circles like.

EVELYN: Nowadays they have pow-wows; it's mostly for tradition and for showing. Very seldom you go to a reserve and they'll have a pow-wow just for the sake of having a pow-wow. And they are all dressed up to the hilt now too. They've got beautiful costumes.

EVA: Sometimes kids from the reserve come to our dances. Not too often though. We used to have lots of house parties and dances and stuff like that. But they never come too much. Sometimes we make baskets. We were making a basket and they bid on them. We make our own baskets and put lunches in there. Then some Indians used to be there.

EVELYN: And wasn't the one who bought your basket, you had to go with for the night and dance with?

EVA: No, you had to eat with them, though. Well, he bought your basket, you can't say you're not going to have lunch with him! I always thought it was lots of fun though.

We'd make the baskets with boxes and then you cover them with nice paper. Some people they were putting a little bottle of whiskey or something inside but not too many of them. Usually sandwiches and cookies. Ladies make them, men buy them. The person making the dance I suppose got the money. They'd make some at school lots of times. I suppose it was the school people that keep them.

EVA: We danced the same as now: square dance. Anybody that knows how to play would play the music. Mostly mans that plays violin. Not too many womans. Here in St. Louis there were mans that played violin but we never had too much parties in St. Louis here. I never had parties, only when I got married. We dance here. They quit now. There's nobody making house parties now hardly.

EVELYN: Now there's lots that make house parties, but it's for the sake of drinking now. Nothing else. Just there to get drunk, eh.

EVA: But when we used to make a party in Batoche at night there was dancing. Before everybody goes home, one was saying, "Well, next week it'll be somebody else going to make one." They'd say it right there so everybody would know. We take turns.

EVELYN: What would happen if somebody's house was too small?

EVA: They fill it up and towards the morning sometimes you could see smoke.

EVELYN: Smoke from where?

EVA: People smoking. When there's about twenty-five, thirty people smoking in there, you could see the smoke inside in the morning. Some parties they stay up late, some they quit earlier. All depends. They'd start about nine o'clock I'd say, to five, six o'clock in the morning sometimes. There was some drinking but not as much because there was no beer parlour close by there. Nothing. They have to go to Duck Lake or Rosthern to buy liquor. Some people make home brew but not too much.

EVA: I was fourteen when I left school. I only had one brother and my dad was always sick he couldn't do nothing and my brother had to work in the field. My mom used to work like a man her. She make hay and stock and everything. She done everything that woman. There she was spinning wool and us we were making stockings and mitts to sell. We used to knit until twelve o'clock at night. We were tired but we was used to it. Sometimes I still knit. Last winter I made a few things but not this winter, the winter before. But I start having my shoulder sore from knitting here so I quit. I never done no beadwork. Our mom did. She made everything her. She used to sew, she used to knit, she used to crochet, everything.

EVELYN: She used to be a good cook too. She used to make, oh what do you call that? I used to just love that fried fat there with sugar on it.

EVA: I can remember that but what do you call it? When you make lard, you know, the fat there you make lard out of it. After they melt, she used to pass that in the grinder and put raisins and sugar inside and it used to be good. Comment qu'on dit ça en français là?

EVELYN: It's not that long ago that. Thirty years ago. I don't know what to call it. You just named it not too long ago.

EVA: I know but I don't remember now. In Cree they used to call that "puttadie." In French I don't remember.

EVELYN: I wouldn't even attempt to make it today because it's probably so loaded with cholesterol. You'd probably croak because it was very, very fat. But it was good.

EVA: I don't think we ate higher fat foods back then.

EVELYN: That must be an Indian recipe that eh?

EVA: It must be, yeah. The old ladies, they used to make that with the fat, the old womans.

EVELYN: Another thing you used to do is crush those chokecherries and you would eat them.

EVA: You crush chokecherries and then you dry them after they are all crushed. And in winter time we used to cook them and put some kind of sauce inside. It was good.

EVELYN: The bone like, out of the chokecherry bone.

EVA: Crush them with rocks.

EVELYN: It was rough eating. It was good but!

EVA: Them days they do anything those old ladies, eh? They'd even dry saskatoon berries and then in winter time they'd cook the same thing. They'd cook saskatoons, put sugar in there, and then make a little sauce. It was good.

EVELYN: They'd do their own beef jerky and all that.

EVA: I used to do that when I was younger. I used to make lots of canning - four hundred quarts sometimes - when they were all young. But nowadays they don't eat it. They use store bought jam and that. I used to make all kinds of jams. I canned some crabapples, lots. I canned them whole. I never made apple juice though. They make juice lots of peoples. You put the whole thing in the jars and put my syrup inside and then boil them up.

EVELYN: And the pits were still in there eh?

EVA: Yeah.

EVELYN: When you eat crabapples you have to take the pits out. Even the little stem. She'd make the syrup. I don't know. To this day, I don't think I'd want to eat crabapples like that.

EVA: I think I've still got two quarts in the basement. Three or four years old now. I don't know if they'd still be good.

EVELYN: I wouldn't want to eat canning that's over two years old. They lose their colour and everything eh? `Cause I do a lot of canning.

EVA: I was going to bring them up all the time to throw them away but I never did yet. They are no good.

EVELYN: They probably wouldn't be.

EVA: Could be.

EVELYN: Mom used to can peas in beer bottles.

EVA: Didn't have enough sealers and take beer bottles and put them in there and can them. I just used a capper to seal.

EVELYN: There use to be a lot of beer bottles around with dad. More beer bottles than jars.

EVA: We had big, big gardens. I'd make gardens all over. My mom used to live over there and she had a big place to make a garden. I used to fill that up and here I didn't have no garden.

EVELYN: We used to have gardens all over. Three or four gardens the size of this, maybe. Two or three, maybe with just potatoes.

EVA: You had to. That's how we used to save on food. Sometimes I'd get up at five o'clock in the morning, go work in the garden and come back, get my kids ready to go to school. I sure had my share of working anyways

EVA: I used to have a sewing machine. I still got one but I don't sew any more but when they were young, I would sew all their clothes.

EVELYN: Hell, we used to be dressed not too bad when we were small. You sewed a lot for other people. You used to sew garbage bags full and only charge two dollars. You used to get us so mad. You know, when you're poor and you need money and here you're doing all this mending. Arm loads like this high and you'd charge them two dollars. I guess it was more of a favour than anything. But that's one thing about Métis people, I find, they're very good hearted and they're - -

EVA: - - always willing to help.

EVELYN: Yeah. Help each other. Take the shirt off their back a lot of them. They are still like that even today. Like they get together especially amongst families. They donate their time. Even Gerry, my husband, he donates a lot of time to the seniors, to the church.

EVA: I never meet too much other Métis people from other places because I never went out too much. When they start having Métis Society meetings and stuff like that I used to go to meetings but I never say too much. I never got involved. It was important to have that. They are fighting for their right really in a way. And they say why Métis and Indians are always discriminated.

EVELYN: When you were growing up, you didn't feel like you were discriminated against? Like, say, even some of those families that you worked for?

EVA: Well I guess some people they did, yeah. Like when I was working in Vonda there, those people they were all Frenchmans, so they figure us Métis, well we weren't nothing much eh? I still worked three summer there for the same family. We had to work. We need to have money. I used to go to church every Sunday with them though. Those French from Vonda are mostly from France and Belgium.

EVELYN: You could always sense that you were discriminated against but not by all; just certain families. When we were going to school, we used to be laughed at in the worst way by this one lady. Well, now we visit her kids. She's in the Prince Albert hospital but now you can't find nicer kids in that family and yet when we go to school

they made our life hell. Holy, that family! It was just unreal, but we meet them today, you'd never think so.

EVA: Some kids can be cruel. I remember when my kids got teased. It hurt, that's for sure. They used to call you what?

EVELYN: I don't know, "Cats from the west end," or something. Some kids not all of them. Like, my kids go to school today and they don't have a hint of prejudice. They don't feel like they're being discriminated against. Times are changing.

EVELYN: I would say my kids are losing some of their cultural identity. They are not ashamed to admit they're Métis today, which we used to be when we were young, but they're different. Being a Métis is just like being a Frenchman. You're like anybody else. The girls have been involved with the Métis Society for years, like helping out and all that. You know, go to meetings. Priscilla had a job program last summer through the Métis Society. I want them to keep up on it. To follow what it's all about. I find too that at school they don't teach enough about their culture. Very, very little history about the Métis. `Cause when I went to school maybe one chapter was about the Métis and you'd write a test and that was the end of it. I don't remember what the chapter said. I don't know. When we were growing up we just hated to admit we were Métis. So there must have been a bad racial problem then `cause today it wouldn't bother me to go tell anybody that I'm Métis. Maybe up to twenty years ago it was considered a bad thing. I think when I even went for my job interview at the School for the Deaf, I don't think I put down that I was Métis.

EVA: It was like that for us too. Lots of people they were saying, "Those Métis!"

EVELYN: "Michif," *hee, hee!*

EVA: They used to laugh at them. I didn't mind being Métis and I still don't mind it. They can call me what they want to, "old Indian" or whatever. I'm proud of my relation anyways.

EVELYN: There's lots of times we used to come home crying from school. We wouldn't want to go to school. In fact I remember hiding out and I don't know how long it was before you found out that I wasn't going to school. So, then the teacher finally got a hold of you. I used to write my own little notes eh? `Cause I hated school so much. Like I said, there was just a few families that would make it tough on us and we just hated to go to school because we weren't well dressed and we had all the disadvantages anybody could have, I guess.

EVA: You know when you're poor well, those poor buggers.

EVELYN: They'd laugh at us. You know we wouldn't bath often enough, wearing old rags.

EVA: I give you shit for hiding of course, *hee, hee!*

EVELYN: It used to be the old nuns then who teach school. They used to use the ruler a lot, the strap on the hands and that. It was sore. But I know there's one nun that was very, very good to the Métis kids in St. Louis. Mother Superior there, she was very good. I used to always get that windburn in the winter and it was always scabby. For the longest time I was scabby. She used to always give me holy pictures, "Evelyn, you get rid of that rash." She gave me salve. She'd take care of me and give us clothes.

EVA: I might as well say, I was alone to raise them. My family couldn't help - we were five girls and three boys - they weren't around except my one brother and he died when he was only forty-six. My one sister was in Ontario and the other one she died at twenty-one. So I was young too when she died. I was at least one and a half years older than her.

EVELYN: Than Auntie Josephine?

EVA: Yeah, Auntie Josephine. It was after I moved to town that it was hard. Sometimes I just think about it. I was lucky.

EVELYN: Not too many Métis people suffer mental illnesses. They're very, very strong willed people. But maybe not today. People can't handle stress as much. Women just had to keep working. Maybe that goes for all women, as far as that goes, in the older days. They have that old saying there, "A Métis is never stuck."

EVELYN: Alcoholism is a disease actually, it's a progressive disease but it's not curable. Mind you, you suffer mentally while you're practising. It's like anything, if you drink long enough it actually destroys your brain cells. It's not a mental illness. It's incurable actually. That's what they call it, an incurable disease. It's never cured. Go back to that one drink, there you're gone.

EVA: I went to Alanon for awhile but he always said nobody's going to stop him from drinking so finally I quit. He's still saying that.

EVELYN: Really you should have kept going but I find with the older generation - maybe it's because of their lack of schooling - they don't understand as much as kids today or what you call that, the baby boom generation? - which we are. I know my mother-in-law too had a problem with her husband. I still go to Alanon mostly to help myself.

EVA: Now, the drinking, it don't bother me. I've got my pension now. I've got enough money to live so if he drinks, he drinks. Kills himself drinking, it's up to him, can't stop him. He says all the time nobody's going to stop him "until I'm dead," well I think it's true. I think I'll swear like my neighbour there. She says to me, "If there's a heaven, you're going to go for sure."

EVA: I go to church here to the Anglican church `cause over there to the Catholic church, there's five, six steps to climb and I can't climb much. Not any more.

EVELYN: That's the church with all the steps but they're building an elevator there for the seniors `cause lots of seniors can't go there. They can't make those stairs. They've been having a little mass for the seniors at the lodge here once a week. And then a nun comes in every Sunday to give a Communion.

EVA: I didn't really take my family to church much. When I was single though I always go to church.

EVELYN: Now why is that? How come you never tried to send us to church?

EVA: I used to try and send you guys, but you guys never wanted to go too much.

EVELYN: Probably the same as I'm having with my girls now. Same problem. I do remember going to church, but not like some families where the parents push.

EVA: Oh yeah, but if I would've went and take you guys, maybe it would be different, but it didn't have much sense to go to church, I always had young kids. Too much work. Bentley used to serve at church. I used to send him on Sunday but he'd run some place else and miss the church. Finally, I quit. No use force him if he doesn't want to go. He goes today but not that much. But, they should go.

EVELYN: Very seldom we miss a Sunday plus we go to the Grotto sometimes. But that's since I'm married that I'm very religious. I wouldn't say since I married, since I start having children, maybe. I don't know, there comes a time in your life where you kind of grow spiritually and you want that for your family too. But I've got a heck of a time sending my kids to church. Luckily I wasn't forced though 'cause I don't see any sense telling them, "Well you got to get up and go to church" and then go there and not get anything out of the mass. Hopefully, when they get old enough again it'll come to be important. They were going with me and then they quit altogether. Angela, she's been to Denver with Gerry and after that she was really into it and then other kids were not coming so there's a lot of peer pressure. You know, they figure, 'Well everybody'll think we're different and everybody will think we're better than everybody else,' so they keep away from it. Jennifer was even coming last year with us. I went to the Denver Shrine. That was in October last year. But, just about every year we go to the St. Laurent Pilgrimage and the kids come with us.

EVA: I used to go every year. But now, it's kind of hard to climb up that big hill there.

EVELYN: Your mom got healed there at the Pilgrimage.

EVA: Yeah. She had an operation when my younger sister was born. Then just a few days before Pilgrimage she asked the doctor to let her out to go to the Pilgrimage and then she got healed. The doctor said after, "Well, you're going to say it's not me that healed you it's Pilgrimage," but she got help there too.

EVELYN: Well, what was wrong with her? An operation for what?

EVA: I don't know if she had an abscess here on the leg some place and they took out a gallon of stuff from there. Her leg was just crooked and she couldn't even move it.

Then the priest in Batoche didn't want my dad to take her to Rosthern with the horses so he phoned the doctor and the Rosthern doctor came with his car. He said to my dad, "If I get her to the hospital before that abscess bust, I'm going to heal her."

EVELYN: Before a rupture?

EVA: Before it ruptures. So he did but he only went five miles an hour so it she wouldn't be so bumpy. This was after she had my last sister. She walked to Pilgrimage. She didn't walk fast mind you. She had just had her operation a few days before. She was well enough to walk. After that stuff come out, well she wasn't bad after that.

EVELYN: So it could've been the doctor that healed her too probably? Most likely once they drained that abscess the healing started.

EVA: But I see one of my cousin, he went down there with crutches. When he came up he was walking by himself. And mom too. One time she had a big wart and she went there. She bought a funnel to take to put in jugs for the water and she went to see the priest and she said she was giving that for that thing to come out there. She was asking for that. The priest made a cross on it and after mass when she took her glove off it was gone. The Pilgrimage started a long time ago. We were young when it was already started.

EVELYN: It started years ago because it was Auntie's brother that put that statue there and his wife was healed. That was a Nolin.

EVA: Yeah, I think she was.

EVELYN: That's years and years ago. It must be fifty years, now.

EVA: Oh, more than that. Me, when I was young, as long as I can remember, we were going there. We used to walk from home after we were old enough then.

EVELYN: It's on July 15th and 16th each year. I don't know the history all that good.

EVA: And there was another. One time we went there and there was an Indian woman having lunch down there and we had brought our lunch and we start talking with her and she said it was fifty years ago that she was going there every year. She said she got sick and there was something wrong with her leg and the doctor wanted to cut her leg and she went to the Pilgrimage and she asked. She said if they'd heal her without cutting her leg she'd go to Pilgrimage every year, rain or shine. And it was fifty years this year she said that she'd been there. That was six or seven years ago already. And they never cut her leg, it got healed. They used to be from Leask she said. A couple of days before the Pilgrimage they cover on top the wagon and go, rain or shine. They didn't have no car. Maybe now they have a car, I don't know. She used to go with her husband. I don't know how many kids she had.

EVELYN: Oh the Indians are very, very drawn to the Pilgrimage. They go with the whole family. They camp right there, in their tents. They have lots that walk from Batoche and Beardy's reserve even. Not all the Indians are Catholic but the ones that are Catholics are very strong.

EVA: Very, very strong, yeah.

EVA: My mom knew some Indians who did the traditional medicine but not me. They'd say how they were sick, what was wrong with them and they'd give a little something, some kind of medicine, I don't know what kind though. My mom used to have lots of root stuff too. Herb medicine like. She had a little trunk. It was full of all kinds of little parcels there. All kinds of stuff.

EVELYN: Dad said the other day she used to send you out picking certain weeds there to brew.

EVA: Yeah. We used to help her pick some. I received a book the other day there telling what the herbs are. I used to pick some of these with her. I just saw this book. I never learned that healing. If I would've learned from her what for each sickness then I would've been able to use them. But, I never did.

EVELYN: You know what you used to do when we were kids? We used to have earaches and you'd make us put urine in there.

EVA: It's good and it worked.

EVELYN: I don't know. It probably was just the hot urine. That's what they used to treat our earaches with.

EVA: See? In this book they say here all the herbs. These I remember. This one I don't remember. I think I know them but I'm not too sure. They say in here for what it's good.

EVELYN: What were you asking Auntie Mary about the other day? Some kind of berries or something?

EVA: Sasparaille [sasparillas].

EVELYN: What was that used for then?

EVA: It supposed to be good for high blood pressure.

EVELYN: But in those days I'm sure they didn't use it for high blood pressure `cause I don't think they'd have known that much about high blood pressure then.

EVA: No, nobody never had high blood pressure then. But I seen that on the t.v. We used to pick etchinasia too. If I could get these herbs I'd use them for myself, for healing.

EVELYN: I tried dandelions one day but I waited too late. You're supposed to get them before they flower.

EVA: When they're young.

EVELYN: And I waited `till the flowers were there. `Oh,' I thought, `how can anybody eat this salad?' It was the biggest flop of my life!

EVA: No, you're supposed to eat them before they get flowered. They grow in the dirt then you pick them and eat the white stuff that's in the dirt there. The root right in the bottom there. You make lettuce with that. Cranberries, that's good for bladder infection.

EVELYN: Well, I wouldn't know what to do with all of these seeds and herbs. They used to be bad for that these older people here. Trying to treat everything with herbs but a lot of times, it didn't work. There's certain leaves too, when we used to get cut and infected: plantain. That's how we treat our sores. It would draw out the pus and the infection. In fact, I got an ulcer after my car accident in my foot. They thought I had sprained it and it just started swelling, swelling, swelling and it was black and blue. So I imagine that stuff had to come out somewhere. so finally I got a little hole on my foot and it got bigger and bigger and nothing healed me except for those leaves. The doctor gave me an antibiotic ointment, and it wasn't healing. It took how many months for my foot to heal? Finally you got the leaves eh?

EVA: All summer.

EVELYN: They grow all over wild here. In fact I usually have some in my yard.

EVA: Me too. I had a piece of glass in here and I start putting that there and it come out. It brought it up and after I took a needle and finally I start pressing like that and it come out. And Bentley had a big sliver and it went right through his finger. He went to see the doctor. The doctor cut it open and they couldn't take it out so we start putting that plantain there. All at once he could see it there and he took a tweezer and pull it out. You know, it draws it out.

EVELYN: It draws out the infection and whatever is in there. I would use it today still. If I had something that was very hard to heal that's the first thing I'd probably go for. Even for cuts. It heal probably in twice the time. We used to get a lot of impetigo when we were young.

EVA: Big pimples.

EVELYN: It would start off as a pimple and then turn to a scab and then it would spread if you'd scratch it. It's some kind of virus. It's not scabies or it's not caused by a bug, it's a virus but it's something like the little warts you get. Some people tend to be prone to those. It would probably be along the wart virus. In the old days they say, "Use this, use that," and then they'd try it. I remember maybe fifteen years ago this lady got pills from the doctor for high blood pressure and here she was using these herbs this woman gave her. She wasn't taking her pills and she wasn't feeling good. I was taking the same medication as she was taking, but I didn't know that, so I said, "Show me your pills," and all they were actually is a diuretic pill. I said, "Try taking one of your pills seeing as you got it from the doctor instead of those herbs you got there." So she took them and within a week she was feeling a hundred percent.

EVA: Well, there's some herbs that must agree with you, that's for sure. Some other kinds of medicine, some pills, they worked good. I can take them.

EVELYN: In those days they didn't have doctors that were available. We had to hurry to PA with no vehicles. You'd give us all these contraptions to drink here if you were constipated, if you had a fever, you name it. You'd make us drink epsom salts, pure epsom salts. Then we'd run for two or three days. You used to tell us it was good for our blood.

EVA: Yeah, it's a good purifier.

EVELYN: To bath in epsom salts, there's nothing better, or if you have a sore somewheres. Oh, powerful stuff. Even when we used to get impetigo, you'd make us drink that just to get rid of that bad blood you'd tell us.

EVA: One time Gerry had this blood poison in his knee there. I make him drink that and put plantain on it and he got healed right away.

EVELYN: Oh that was unreal that time. That thing that come out of there. It was like a worm. Oh God it was gross! I think there was so much infection in there he kind of squeezed his knee and it just popped out. And then he used those plantain leaves and it healed it right up. Even ginger. We used to drink pure ginger when we had colds.

EVA: It's good, ginger. You even cook with it.

EVELYN: But I don't think it helped us.

EVA: I use garlic.

EVELYN: You do now. You even smell garlic sometimes. It comes out of the skin. I bought a book on Native herbs and medicines. I just got it about a month ago in Wakaw but I don't see anything there on plantain.

EVA: In my book that I got it says plantain.¹²

EVELYN: I was wondering, `cause that time I got my ulcer that's what cured me is those leaves. It drew everything out.

EVA: When my mom had babies she had a lady that served her. She was a Métis, Lépine.

EVELYN: Well, you had midwives too.

EVA: Oh yeah, three. I had three kids at home. I had nurses but only one midwife. It seems to me I would've rather have them all at home than in the hospital. At least when they are ready to come, they come. But in the hospital it's not like that. When Nap was born there, they made me suffer so much. I couldn't hardly get down from my bed the next day. They hurt me so much. You know I got in the hospital and I told them, I says, "I have the runs all night." So in the morning I could feel it down here and

¹²Eva is referring to Michael Castleman's **100 Healing Herbs** (1991).

then they said, "Oh no, oh no" the nurse was telling me. And then all at once I ring my bell and I says, "You better get me to the case room because I know the kid's coming." "Oh no," the nurse said and she looked and she says it's far yet. About five, six minutes after they came with their little cart there and take me. Now they were seeing me over there and they grab a couple of rags and they were pushing on him. Two nurses were pushing on him so he wouldn't come right away. They didn't get me ready or nothing. And they didn't phone the doctor. The doctor give them shit those nurses when they do things like that. They were pushing him back. Oh boy, I suffered and I screamed. I think the whole hospital must've heard me. Oh boy, they hurt me that time. When I went to the hospital for Clarence, he was my second son. I went there early in the morning and about every half hour they'd come and look at me and they says I was far yet: "Far yet." Kept me in bed, kept me in bed having pains and having pains. Around seven o'clock at night I got down off my bed. I thought maybe if I get down and walk a little bit it'll do me better. About half an hour after, he was born. The other ones well, I don't remember too much. They give you a bit of stuff to put you to sleep. I was at home one time when I was living over there and Albert was away working towards Wakaw, that night, early in the morning I got kind of sick so I came and walked to St. Louis here. I had a friend here and I was there and I told her that I think I'm going to get sick, so she said, "I'm going to go and get Mrs. Lépine." They went and got Mrs. Lépine and we went home. And when we went home she said, "Well you lay down then." She took a scissor and bust my water and she was born right away.

EVELYN: That guy there, Leo LaChance, that got shot, that was no accident. In the first place the old fellow went outside and he'd been shot and he fell on the street and this guy come in to Carney Nerland's store - wanted to phone 911 - he wouldn't let anybody use the telephone to phone 911 to get help. So here he had to flag down this car and go to another place and go get the cops. The guy that killed him was a White supremacist. He probably had more hatred for Indians than some people do but to kill somebody in cold blood for the sake that you don't like their colour? Sure the old guy probably went in there half cut wanting to pawn his gun but he was there for that. It was a pawn shop; that was his business. There was no reason to kill him. ***

EVELYN: I think Métis people, what they are striving for, they want to be recognized and treated like everybody else. No different but treated with respect and dignity `cause we're not that much different from White. It's just our skin colour maybe a little

darker and culture's a little different. I think this is why nowadays all these kids are losing all these cultures `cause they know they're not being treated the same. So you want to try and live in the White society and adapt to their ways as much as possible. I get along with anybody even on the job but I get offended when I'm being discriminated against because of my race. It's not that I'm saying I'm ashamed of being Métis because I'm not ashamed of being Métis but I think to myself, `Why? Do you have a reason why?' A lot of these times I'll say, "I'll have you know that I'm not an Indian but I am Métis." Sometimes I'll get an answer back, "Same f'n thing." I'd like to know the reason why they discriminate against us `cause no two people are

alike. You can like the sister and not like the other sister. But, you have some of these people that don't like Métis. It don't matter which one it is, they just don't like you, period. I don't know what we can do as Métis people to change their attitude.

EVELYN: To tell you the truth, I find the Métis Society is not doing that much. They are stressing that our kids get education and do something with their lives so they don't end up like most of our people do: on the streets, bums and drinking. As far as doing anything, well, they are having conferences on racism and awareness but they are mostly all attended by Métis people.

EVELYN: In the old folks home you go and visit there and you have Ukrainians and you have all races there. You'll find there's one old Native lady. There's very few Natives in the homes and I couldn't figure that one out. I figured, 'Why is this?' but I asked and she said, "Well Native people have been known to keep their Elders. They don't let them go." But this one particular lady, she never gets visits. So it has to be because she's Native. Yesterday I stopped by - she's got a problem talking - and I kind of grabbed her by the shoulder and I said, "How are you Mrs. B.?" She looked up at me and she all of a sudden goes, "Okay," and this big smile come on her face. Somebody just had to acknowledge her. She seems to walk the hallways even the people in there, the clients themselves, the patients, don't bother with her. She goes from room to room just kind of wanting somebody to talk to but she's just left behind. I find that so sad. I went in yesterday and this other Métis woman was really down. She said, "Well, I don't like it in here. Nobody talks to me." She says, "You don't keep old people?" I said "No. I'm sorry. I don't have the house to keep old people." You know, if I did I probably would. "Well," she says, "try and find me some place else." And then I say, "Well what's wrong." "Oh," she says, "I don't like it in here. From the day I was brought in, they just ignored me and nobody talks to me, nobody bothers with me." "Well," I said "maybe you should start approaching some of them." I don't know if she'll do it, maybe. She seemed to be very unhappy. Then we went to the lodge yesterday. We got there and they had these three little old Métis women, three of them sitting together watching t.v. Kind of their own little group. I'm sure Mrs. Bear isn't as well treated as Mrs. Smith. We have a volunteer service and they take her out and all this and that. She got money too but she's also White. They're not all like that because we met this old French Canadian from around Whitestar. She was very, very

nice and she was lonely and we sat and visited with her for almost an hour. Then Gerry, in Wakaw yesterday, seen this other old lady and she said, "Who are you?" when I walked in there and Gerry said, "This is my wife." She says, "Who are you?" I said "A Richard." "Oh I know," she said "but who are you?" I know she thought I was Native because Gerry is quite a bit Whiter than me. So then she said, "Are you Ukrainian or Hungarian or what?" "Métis," I said. But then she was nice about it. She says, "Métis is okay." For awhile I thought maybe she didn't like me butting in but she turned out to be a very nice old lady.

EVELYN: There are Ukrainians, Hungarians and German populations around Wakaw but not too much in St. Louis. We have a couple of families that are Native in St. Louis but mostly are French and Métis.

EVELYN: We have this other Native lady that moved to St. Louis. I think she maybe went with this fellow for awhile here and she decided to move and then her daughter moved here too. But even her, last year, she goes to church every Sunday and nobody ever offered to pick her up. Nobody. It was cold, so just about every Sunday I'd give her a ride home. I see her walking. Sometimes she'd walk two blocks before I'd pick her up. I've even seen her come down from the IGA with loads of bags of groceries. I don't know if she's ever inquired but I should ask her and tell her that IGA will deliver. But why they've never offered I don't know. A lot of people laugh at her I guess. It must be some of the younger teenagers. We even got together, just our family, - when was that? - Not too long ago they said that she had a bunch of her grandchildren there and they had nothing to eat so mom, myself, my sisters and my brothers, we all got together and we gave her I don't know how much food. We made a big food hamper and brought it there. We asked a few other people. "Are you crazy?" they said, "We got to donate to that old drunk?" It wasn't the question of donate, if it had come from the heart. I mean, alcoholism is a disease. It maybe wasn't her fault at the time when she had all these kids there. Maybe they ate everything that she had for the month. She is the type where maybe she was taken advantage of. "Regardless of the consequences, if she can drink and if she can go to the beer parlour, she can buy groceries," people said. "Okay, I just asked," I answered. You can't push anybody. Quite a few of them were Métis that said no but I didn't go all around town. In fact, it was just about all our families that helped. I

phoned people I knew. Gerry's mom gave, my sister, mom, I, Bentley, there was Marlene, Auntie Mary and them gave. Maybe ten other places. That's the people I go see, the ones I find that are left behind and abandoned. I fall for those ones. It could happen to anybody. Like, even us. They could have said the same thing about us and yet we got quite a bit of help when we were younger. Dad used to drink everything so if it hadn't been for mom, well, a lot of times we went without lots though but always managed somehow.

EVELYN: The time to have made a Métis history book here would have been when Mederic was alive or when Clovis was still here.

EVA: Them, they were strong for Métis.

EVELYN: There was a book done on St. Louis. A telephone committee was constructed with four or five people. They called people to go to the lodge and get their pictures taken but we never got phoned so I said, "If we don't get phoned, we don't go." We didn't get a phone call.

EVA: Claudette asked me if I wanted to go but I didn't. The teacher, the sister, took my picture here. I didn't go there but they came and take my picture here. I remember.

EVELYN: No it's not the nuns, it's the parish that's doing that book.

EVA: The nuns and Mrs. Lacroix came here to take my picture.

EVELYN: There's lots missing from the first History Book. When I even bought that book I said when I first seen it there was very little about the Richards in it. The Richard family is one of the first families in St. Louis. But you know, half the information is wrong.

EVA: Well it was mostly Mederic that had questioned people those days, eh?

EVELYN: There are other White families here that lived in St. Louis for three or four years and there's more said about them than us. St. Louis was always like that. So now you know why I said that when we grew up we saw discrimination badly. This is why I think us as Métis people you sit back after that and you don't ever open your mouth because you're always scared to talk because nobody listens to you; you're not worth listening to. You tend to always stay in the background; you end up shy. I remember when we were kids we used to follow mom around. We'd hide behind chairs and just peek. We were so backwards but it wasn't the fact that we were Métis then, we were probably brought up shy. Hey, look in this book. It's a history of St. Louis. That's a picture of Maxime Lépine, "Friend of Riel." That's a relation to Gerry's mom. That's Auntie Alexandrine's grandfather. It says here that "Mary Anne who lives in St. Louis tells the story of Maxime Lépine. Maxime, fondly referred to as "Old Maxime" is my grandfather. His son, Maxime, is my uncle." It says here, By 1883, Maxime Lépine had migrated to the St. Louis-Batoche area and was active in petitioning the government in Ottawa for titles to Métis lands. He was present at the first meeting called by the Batoche-area Métis to discuss the possibility of a confrontation with Ottawa over these land claims....leading up to the re-call of Louis Riel from Montana...1885 Maxime was appointed to the Council of the newly proclaimed "Provisional Government of the Saskatchewan River," which the Métis called "le Petit Provisoire.".....He fought in the trenches beside Dumont....Maxime was arrested. He refused to answer the questions and in August 1885, he was, with nine other Métis soldiers, sentenced to seven years in prison. He suffered very much because he survived only two years after his release. He died - a nearly forgotten man in 1894.¹³

EVA: Mederic McDougall did quite a bit for the Métis. I guess it was worthwhile. He was working hard though. Well, if it wouldn't have been him I don't think there'd be too much going on in St. Louis here. He all started that, Mederic eh?

¹³This text was read by Evelyn from pages 64 and 65 of her book entitled, **I Remember: A History of St. Louis and Surrounding Areas**. This book was written and produced in St. Louis by the St. Louis Local History Committee.

EVELYN: At the Local level here? More or less. I think he started it but one thing too, Mederic did so much for the Métis Society so had to be acknowledged for his contribution.

EVA: Yeah.

EVELYN: Even the trips that he took for the Métis had to be paid for but he did lots. He's got to be commended, old Mederic still 'cause he did do a lot. Just as an example, the last few years he spent at the graveyard making all those wooden crosses for the forgotten Métis people that had died and didn't have a mark on there. So he donated a lot of hours. He fought hard. He fought 'till the end I guess. He was very strong in that self-government. I remember one time he was involved in getting those Métis sashes done and recognized. They were always talking about these Métis sashes and some of them didn't want to wear them. Certain things weren't recognized but he was one of them that went and fought to wear them and have them recognized at Métis events. He wasn't as good as John B. is for coming back and explaining things. John B. is very good for that. He'll come back and at our Local meeting he'll tell us what's going on. I notice even since he's Senator and he can't take part in a lot of our things because he can't vote he's still getting our Local going on certain things. He was fighting just two months ago to bring that bell back to Batoche. I don't know where it is but this lady from Saskatoon that was running for a position with Métis Society, Lorna Laplante, she says she knows where it is.

EVA: Oh my God, I thought it was still there!

EVELYN: I heard that when the government opened that place up and built that museum, they took the bell. It was taken not that long ago by Parks Canada, so I heard.

EVA: I heard a church bell like that church bell I don't know where. I can't remember. The same sound.

EVELYN: No, the bell was there at least fifteen, twenty years ago. For some reason it means a lot because they want it back in the worst way. I guess it's part of Batoche

and it's always been there. It's part of the Rebellion, so there's a lot of history behind it. I think this is why they are after it.

EVA: John B.'s working to bring it back.

EVELYN: Well, he's involved in there to bring the bell back to Batoche but he doesn't know if they'll succeed cause government's pretty hard to fight with sometimes. I'm not sure it's government but it has something to do with Parks Canada. It's government really, when I think about it. They restored the old church and the church is not a church without a bell either. I don't even know the reason why it was taken away. It would be like going to the cemetery and digging up all those dead people that fought in the Rebellion and moving them to another cemetery I guess.

EVELYN: I never heard about them, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, before now. I kind of got the feeling now that the Royal Commission also is putting up this survey because the Métis and the Natives are after this self-government thing and they're very, very reluctant to give them their self-government until they know what it is. They don't understand it or know what it's all about themselves. Gerry and I are two very strong Métis but we feel we're not ready for self-government. I don't know. We don't understand ourselves what self-government is all about and here you have these certain people higher up that are fighting for self-government. Is it going to benefit us as an individual or is it going to work against us? People need to be informed more about it before they are sent to the polls and vote in something you don't know. It was like that last election, the referendum. People wouldn't even go vote because they didn't know what they were voting for. A lot of others went and voted and they still didn't know what they were voting for and that's sad. I was doing the enumeration for that. Every door I knocked on and left pamphlets at they asked, "What is that referendum? What is that?" I had no information whatsoever on it. I would say, "Well you are going to get a pamphlet in the mail and you're supposed to read up on it." That's what I was supposed to tell you mom.

EVA: I think I got a pamphlet.

EVELYN: You must've got one 'cause we got one. But, a lot of them throw it in the garbage because nobody knew a darn thing about that, the **Charlottetown Accord**. So, I don't understand a damn thing about this self-government and until I know any more about it, I wouldn't want to come and vote. Now, there's got to be a lot of open discussions and meetings on that tell the people what exactly they're after. Because, I know for a fact some people get involved with the Métis Society and won't do a damn thing for a Métis person. It's all for themselves. It's sad. I think it's getting to the top that corrupts them, even at the Local level. I know in St. Louis for the last ten years they've been asking me to run for President. They said, "Run for President. You know you're honest and you speak in public a little." If I'd have to run for President I'd have to quit my job and run it full-time and I can't afford to do that. There's meetings to attend and they're not all evening meetings: some are in Regina or Saskatoon. If I had the money I would get all involved. But you know, myself, I could be motivated but I'd

have to work on motivating others to help me `cause they're not motivated. You have to have money to begin with to make a go out of it. Gerry, all he's got coming in is \$672.00 a month. We couldn't live on that. I got to supplement whatever he can't bring in. Even if his other pension comes in it won't be much more than \$500.00 a month. But, at least with \$1,500.00 the two of us with Angela, we can make it. First of all, though, I'd have to take training on public speaking. I know more or less how to get my point across if I can write it down and somebody re-writes it. I need a speech to get my point across but it has to be on paper. Speaking is a different story. It's all over. You go for jobs a lot of times you get turned down because they say, "You haven't got the qualifications," but a lot of times you have more qualifications than the other person but because you can't communicate well the other person would get hired.

EVELYN: Mom, didn't you skin beavers and all that when you were young?

EVA: No. We cleaned fish. My mom used to clean rabbits and she used to snare rabbits, and my dad and my brothers too.

EVELYN: The boys here did.

EVA: Yeah, the boys here did, yeah. I cleaned them for the boys. I never eat or cleaned a beaver though. My dad never hunt. He used to hunt ducks himself but never hunt for big game. Some of my sons do. Bentley goes every year.

EVELYN: I wouldn't be able to kill them. They're too nice.

EVA: Last week there was two down here. They're running away from north.

EVELYN: From the fires eh? There's deer all over. They've probably gone back now that we've had rain. There must be a lot of fires out.

EVA: They used to eat everything.

EVELYN: We ate bear. We ate horse.

EVA: Horse meat, bear meat, yeah.

EVELYN: Bear meat is terrible, the fat.

EVA: Horse meat is good.

EVELYN: Oily.

EVA: They have to be horses that never worked. Make good steaks. One time Auntie Mary, she said, "I would never eat horse meat" and when Mr. Boucher there had give us some horse meat, I grind it and make meatballs. One time they come for dinner and here I had horse meat, some meatballs. After she ate, I said, "You know what you ate?" "No," she said, "it was good meat." "Well," I said, "that's horse meat." "I'm sure," she said. "Well yeah," I said, "Yeah!" Before, they used to sell buffalo meat in Batoche, a long time ago. They still sell some but it's expensive.

EVELYN: I ate so much of that in my life that I just feel, blah. Like moose meat and deer meat, I'll eat. Where did we get that bear meat that time?

EVA: Albert Bruce.

EVELYN: When there's fires around here in the summer there's quite a few bears around here or else like last year, it was such a dry year they were starving. You'd see them along the river here all the time. They were warning people. In fact, when was that they go around every year with helicopters when you have fires, and they spotted thirty-three between MacDowall and St. Louis. Everything was froze last year. There was no blueberries or nothing, so they go hungry. And they spotted some right down here by the river. That time we went to the cemetery in Batoche, that guard was telling us that they spotted bears the night before. So, you wouldn't want to go hiking alone, not when they're hungry or if they have their little cubs. They were all over last year. They even spotted some in Bellevue.

EVA: They kill one East from here.

EVELYN: Nobody's allowed to hunt bears.

EVA: We even ate porcupines. I never did nothing with porcupine quills, though, neither did my mom.

EVELYN: Really, all that stuff like that leather craft or earrings with porcupine quills is mostly done up North. A lot of them are Métis but the Elders are Natives. They show them all that stuff. I wouldn't even go near a porcupine. I probably wouldn't have never known how to even pluck a quill. I'm so scared of them. The other day we were at the Grotto. You could here rustling in the bush. I said to Gerry, "There's something coming awful close here. You better check it out." He gets up and he starts rattling the bush and this skunk walks out. All he was doing was sitting there quiet and here we come and we surprise him. I've even heard of people eating skunk, eh?

EVA: Some did I guess. My uncle used to eat gophers. He drowned the gophers then cooked them. There was nothing to it, just add vegetables.

EVELYN: Partridge I like. It tastes like chicken.

EVA: It tastes like chicken: dry white meat.

EVELYN: Ducks I don't care for. I ate too much of that. The dark meat, it turns you off.

EVA: No, duck meat we really don't care for it any more. When I was young I used to go hunt with my dad. I'd hold horses for him when he'd shoot ducks. We had a big black dog. He'd go in the water, pull the ducks out of the water. Sometimes we'd bring a whole bag full of ducks.

EVELYN: Are you allowed to hunt wild geese?

EVA: Oh yeah, when hunting season is on.

EVELYN: There's a lot of those along the river.

EVA: Some people they kill as much as five or six. But they're hard to make. They're hard to pluck. Somebody told me they skin them. They just cut them open and they skin everything. It's easy like that they say. But they're fat and greasy. Me, I'm not fussy about geese. I used to use snare wire to get rabbits. You put it like this here and then from there it turns like that and it goes this way and here there's a little, you know. You put that in there and then when your snare is made there you hang it up here on the bush and then the rabbit goes inside.

EVELYN: I couldn't do that if you ask me. I suppose when you are starving it might be different. It's not the thought that I wouldn't want to eat it. It would just be if somebody else would kill it. I even feel sorry for the cows and pigs.

EVA: Chinamens, they eat cats and dogs.

EVELYN: Well, I don't know. We had these Chinamens who moved to St. Louis here a few years back and all the cats disappeared. We lost two of them and we're not the only ones at St. Louis. It must be fifteen cats that got lost.

EVA: Henry's wife there, she told me when they went to Hawaii one time they went into a meat store and here cats were hanging all over. Good-bye cats and make some stew! Chinese stew they say is good.

EVELYN: They used to eat everything, beef tripe and everything. The stuff stunk so bad you couldn't stand to go in the house. Tu rappelle pas le stuff que vous faisez cuire là?

EVA: Qu'elle stuff?

EVELYN: Avec le gras là?

EVA: I don't know how to call that in English but I remember, yeah. Je ne sais pas si c'était français ou cri. Je pense que c'est "budeguy" qu'on appelle ça. But I think that's a Cree word that. C'est de la graisse avec des gortons, le restant de gras.

EVELYN: Gortons c'est le restant après la graisse est fondu.

EVA: Tu fais un rôti de gras. Tu coule tout la graisse là et tu prends le restant et tu faisais ça avec les moulins de viande et des raisins.

EVELYN: Et sucre brun?

EVA: Du sucre brun mais pas gros parce que les raisins sont sucré. C'était bon eh? Mais c'est gras. Cela sa gaspillais rien. Tout ce faisais. Mettons il restait du gras de porc, sa faisais du savon avec ça.

EVELYN: Vous faisez pas quelque chose d'autre avec ça?

EVA: On faisait ça avec des cerises.

EVELYN: Oui, vous faisez ça mais quelque chose d'autre. C'était comme des crunchy, comme des chips on dira. C'était pas sucré, c'était salé. C'était bons. C'était des torchons.

EVA: Avec que c'est tu faisais ça?

EVELYN: Ont dira que sa goutait commme le gras. It seems to me you would put it in the oven. It was dry, crunchy afterwards. It was actually almost like those bacon puffs that you would eat. They tasted something like that. Maybe it was pork fat.

EVA: It could be, yeah.

EVELYN: They weren't sweet. They were salty these ones and really crunchy.

EVA: But they were fat.

EVELYN: Well sure; it was fat that made it.

EVELYN: I went to the convent and then I went to that school. I went to the convent for two years. It was like Little House on the Prairie: one room school.

EVA: We only had one room at school, us too. Every grade in one room. I didn't go far; I was in Grade five.

EVELYN: Well, what grade did it go up to, the school?

EVA: I don't know, ten, eleven. We got science and biology classes. But us, we didn't get that far. In the winter time we didn't go to school. It was too far to go. They'd have to bring us with the sleigh or something like that, and sometime we'd quit in the Fall and then go in the Spring. We called it "un sleigh," en français.

EVELYN: Ça c'est un train.

EVA: Us, we call it "un train."

EVELYN: Those old things they have there with the sleigh, le caboose.

EVA: We put fire in there.

EVELYN: We used to see the horses and Indians, when the fair was on. They used to pass from Batoche with their horses and wagons.

EVA: They didn't have fires in there.

EVELYN: When we were kids, we were scared of Indians. I don't really know why. Quand on était jeune on avait peur des Sauvages. Comment ça ce fait?

EVA: I don't know, because they were Indians I guess.

EVELYN: You see them passing there. Maybe it was just that they were different.

EVA: They used to scare us too.

EVELYN: Did you ever hear that word they called the old people in the old days who used to go around like? What you'd call them now? Probably a transient, you know, passing through. In our days, they used to call them "tramp." Oh, I used to be scared of them too.

EVA: Oh yeah, me too. If I'd see a man coming I'd lock myself in the house.

EVELYN: Like now I'd see a stranger walk around, I wouldn't think much of it unless maybe three or four o'clock in the morning. Some of them old ones were on horses, some of them were just walking. We hear stories - the old ladies talk when I go visit the old people and they talk - "les tramps," oh they'd just shit themselves. Just people maybe out looking for work you know. I don't know why but they used to call them "les tramps" and everybody was scared of them. But in those days their husbands were all gone to work so they got scared easily.

EVA: Here, look at this book. This is what my mom was doing, spinning wheel. That's how we'd spin our wool. We got wool from sheeps. We had a bunch of sheeps in Batoche and cut the wool in the spring and then get going all winter.

EVELYN: They used to have wakes for their dead. I wouldn't do that today.

EVA: Oh, we used to stay up all night.

EVELYN: Cry and pray. Cry.

EVA: Three nights with the days or two nights. My dad died on the 30th of December and they put him in his coffin New Years morning and on the second day of January, they buried him. All the family get together and friends and they come. Some come earlier and then they stay up. The other ones, they go and some come later on and then they stay up for all morning, all night. Somebody with him all the time. You stay up all night and wait. You had a wake with the body.

EVELYN: The Métis and Indians, they can still do it.

EVA: They still do it, yeah.

EVELYN: The other day I seen a Métis person died and they were having a wake there. I found that to be a real Métis family. I wouldn't mind doing it me, but now how do you do that?

EVA: Now it's in a funeral home. Before there was no funeral homes. Unless far away. They used to make the coffin themselves and cover them with black cloth and put a white cross on top. They had their best clothes on. They used to put them in the corner there on boards and then a little lamp and a candle beside it and holy water. Somebody come and prayed there and put holy water on him or on her.

EVELYN: But in the summer time, the bodies must start to stink after awhile?

EVA: Well, not really, no. After the coffin was finished they put them in right away.

EVELYN: Yeah, but I mean even if you were embalmed?

EVA: But my dad, when he died him, he was so big and he bled lots after that. The morning when they put him in the coffin and took him to church, the coffin was even wet underneath. They say that he had bled so much.

EVELYN: Bled from what?

EVA: From his body `cause there was no funeral home to fix him then.

EVELYN: Yeah, but I can't see what he'd bleed from unless he was cut or something.

EVA: The blood was forced out from some place I suppose.

EVELYN: Unless he had an aneurism or something.

EVA: He died with his heart, heart attack. He came here, I was making pies in the kitchen and he came and sit behind me and he tells me that he was at home that night and he says, "Gaston is in town. I wish him he would go away, go home." I didn't think me think me that he was going to pass away. He went outside, he came in, and when he came in he was wobbling. He got into his bed and he fell down out of bed. I was nineteen.

EVELYN: Well, Uncle Albert died what, in 1950?

EVA: In 1962. He was forty-six.

EVELYN: I was twelve then `cause I was born in 1950. So the wakes quit that long ago then? I don't think I've ever been to a wake.

EVA: That's about the last one that we had too.

EVELYN: But I seen last week in the paper that there were wake services for a Métis. Would you like me to have a wake for you if you died mom? I don't know if I'd have it for my kids but it's something that I'd like to do. I'd have the body embalmed first. I wouldn't take the chance. Who was telling me that story? Auntie Mary was telling me that story where they went to that wake and all of a sudden the man sat up. But it was just a reflex or something. Stiffened up like. They say in the old days when they used to die sometimes the way they died, they had to break their arms and their legs to put them in the coffin.

EVA: They still do, they say.

EVELYN: `Cause they're stiffened up. But I'm sure it was Josephine who was talking about that the other night. He sat right up in the coffin but actually I think he was dead it was just what happened. They put him in the coffin right after he died or something like that. They were waiting for him to die and they had the coffin ready. I don't know. I'd have to see that to believe it.

EVELYN: But, I think if I had one of my kids die and my husband, me, I would like to have a wake. I don't know if they'd allow it but I think it would be my choice. You stay there with them.

EVA: My brother, Uncle Albert, when he died we did that one night, all night.

EVELYN: Well, yeah, I remember `cause that guy come here and we were so scared. Again, we were young. Mom was gone to Uncle Albert's funeral in Batoche and she had told us, "You don't open the door." We were small right? We had the door locked with a butter knife. I just happened to open it; I don't know what for. All of a sudden, we heard knocking on the door. And Clarence said, "Come in." And here this big Native guy came in walking right here. `Oh, that's it,' I thought, `Now we're dead!' Then he says, "I'm looking for a way to go to Batoche. My friend Albert Lafontaine passed away. I want to go to the funeral." So when he said that it meant everything. I said, "I'm sorry, I don't know, we don't drive. Mom just left not too long ago with her brother." He kept walking. Then I know Clarence had went somewheres and asked if they could give him a ride or something, but they weren't home. So I don't know if he made it all the way over there.

EVA: Oh yeah, he made it. All at once he come in there.

EVELYN: Did he walk all the way there?

EVA: No, he had a ride with somebody.

EVELYN: But like she said, I think they used to scare us when we were young and we were always scared until we got a little bit older.

EVA: Well, us too when we were young, we seen a wagon full of Indians, we were scared. They always tell us, "They will pick you guys up!"

EVELYN: Well, we used to hear some of these stories. They'd say, "Don't laugh at the Indians or some of them will give you medicine." We were always scared.

EVA: My grandmother, one time, she was sick. She had something in her tooth and one Indian asked her, he said, "What you got in your tooth? Something tickling you all the time there?" She said "Yes." Well, he says "I'll give you something and I'll heal you." He went and got some kind of medicine and give her that and she was okay.

EVELYN: I know, but the old people used to tell us, "You don't laugh at Indians or else they'll give you something."

EVA: Well, yeah, I guess she did laugh or something. I remember that old Cuthand that used to come at my dad's, always coming at home. He was an old man and always come trashed. Some of the young boys used to laugh at him and he said, "Those boys, if they don't stop laughing I could put their mouth right to their ear if I want to." And my dad told them, "You better watch yourselves because if he finds out you laughing he'll do it!"

EVELYN: But, is that true though?

EVA: They say it was true. They had something in them that they could do it.

EVELYN: The Métis never had that kind of medicine?

EVA: Never heard about it anyways. But the old Indians, they say they had.

EVELYN: I know one time I heard this story that this lady laughed at this Indian lady then she went home, next day looked in the mirror and she had this big wart on her nose. And she said that she got it from her but I still find it hard to believe but then I suppose I'd have to talk to Native Elders. We have Elders. Like Auntie Mary, she's eighty-two. We had one old fellow that died just a couple of years ago, one hundred and two. Old Métis guy, Alfred Boyer. All these people at the lodge here, there's one, two, three, John B.'s mom is there. I bet you they'd have a lot of stories about Métis things.

EVA: Beatrice would.

EVELYN: Beatrice might have some but not much more than what we're saying but if they heard stories from their grandfathers or whatever they'd probably have lots of stories. There's Auntie Mary but she married a Frenchman from Bellevue, then she moved to Bellevue. She must know all about farming and all that. You see, what's happening now today is we're losing the stories. Like even Alice Lépine, she's eighty-seven you know, but she'd know about the old days. She can say lots but her memory goes. A lot of them their memories are going. Very few you'll find that they'll have a good memory. Justine would probably know a lot too eh? That's Fernand's mom.

EVA: She used to stay in Batoche her too.

EVELYN: We even heard stories where they'd dig up people from the graves and they turned over and their fingernails had grown and that's scary. Before they did the embalming, you know. In those days doctors didn't come around and give death certificates either probably. So you know they could've just been in a coma or whatever and buried them alive. I've heard where people had grown a beard. There was that lady they said she had no fingers left trying to dig out. And then one of them, they were supposed to have opened the coffin and he was turned over. Gerry used to dig a lot of graves and two years ago they dug up this grave and all of a sudden this body fell in the hole. She died seventy years ago and "she still had her clothes on and her hair was still on her. She was like mummified," Gerry said. "You know those apples that are dried up? She looked like that. and she still had her hair," he said. That was unreal if she died seventy years ago. They couldn't figure that one out. "Maybe that person," he said "was an old saint or something. Even the clothes didn't get decomposed." Well, I imagine it wasn't in perfect shape but those guys were really bothered by that. Years ago they used to bury them in there and not mark them and now sometimes they are hitting a grave when they are digging. They come close. They dug up a little girl last year. She still had her red hair: a little baby. They said they felt bad about that person because then they really had to pick her up and rebury her. They were digging that grave and somehow when they dug it the ground caved in and she fell in also. She must've been on the side of the grave probably. The coffin was all decomposed.

EVA: Clarence used to be a wild one.

EVELYN: He learnt his lesson though. He got sent away to a foster home for a few months.

EVA: The reason why is his schooling. He missed so much school, he didn't want to do his work.

EVELYN: Raymond? Yeah, he went to reform school: Camp Shilo

EVA: If he would've been smart he would've had a nice job. They wanted to show him how to work with electricity but he didn't want to.

EVELYN: I don't remember if I was good, you'll have to say it.

EVA: No, the girls were not bad. The boys not too bad neither but they were a little more to handle. Donald was pretty quiet when he was young. Clarence him he was always having fun with his friends there and they weren't too bright. If they wouldn't have been I guess he would've been alright him too.

EVELYN: No but you can't always blame friends either.

EVA: No. He didn't want to attend school. He used to hide to go to school.

EVELYN: We all went through that. For some reason we didn't want to go to school.

EVA: I think because we were poor and we didn't have lots. It must've been something.

EVELYN: We'd play hooky a lot. Terrible!

EVA: I thought we had to work so hard. It's tough for us, otherwise my life was real good. I never done anything wrong. Well, we didn't have no chance to do anything

wrong. Work, work, work all the time. I wish my nieces would be the same way. Just go ahead and work but then they sleep all day.

EVELYN: There was a 75th or 100th Birthday for St. Louis. I've got pictures but I didn't write the date down. But I know this one guy he really dislikes discrimination and he had called us and told us to make a float because he didn't think it was right nobody had got a hold of us. Richards were one of the first families to settle in St. Louis along with the McDougalls and Boyers, and they're Métis too. Our float looked pretty good.

EVA: It had a big cake.

EVELYN: Yeah and it was a big cake. I remember 'cause I made it. It must've been the 75th Birthday.

EVA: Could be, yeah.

EVELYN: I made this big, big cake out of flowers and I put "75" on it. We had some bales on there and some old kinda antique stuff and then my cousin was on there singing. Then they had the Elders like Auntie Mary on there and dad's sister was on there.

EVA: They had an old spinning wheel and somebody was spinning wool.

EVELYN: One person was making butter.

EVA: Something like that, and one was knitting.

EVELYN: We didn't have much time to make it but it turned out pretty good. We spent a lot of hours on that. It's too bad we weren't told about it sooner because really the Métis settled here first.

EVA: The Métis weren't recognized.

EVELYN: Yeah, the Métis weren't recognized.

EVA: If you're a Métis you stay behind.

EVELYN: Especially the Richards. Uncle Joe was a drunk, Uncle Louis drank, dad is a drunk. The Richards in St. Louis, they were nothing because of that. The men. eh?

EVA: Everybody in St. Louis knew. Everybody.

EVELYN: I would say that the whole family suffered because of them `cause the women weren't drinkers. Azilda started in later years. Her husband drank and she joined him and she never gave it up yet. That's dad's sister. Well, how come dad and all of them started drinking? `Cause you take some of them, they didn't drink that much. I think a lot of it has to do with that because when you don't feel good about yourself you can easily turn to the bottle. Then `cause you're laughed at, you tend to be backwards and shy and then you drink just to overcome your shyness. And the first thing you know, you get addicted to it. I know that even myself, sober, I used to be really, really shy. we'd kinda almost hide behind mom when we were kids. And then once you go out and have a few drinks you usually weren't shy any more.

EVELYN: If we would've been White, things would have definitely been different in St. Louis. Not if we were Indian though because St. Louis is not an Indian place. The Indians here were very discriminated against when we first moved in here. That's why we only have two Native families in St. Louis. One has been here for maybe ten years. But, I think if we would've been Indians we probably wouldn't have lived in St. Louis. Probably would've settled in Batoche or One Arrow [Reserve]. Even growing up as a kid I don't remember a Native family ever in St. Louis or around.

EVA: But I still learned to speak a little bit of Cree.

EVELYN: I started to and then our course was discontinued. I probably would have caught on quickly because I have the accent to speak Cree. But our teacher was more interested in drinking than teaching. I was kind of disappointed because they were telling us that for jobs around here you should know Cree. But up North they have

different languages. They have Dené. Yesterday, Solomon, he's very religious, he was at the St. Laurent Shrine. They had a Cree mass and he said, "I don't understand a thing you are saying." He spoke the Dené language. What else is around here? Dené and Cree.

In English I say "Métis" and "Natives" and in French I say "Michif" and - -

EVA: - - and "Indiens."

EVELYN: When we were kids they used to call me "sauvage", that's how I pronounce it, but we call Indians "les sauvages" also. But then, when we grew up a little bit older they said "sauvage" in English meant savage and they're not savages so we kinda discontinued using that. But us, when we were going to school, they used to call us "les sauvages." It meant wild like a savage. A savage is actually wild. Like, you watch those movies where Indians are shown killing people, that's what they call savages but we didn't say savages in English. It was just a French word that we used "le sauvage." To us it just meant Indians. Now they're telling us that Indians don't want to be called Indians they want to be called Natives. So there again you go and call them Natives instead of Indians because some get offended if you call them an Indian. But we're classified as Native ancestry also so I don't know. We call ourselves Métis. To me, today, a Native is a full blooded Indian. Which, really, there isn't that many full blooded Indians left around. And we're aboriginal also. I suppose they could call themselves Status too or Non-Status, whatever. There are different ways of saying that. It all depends on how you say it too. You can just discriminate just by using a certain tone.

EVA: I'm going to need a ride to the church later.

EVELYN: Well, the ride's no problem, it's to get you up there. Well, even myself I'll probably be using the elevator pretty soon. Five, ten years from now, if that! Gerry is working on that. The main work is free labour, but the installation, I guess they contracted it out because they have to have someone who knows what they're doing. But, the breaking up of the foundation to make the entrance was done by volunteers. BINGOS are mostly done by Métis people too. I'm really having a hard time believing it. It's good that our Métis people are doing a lot of volunteer work but I wish once in a while we'd get a little recognition and acknowledgement and not just called on when they need free labour or free help. The Métis have always been known to help out. But, who gets the credit is all these big guys that donate money. They get the acknowledgement: "This one donated two thousand dollars" or whatever but they don't realize that some people are working there for two, three weeks and donating seven, eight hours a day: that's more than two thousand dollars worth. But, it was always like that. Even when they built the church with Father Leclerc, it was mostly Métis people who helped out. And then the steeple was built by Max Vandale. He was very good. He didn't have the education but for some reason he was almost an architect.

EVA: Not that I know about anyway.

EVELYN: I'd like to look in the history book to see if there was anything on that church. I did read through that history book but I was too disappointed in it. I didn't go back a second time. Their prejudice really showed there. It's the same again as far as I can see it. But, that's okay. I'm not going to let it get to me.

EVELYN: You know, our Métis Hall, the Village can exempt us from taxes. It's up to the Council. Bernice Hammersmith is coming in to help us on that. But, we went in there and had a meeting and they wouldn't even listen to us. It's probably the fact that we're Métis people that they didn't give us the time of day. So, we're going beyond the Council and trying through our MLA. In a small town like St. Louis, people hate to make vibes you know because then half the town doesn't look at you. Even when I brought up that thing with Gale, about the housing and her being discriminated against,

there are still people that don't look at me because of that. They probably figure, 'Who the hell are you?!' It's not over yet. As far as I'm concerned, though, we won it because Saskatchewan Housing threw it out. Well, it was ridiculous what they were accusing her of. If I didn't know her better I wouldn't have went out to bat for her but I knew her. There's how many Métis families right now who are waiting to get in those low rental houses and they've got school teachers occupying houses. They got one in there that's a Principal and his wife's working at a bank. They just happened to come and they didn't want to start paying a lot and most of the houses aren't for rent, they're for sale. People want to move out but they don't want to rent. Housing wasn't available. Unless you know you are going to be staying here, you don't want to buy, I don't blame you for that.

Then, I got our MLA involved and then he nominated me to represent the Provincial Government for the nominating committee so that I could nominate some of our people. I got three Métis on the Board. I helped get three Métis elected on to the housing committee: my brother-in-law got in, Sonny, and we got Barry Swain and..... I got Sonny in and I wanted Lionel Ginaille in but they wouldn't accept Lionel in because they said he was too old. That's another thing I got into a fight over. I went to that meeting and the posters were supposed to be posted up so that anyone who wanted to run on that Board could sign their name. Then, it was up to us, myself, Allan, those that represented the federal government, the Mayor representing the Village. But, the posters were never put up and Emil kept postponing the meetings 'till the due date was already past and gone. I said, "Well, when are we having that meeting?" And I had nominated Doris McDougall, Mederic's daughter, because she was pretty upset with what happened with Gale. She said to put her in there and that she'd make sure things like that didn't happen. So I nominated her. I went up to Emil's and I said, "I nominate Doris." He said that I couldn't have Doris because she was related to him. He's married to Doris's sister. He said that you can't have any relations in there whatsoever! I thought to myself, 'I'll put Doris's name down any how' but then Doris didn't want to cause any undue feelings so she took her name out. I figured, 'Well this doesn't sound right.' So I phoned Regina and I talked to the lady there and she said that there was nothing that said that you can't have relations on that Board. That's when I asked Sonny if he'd be willing to sit on there because we only needed one at the time. He got in but I know the Mayor just wanted his own people in there for some reason. We still needed one more person in to replace someone who retired but I

didn't vote on it. He figures just because he's Mayor he can do what he wants. It's the same thing with the skating rink. That was built with free labour and the kids hardly even get to go skating on it. They don't have quality skating time because they are renting out their skating rink to all these people. I heard next year that the PA Generals are supposed to play there. They rented the ice out to them. After the rink was built well it was just, "To hell with everybody!"

EVELYN: When I was young I never went on horses because I was always scared of them. I went once and I had such a bad experience because I went bare back: no saddle. I got chafed so bad that I couldn't walk for two weeks I think. I was with my cousin that's in the hospital now with diabetes. We were on the same horse but she had the saddle and I was bare back. Then, we had this bull chasing us. We were going full gallop. I remember I was so terrified of falling. She kept telling me, "Hang on! Hang on to me!" I was just sliding. But, the boys, they used to go across the river here to Mr. Adams' farm - that's Howard Adams' brother - and he always let the kids ride. We never had animals us. If we would've had horses we probably would have been used to them. There weren't many horses in St. Louis itself but on the surrounding farms there were. By the time I was growing up already the cars were out.

EVA: I told you it was going to rain up until the Pilgrimage and it did but it's still raining. They say it's supposed to quit but I don't know for how long.

EVELYN: But they say that's the work of the Devil. Somehow, these last few years, its been raining at the St. Laurent Pilgrimage all the time. That's a big pilgrimage that goes on. Same thing in Wakaw; it got rained out. And the weekend after that there was the pilgrimage in Cutworth and the same thing happened again. Rain was pouring down.

EVA: The Devil wants to turn Catholic people around I guess. They say the Devil is working against the people.

EVELYN: Who was I talking to the other day? I was talking on the phone and they said, "Oh, I didn't realize you spoke French." Who in the heck was that? I said, "Yeah, I speak French. We were brought up speaking French. When we were

growing up we never spoke a word of English really except in school. It's our French, our Métis-French, but it's still French. All Métis who speak French understand each other when they speak French. Even Bellevue understands me." But the big meetings are usually held in English and Cree. Up North you have a lot of Cree at a meeting and in a way it kind of bothers us because we don't understand what they're talking about. It could be the same thing with the French speakers. A lot of those people up North are Métis but they look Native. There's very few full blooded Indians now. They're mostly Métis. A lot of them speak the Cree language because their parents are Cree and that's the way they are brought up. I can see why people get offended when we talk French and they can't understand French because they might think we're talking about them. Remember when you were working at the fish factory and you said that those ladies were talking about us and you could understand some Cree and they didn't realize that?

EVA: Yeah.

EVELYN: All of a sudden you were upset `cause these women were telling each other in Cree to not pass us the fish. They might have been trying to get us fired because there was a lot of Native people working there and the guy that was the manager was hiring a lot of Native women. Not because they were better workers it was because he could fool around with half of them. So, I don't know, even in St. Louis here, some people would get upset at the mass when one week it was in French and the other in English. They were saying that a lot of them don't understand the French so why have it? There you go. But, it's just like my kids. They'll sit there and understand some of it but with the French they speak they understand very little because their's is the real French. Maybe we'd still have a few Métis still speaking if they would allow them to. But, then again, you've got to read out of the big book so their French in there is not our French anyways so that's our fault, I guess. If I ever went to France I probably wouldn't even be able to read their menu or I don't even know if I could come across enough to be understood over there. I'd probably have to take along my French/English dictionary. I have a heck of a time understanding Hélène but she understands me. She speaks so fast. I have to ask her a lot of words. She uses so many different words that I haven't got a clue even what they mean. She's got a very hard time speaking English.

EVELYN: You know how I said I was shy well I remember this guy, even come to our house to ask mom and dad if we could go out and I hid upstairs. It's not that I didn't want to go out with him but I was shy and he come here to ask permission. I didn't even come down the stairs. Our upstairs was more like an attic. That's where we used to sleep altogether. You and dad were in the middle. There was no privacy you know. That's the same with our home now. It used to be Gerry's parents' house. We just fixed the upstairs maybe seven years ago so we could have separate rooms. All we had was one little bedroom downstairs but then the living room was so cramped. That little bedroom wasn't enough for us. There was just room for a thirty-nine inch bed in there so I knocked it all out and then we slept upstairs. That's where Gerry's parents slept. They had twelve kids and they all slept together. Well, we were eleven here at mom's.

EVA: Everybody was the same way. They just had an upstairs and had a bed here and another bed in another corner and another bed in another corner.

EVELYN: I think we had three beds in that one big room upstairs and one was in that little room. No door. Yeah, it was pretty well like that all over. I remember Joe Vandale's place there too. They had a little one bedroom house and all their kids was there. I kinda doubt the White society had houses like that.

EVA: No. Them people they had better houses than we have. I worked in lots of them. Four bedrooms upstairs and one downstairs.

EVELYN: Even when I worked for this French family I had my own bedroom there on weekends. I'd just go there weekends. She'd pick me up Friday and bring me back Sunday. I had my own bedroom.

EVA: At first I worked in St. Denis for three summers, then I used to come back for the winter. After, I went to Domrémy for a couple of winters. I went to PA in `46 when my mom had some kind of a stroke and then she went in the hospital. I went to PA and I looked for a job there. I got one in the Princess Café. Then I worked there for twenty months and then I quit there because I was getting tired. They used to make me carry boxes downstairs and rats were downstairs. Chinamans used to own it. Then after

that I worked in a kitchen for over a year. I'd cook breakfast and help upstairs and stuff like that. After that I came here and after I had my family I start working fisheries. The youngest was three years old when I start work again.

EVELYN: I started working there but then I got in that car accident and I didn't work after that. I have problems with my back me but it's not a chronic lasting pain. Nothing a good night's sleep won't cure. I think I got a problem up there in the neck with my spine. There's something not right here. This is why I get so many headaches, they told me. But, I'm not in constant pain. Certain things will aggravate my back but it's not like I can't do things.

EVA: We used to work in gardens too. Frank Moore's garden.

EVELYN: We didn't have no choice. We didn't have the education so we had to take piddley little jobs like that.

EVA: Me and the gardens on hot days; we kneel on our knees all day.

EVELYN: Picking weeds and picking potatoes and then the carrots. We'd pile them real high and sit there all day and cut the tails off and bag them. They went into the root cellar and later washed and bagged again.

EVA: We'd wash onions and bag them. Five dollars a day.

EVELYN: It was good money then. We'd start from eight `till five or six sometimes, depending. Then we'd get this ride from this man that was a sex maniac! Kept wanting to offer us free rides for trade. We sure told him where to go in a hurry. He kept giving us rides but then he quit harassing us. I think when he seen that we weren't to be bought he quit harassing us. Well, we didn't have much choice. He was the only one working out there and it was either take a ride or walk. We had to put up with him for awhile before he quit it. He didn't go so far as to try anything but he kept asking and asking. It's funny now but at the time it wasn't funny.

EVA: Our life wasn't all that hot.

EVELYN: It's hard to say what would have come out of it if worse for the worse, if he'd have told us, "You're not riding no more." You never know. `Cause I know when you're poor you need the money, boy. It didn't resort to that but maybe we threatened him in a way too. We sure didn't have opportunities to drive around or get rides, though. He was the only one. There was probably a bus running but not to get us there in time for work and back. It was about five miles out of PA.

EVA: We were brought up different than you guys. We couldn't do nothing much and we each had a job. My job was bringing the wood in and washing the dish towels. We washed them on a board.

EVELYN: You couldn't do nothing, you said, your parents were strict.

EVA: Oh yeah, they were strict.

EVELYN: Very strict.

EVA: We used to go pick up the cows after school and come back sometimes, it's dark. And three miles sometimes we had to walk after school. We had to get the cows and help milk them. When I had kids then I teach them as much as I could because we were taught to do this and that and this and that so we knew how to do everything. I wanted them, the children, to know everything but some of them didn't want to learn.

EVELYN: But that's where it goes down the line. You get less and less strict and first thing you know they're on their own. My kids are almost on their own now and they do what they damn well please. But I think as a parent instead of always fighting and not wanting to always be criticized you let them go do what they want. But I remember us growing up. We each had our chores to do too. We didn't go out unless they were done. Life was easier for the men.

EVA: Men, yeah.

EVELYN: I remember when mom was canning, it was always us that would go in the gardens to pick up. We used to fill those galvanized tubs that you used to wash and rinse clothes in, full of beans. We had to sit there - and those were full of peas sometimes - we had to sit there all day to shell peas. And the boys were outside playing. And then there's the house work, the cooking. I don't know but for some reason men seem to think it's a woman's job. Today, Gerry took out the milk, he took out the Corn Flakes, he took out the Rice Krispies, and it was all left on the counter afterwards. Like it's my job to put them away? It shouldn't be. Of course, maybe if I leave them there for five days he'd finally put them away, *hee, hee!* We worked harder than the boys us. I know that. I can't say for my kids because I don't have boys.

EVA: I used to go work at nine o'clock. I would send my kids to school and the rest went to my mom's. Then I work all day cleaning houses and then I'd go back home again. When I was working, on Sundays I used to bake bread and wash. It's my fault.

EVELYN: Yeah, it's our fault, exactly.

EVA: I didn't have to marry that guy, *hee, hee!*

EVELYN: Not only that but you could've made the kids work a little more. Like me, I never started canning until maybe five, six years ago after I moved to St. Louis. I never used to can a thing in my life. I always figured, 'Well geez, this is enough. I used to like home canning.' And then I started canning but I never or don't remember ever getting my girls to help me. Maybe I tried and I never pushed them. I know last year I had to get my girlfriend just to wash my quarts for me 'cause my hands are wide and got a hard time going in the jar. Probably the girls' hands are just as wide as mine, all of them, so they'd have problems anyhow, but I haven't really tried to show them.

EVA: Yeah, those young kids they don't know how to do things. Marlene's kids, the same way. They can make cake or stuff like that but you tell them to can something they wouldn't want to do it. And us, that's what we had to do. We had to work in the garden as soon as canning comes. Can and can and can. Mom used to can in jugs even her. We used to can peas in beer bottles. We'd go pick berries, a pail full of berries and make jam and jelly. Everything.

EVELYN: I learned that from you, mom. I used to phone you and ask you to come here and tell you to tell me what to do. I tried it and it turned out, things like jelly. I wish you would've taught me to knit and crochet though. I could do something with my idle time in my old age. I'd love to be able to do that stuff and I don't even know how to do it.

EVA: It's nice to know. I knit too. Last winter before there I couldn't do so much with my hands hurting that way. Sort of get sore so I quit finally. I made three or four bed covers that go on the bed.

EVELYN: Afghans?

EVA: Afghans. Well, I used to do a lot but not any more. My mother didn't teach me it was some lady, she showed us to knit. She could crochet too but I learned that by the book. When I started to work in PA I bought some books. We had three hours in the afternoon. I'd be downstairs and read my book and then learn from there.

EVELYN: I can crochet a straight line but that's it! Someone showed me how there at one time but I don't know if I could start. Probably if I get started I could go at it. I don't know when to turn around and when to stop.

EVELYN: It's just now really that we're marrying outside of the Métis. Younger people are moving to the bigger cities and meeting up with different people. But there's a lot of times they're still not accepted though. My brother even is an example. The girlfriend he's with now, well, her mother is passed away now but there was no way she'd accept their relationship. He was an Indian and that's what he is. This is probably why when we grow up we tend to marry Métis and it doesn't matter if he's a drunk or what because we're accepted in the family. Before when I was growing up you never dreamed of going out with a little White guy. That was almost out of the question. They wouldn't even give you the time of the day. I played very little with White kids even.

EVA: Not too much because they were all Métis in Batoche too. Where I went to school they were all Métis there. Maybe a family or two wasn't.

EVELYN: Well, even in St. Louis most of them are Métis kids so we're right at home.

EVA: We were friends with others though.

EVELYN: But they wouldn't want their kids marrying us. It's different for my kids' generation. I wouldn't have any problems with them marrying any race. With White parents it will depend on who it is. I've heard some White families in St. Louis forbidding their kids and have even broken up relationships because their kid was going out with a Métis. That was just last year. Who in the heck was that engaged to that Métis and they made them break up there and he was so unhappy?

EVA: I don't know.

EVELYN: He was engaged to a Métis girl and the mother harped and complained and complained and finally broke them up. And now he married another girl but she sure wasn't Métis. Some people nowadays are not racist at all. I could care less if they were Métis or Native or whatever. But I've heard a lot of White families say, "You know, he married an Indian and put shame upon our family." But see, kids are not like that. Maybe when we grew up we listened a little more to our parents or kind of went

with what they say but nowadays they kind of use their own judgements and whether or not we like it they go ahead and do what they want. I could see my girls going out with Natives. They wouldn't have a problem with it. Anybody, even Negro, and not have a problem with it unless the other family would. You don't always pick who you fall in love with a lot of times. It just happens. Their happiness comes first. I wouldn't worry too much about their nationality. If they're happy with the guy and he's half decent `cause you know Métis got a long way to go yet before they're accepted and change their lives around for the better. Like being educated and all that. Education, Métis' need it to go forward. They could have classes on building up these kids' knowledge starting from kindergarten. By building their self-esteem up and their self-worth half the battle would be won. Right from Grade one through high-school, they should be given some kind of life skills. To me they need a sense of where they come from and what they are all about actually. It's not just the idea that you're a Métis and go from there. You can't just say you're a Métis because it doesn't mean a damn thing to you. Even kids today, they talk about Riel like it's no big deal and yet they should be proud of Riel and the Rebellion. They just pass it off as no big deal. A lot of them, their ancestors were in there and yet they'll go to the grave site and see the name and it doesn't really sink in because they weren't taught. We don't even have a Métis flag in our Métis Local Hall yet. We will though and we'll hang it outside. We ordered the strongest material so it doesn't start shredding in a couple of years. The blue in the Métis emblem means pure of heart I think.

EVELYN: We're going to Batoche this weekend. It's tradition for us. I've gone every year since it started. I walk around and visit all the tents and then after I'm done that I usually go and sit in the tent and just enjoy watching the dancers. We might go to the pilgrimage; it depends when it is. I know John B. is because he's an Elder. They're having Elders this year who might lead the procession. So we nominated two Elders to go to that with him.

EVA: Sunday morning and there's an opening on Friday too, eh? I got this letter from somebody.

EVELYN: Yeah, well that's a meeting. They always start off with a prayer at their opening ceremony.

EVA: I might go on Saturday. Usually we go on Sundays.

EVELYN: Me, I get a thrill out of going there and seeing people and how they dress with their moccasin and that. Oh, I just love that. Even when I was a girl I've always wished I was thin enough to dress like that. I would like to dress with the skirt and frills and even the shawl. Oh, I'd dress like a real Métis but I'm so big. People probably would just laugh at me. I never wear dresses. Maybe they wouldn't laugh but I wouldn't feel comfortable. I'm too fat. I have to lose fifty pounds. I like the braids too. I'd let my hair grow. I've always been fascinated with that dress.

EVA: It's nice in a way but we were too big.

EVELYN: Yeah, because you see some big ladies walk around and they don't look good.

EVA: If you're slim, it's nice.

EVELYN: Well, you don't have to be that slim but slimmer than this. I always liked buckskin coats too but never could afford one. I think I had one at one time with the frills, the buckskin. You don't see those coats any more, unless they make them way up North, the old ladies. But very seldom you see them with all the fancy beadwork on the back. They're probably all dying off and the younger people aren't doing it. They used to make earrings with porcupine quills. You never see that hardly any more. I don't have any but I got the beaded ones. In fact, I bought a pair of dressy ones at the Hudson Bay about two months ago. They're made with beads and sequins from up North. But, usually when I go to Batoche I buy a pair every year. I like those head dresses too. I'd like to have one of those but they don't give them away. There was one in the Hudson Bay that was two hundred and ninety dollars I think. I don't know where they purchase the stuff. A lot of it is made up North but probably in different communities.

EVA: They're going to have a building there at Batoche this year I think. Aren't they building one?

EVELYN: No, not yet, I don't think.

EVA: Supposed to be building a big building, they said.

EVELYN: That land there belongs to the Métis or have they bought it already?

EVA: They bought it.

EVELYN: I was thinking of One Arrow [Reserve]. They said they bought some land from the Métis.

EVA: Yeah, all around there in the corner they're going to buy all that.

EVELYN: Yeah, they bought it already. One Arrow [Reserve] got a government settlement of fifteen million dollars and they bought all that land.

EVA: Batoche land.

EVELYN: Yeah, it goes right up but not to the Batoche site. I think we purchased that already. I know we had trouble about five, six years ago to buy that land. They wouldn't sell it to us but I think eventually they did. Nogier's owned it. Well, he just has a son living there now.

EVA: I don't know how far down they have though. Fifty-eight thousand acres they're supposed to buy. We have land in Batoche still. My brother Albert, his widow and kids own it.

EVELYN: She's got a lot of kids.

EVA: It supposed to be O'Neill's but I don't know. I think he changed the **Will**.

EVELYN: Well O'Neill he did have some land and he sold it already.

EVA: Well, maybe the one area.

EVELYN: Across there him and Syd, ils ont vendu leurs terrains lui?

EVA: Oui.

EVELYN: Him and that Syd they owned that land across, they sold it when he got married there. A guy from Bellevue bought it.

EVA: I thought it was those Indians from One Arrow [Reserve].

EVELYN: Yeah, but they probably bought it from the guy from Bellevue.

EVELYN: Batoche is about ten miles to Bellevue so when the Rebellion was on they ran to Bellevue and some to Duck Lake. I heard these things, I guess, from talking and reading and whatever.

EVA: My parents used to talk about it. I wouldn't pay much attention because I was so young when my dad died. Before that well, I heard things but after he died well, we never talked about it, except mom a little bit.

EVELYN: Not too long ago I read about all those women they had to cook for the men when they were fighting. They'd run away and they still had to make meals and bring it out to them. Some of them were cooking for thirty-five men plus looking after their families. Most likely they took care of the wounded too.

EVA: They had women's doctor. We used to have a woman nurse in Batoche, no, not Batoche. Gabriel, she was a Ukrainian lady. There wasn't a doctor then.

EVELYN: There must've been a hospital too in those days?

EVA: I suppose, I don't know.

EVELYN: Like, I'm sure some of those men got injured badly. I never read anything about who took care of them.

EVA: I don't know, won't there be some books in Batoche?

EVELYN: There must've been some old doctors around there 'cause they used to do house visits, eh?

EVA: Yeah.

EVELYN: They get sick, they'd go get the doctor. Some died but I'm sure there was some that was probably seriously ill, hurt or shot.

EVELYN: There's a lot of that Native artwork coming out, even reproductions, pictures. Then they have those ornaments, like fur hanging off of them and then a piece of skin in the middle and wood around it. Those are beautiful too. It's not really Métis culture but a part of it. Last time I was in Edmonton Clarence took me to a flea market and you can get this stuff. It's not ceramic but something like it. It's white and you've got to paint them yourself. It was mostly all Native artwork. My nieces had bought this Indian Chief with a gun. He was like a hunter. They had to paint it themselves. Someone had a cowboy too. They're fairly expensive; about ninety dollars I think. It tells you what colour to put on it. Boy they're beautiful!

EVA: Once I watched a cowboy and Indian movie.

EVELYN: When we were growing up Indians were always the savages on the cowboy and Indian shows we watched. They never had a good movie about an Indian. They're always the killers and murderers. Now the movies are altogether different. We rent movies and we like watching those Native movies where the Native and the Whiteman become friends. It's different. It's not like they're always at war with each other. Maybe back then that's why we grew up disliking Indians too. The image they portrayed of them wasn't good. It would show these wagon treks going and getting attacked by Indians. They were always, always shown attacking people.

EVELYN: When Oscar took over we tried to get a booth there and we tried again two years ago and they gave it to this woman, well, she's Métis, but the club she represented was a French Cultural Club. To me it's **Back to Batoche**, and it shouldn't be given to the White people unless they want to have a booth outside the grounds but **Back to Batoche** is there to help your people. `Cause when things were running right we used to bring in five, six thousand from our booth. We had everything. We'd bring in a freezer. We'd have ice cream and we were pretty well the only booth that sold cigarettes, snuff and all this. So, we'd really do good. A lot of times I would go there as a delegate too. Politics, I never was strong for it because I don't understand that much in politics like where I can go and fight for the cause. I don't know what I'm talking about so I just stay behind. But, the Métis Society started not that long ago. Twenty years ago? There was probably always a Métis Society, but I mean from the Local level. I'm sure I was married me already when I started going to Métis meetings.

Yeah, I was. So, I've been married twenty-two years, so I'd say maybe the Local level has been around for twenty-five years. I started going to Local #7. That's how I got involved in the Métis Society. Then when I moved here I started going here. But Local #7 was family run. It was all members of one family. You know, that's still like that. They were all related. Since twenty years ago and it's still in the family. We used to have a mouthy one that would cause commotion at every meeting that I ever went to and even at conferences in Saskatoon. It never failed. There was always a fight going on but now we have another Area Director. They always fight now too. The two of them go at each other. Another one was pretty rowdy too but I think she's kind of slowed down; quieted down quite a bit. She used to be bad for arguing. She'd get her point across mind you. But what I don't like when I go to these conferences is that there is always something coming out. Then you've got to sit there and listen to that bull shit all afternoon and nothing else gets accomplished. They've got to learn to get along with each other. It's got to start from outside the meetings `cause a meeting is not the place to bring out accusations that this one did this and this one did that.

EVELYN: I went to a meeting in Paddockwood about a month ago because I wasn't working that day. Cumberland Regional College was there. I went and there was this man from up North. He's working with the people up there. I don't know if he's a liaison worker or what. And they had this guy from Canada Manpower, where they sponsor students. I was telling them about this Home Care/Special Aide course and that a researcher from Gabriel Dumont Institute was working on it. I said that it was our Area Director's understanding that the Pathways Board tabled our proposal. The same night they looked at it, they tabled it and said, "Well, we just don't have the funding." So it went on to Gabriel Dumont. They said, "Do you mean to tell us that Gabriel Dumont is going to take over the funding?" I said, "No, that's not what I'm telling you. I'm telling you that they're looking at trying to work out some kind of agreement but I'm not saying they are taking over the funding." When I finished that meeting and left a couple of guys came up to me and they said, "You guys got to get rid of that Pathways Board that you have now." They said, "We suggest you get you Local Presidents on there." I'd heard a few things about Pathways from Edwin but I didn't know whether to believe him or not. I don't know what's going on. Pathways was telling us that their newsletter goes out to our Local and we've never had a newsletter. I imagine our President gets it but he doesn't bring it up at the meetings.

They said there's a letter that goes out almost monthly to our Presidents. It should be the Secretary receiving it. We have an office for all this stuff to be filed. Our old minutes from the past President were thrown away and destroyed. I'm not going to try to get on that Pathways Board 'cause I can't bring my point across well enough. If I was more educated to the needs of the people I could fight for them. But I wouldn't; I'm not confident enough.

Evelyn: I wouldn't want to be President now 'cause I wouldn't have the time to dedicate to it so what's the use of being President and sitting on your ass all the time?! Even this self-government thing. You talk to some and they are saying this self-government is what we need and some say no. I don't even really know what it's all about, really. It's almost like the referendum. We voted and we didn't know anything about it. Our President now should be the one going to Local meetings and explaining what this self-government is all about and explain it in a language where people can understand. A lot of our people are not educated and they go and all this crap doesn't mean anything if they are using all this big language. If we're made aware of what actually self-government is then a person could go all out and fight for it or whatever, you know. But everybody is staying back and they're letting the top guys do everything. Even I'm guilty of that. I tell myself, "If it comes, it comes, if it doesn't...." But politics is like that too. I said people got to learn to get along. The PCs, the NDPs, and Liberals don't get along too well either.

EVA: I don't know too much me. I never go to meetings and stuff like that. I used to but not any more.

EVELYN: Well, to tell you the truth I don't see very many senior Métis at meetings and they never did get involved. For some reason, it was mostly what we call the baby boomers.

EVA: I used to go ten years ago. Just people around St. Louis went. Sometimes twenty-five.

EVELYN: In the early '80s.

EVA: They weren't talking about self-government back then. They didn't say nothing much. Well, there used to be the minutes and then people discussed whether we were going to have a school or whatever. Stuff like that. I didn't go to many of those things.

EVELYN: They had upgrading in St. Louis for maybe four years. They hired some teachers and students got help to go with grants. Most of the pupils were sponsored by NSIM [Non-Status Indian and Métis student grant program].

EVA: I got no benefits.

EVELYN: You got grants from the Métis Society to fix your house. It's a benefit.

EVA: Oh, yeah, sometimes.

EVELYN: They had ERP [Emergency Repair Program] then. You shouldn't say you didn't benefit `cause your kids did benefit from it.

EVA: Oh yeah.

EVELYN: `Cause when I took upgrading I got sponsored through NSIM. They had upgrading in the seventies there when Uncle Hector, Clovis and all them went to upgrading. That was mostly all people in their fifties that went to that class. Auntie Mary took that class. I'm sure she went to upgrading. They're all seniors now. A lot of those old people only have grade two, grade three education. Clovis got his grade five. That was a great accomplishment you know. If Clovis had an education he'd have done lots.

EVA: He's smart.

EVELYN: He's something like me. Talk and talk but sometimes people get sick of hearing him but he gets what he goes after. If he'd have been an educated boy he probably could've been a President of the Provincial Métis Society. For a grade five level to be Area Director he sure did help a lot of people. He must have been Area Director for what, six years?

EVA: For sure, maybe more than that.

EVELYN: I think it's a three year term or two year term, but he went over one term. And there's a lot of people who have respect for him.

EVA: Clovis was giving me grants back then. Do we still have that program?

EVELYN: As far as I know, last time I heard that Leon McAuley talk he said there was no money left. Anyone could apply for that program though. But what's happening in Saskatchewan and Canada Housing is that they're building houses for low-income Métis people and they're fixing them also so they really don't need those grants. Clovis was the one who got our Hall built. It must be over fifteen years old. We moved here in 1980. It must be twenty years old.

EVELYN: I was born in 1950, Gerry in 1942. Angela was in '82, Jennifer in '74 and Priscilla in '72. My dad, Albert, was born in 1921.

EVA: He's just one year younger than me.

EVELYN: Brenda, si elle était ici elle nous dira des histoires. My cousin, Brenda; we get a kick out of her. She says if she was here she'd tell us a few stories. And she laughs at everything. I think she's always happy go lucky. She tries but doesn't talk without laughing.

EVELYN: I seen a picture of Isabelle Impey in the paper yesterday. What struck me is that it said that she is the first Métis to be on the Health Board in PA. I think that's John Dorion's sister. John was involved in some legal thing with Bernice Hammersmith. What happened finally with that recount in August? Personally, I don't really know her. I got to know her when Jerry Hammersmith was running for NDP [New Democratic Party]. I don't think she's with him now but that's how we got to know them in PA. We're very strong NDP and we supported them. I know when she first got elected at MSS [Métis Society of Saskatchewan] they were saying she'll be no good in there because she's more for aboriginal than she is for Métis but I don't know, she's

come to a few of our meetings. She's attended a few of our functions. I figured it was pretty nice of her to even show an interest or come down. Connie, our Treasurer, knows her. She said she went to school with her. Bernice took SUNTEP [Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program] and raised hell. Connie is my sister-in-law, well, she's not my sister-in-law yet but I call her that. My niece went through SUNTEP too. Where did Connie get a job?

EVA: Witchekan [Lake] Reserve.

EVELYN: It's too bad they can't seem to get jobs closer to home. Seems to me all they're getting is reserve jobs, those SUNTEP students. I think there's five that took the SUNTEP within the last five years who are out in Black Lake. Her sister got one. Then she had a job for a couple of months in Kinistan and she was subbing in One Arrow [Reserve]. She put her name to the PA Catholic School Board and they wouldn't accept her because she was living common-law. I could see that I suppose. St. Louis school has gotten her a few times for subbing but they'll hire outside teachers instead of hiring locally. The principal now is new. Things might be different.

I never really had anything to do with the school. But there are some things that have to be fought. There was this one family here, a cousin mine, he had kids. He killed this child while drunk driving, a few years back. It's just unreal what his kids have to go through at school. He's been there to talk to the Principal. He's been there to talk to the teachers and it's still going on. You know, at least in the school you tell your kids that it's not the kids' fault. Explain that it's not the kids' fault what had happened there. But they hear it all the time in the school ground and nothing is done about it. I find that sad `cause those kids are suffering. Terrible. And then when that Native family moved in they were just getting the run around boy. Angela used to come home and I even asked if the school was aware of that and she said, "Yeah."

Another thing I don't like is they have drama nights and award nights at the school. Very seldom you see Métis kids get an award. Is it that they don't try hard enough or what? I realize as a Métis you should be working to wipe out racism but sometimes I think we are fighting a losing battle `cause if people's minds are made up, we obviously are not going to change it. The only way you can change them is by example. You don't have to stoop down to their level. But, even us when we went to school the little White kids were getting holy tokens. Nuns used to give out all kinds of

little tokens: little pictures, cards and prayers. For us to get something like that it would mean a heck of a lot for us. We seldom got them and yet the other kids were always getting rewarded for something. It's not that we didn't, because I think we even went as far as even to try to brown nose the teachers to the point where we'd stay after school and wipe the blackboards and clean up for them. We seldom got anything anyway.

EVA: They were just teachers where I went to school. Never had sisters. It was both French and English.

EVELYN: I don't remember me when we went to the convent. Est-ce que c'était en français?

EVA: Mostly French.

EVELYN: I even remember when I was young, you know the girls used to wear those kinds of uniforms but I was always chunky so I never had a uniform. I don't know. Mom probably couldn't afford to buy me one either. They had this choir and I always used to like to sing. They had these girls singing in the choir and I thought to myself, 'I've been told that I had a nice voice so why wasn't picked to be in the choir?' Then they had this one girl, fille Thibault, there. She went up one day to the nun and said, "Evelyn, she's got a beautiful voice. I think we should include her in our choir." And the nun just went, "Umpff!" I was so hurt, like insulted 'cause I figured, 'Well, I'm sure I can sing just as good as those girls.' And I envied them 'cause they were in the choir. And then, I don't know, another nun came over. So Mother Superior, for some reason, she treated me very good. She's the one that gave me holy pictures and salve for my windburn. One day she come up to me, she says, "I was told you had a nice voice." I didn't admit that I had a nice voice but I said, "Well, I wouldn't mind being in the choir." She put me in there. I think that other nun was still there too but it just happened to be this new nun come into the convent then. I always used to envy them. I don't know if I wanted to feel important or just what but I wanted to be part of that group. I used to enjoy singing anyways. There's some that classify us as lower class Métis and some of them are Métis who won't acknowledge they're Métis and they're kind of big shots. Well, I just thought to myself that it's their loss really because I just wonder whether

people like that feel good inside. It's not like White people have better voices than us. I don't know what makes people think that just because you are an Indian you don't hurt as bad, you don't grieve or you don't get insulted or you don't have feelings.

EVA: I think those are magpies out there making all that noise.

EVELYN: Yesterday was funny. There was crows all over at the St. Laurent Grotto. We were at the St. Louis Grotto not too long ago and there was a magpie chasing a squirrel. That was the funniest thing. They were saying the rosary and us, we were looking and we couldn't help but laugh. That poor squirrel just going from tree to tree. It just about fell and then managed to grab himself and that magpie kept chasing it. Another time I fell backwards from the bench. We were at the Grotto and it rained and I didn't have a sweater. So, mom had my brother-in-law's coat and she gave it to me. It was so nice and clean; it was pale yellow. I wore that coat and I went to sit down and back I went. Oh, and it had grass stains on it and it was dirty: full of mud, *hee, hee!* I threw it in the wash soon as I got home. I sprayed it. It came right out, thank God! But they laughed and they laughed and they laughed. And I laughed myself. I broke my rosary and they never did find that one bead. That was my rosary from Denver. And then this one guy was saying, "Good God Evelyn, I wish I had my movie camera here." "Good thing you weren't wearing a skirt," he said. He would have seen a lot more than he bargained for. Oh, God! To make it worse, I wasn't getting along with Gerry at the time and I was kind of pouting. And he was sitting there looking. At any other time he would've helped me up. This time he didn't! A priest is supposed to come and bless the Grotto.

We're supposed to get Father Foileau when this priest leaves. He's originally from Duck Lake. A young priest. He's supposed to be in St. Louis, Domrémy, Bellevue and Wakaw. Father Marchildon is leaving too.

EVELYN: Women weren't being treated equal and they're still not being treated equally. We should just sit back and do nothing. I think now Gerry's accepted me working. In the beginning I think he didn't because it was just when he had first quit drinking but hadn't changed his attitude. It wasn't always lovey dovey at home. He still had his old thoughts and his old ways, you know. He has always been the bread winner and I was the house wife and all his meals were made when he came home

from work. I cleaned house and looked after the kids. Then suddenly I decided I liked spending money. What he was bringing home wasn't enough to buy the extras. There comes a point too where you want to be a little bit more independent. I used to think, 'What if something happened to him, or if I leave him, got killed or something. What would I do?' That's what's bad with the kids now. They don't understand that. I had to go to upgrading to get my ten. It took me eight months. Then I had to go to grade eleven and twelve and that took another eight months to a year. Plus, once I got through there, I had to take the Home Care course. It's not easy. Priscilla has two subjects she's got to redo. The Principal was nice enough to let her. There was one exam where she had come home at eight thirty in the morning drunk from partying and she had to write it at nine o'clock: she didn't. If you miss your final exam you don't get a chance to write it right away. He told her she can go back in August and write that one and then he gave her 'till December to finish her correspondence one. I think she dropped the whole idea as far as I know. I just don't know if she'll finish, to tell you the truth. With the attitude she's got now, I've got a feeling she's not even going to try. She thinks that since she graduated she doesn't need it. She was never interested in school. Well, I wasn't either. I had to go back though. It's harder ten years down the road. Boy, I come home some nights, I was just bawling. I was so frustrated 'cause I just couldn't get a hang of that algebra and then we had biology. I had never taken that in my life and it was correspondence. We had to do all the work here and then take our lessons into PA so the teachers could correct them. Oh, I'd come home and I tell you, I could've pulled my hair out a lot of nights. We took the whole thing through book work - correspondence. I took it with Anne Lépine. Well, I finally got a hang of it but if I had to go write my exams over today, I'd have to start back at grade five. I don't know, maybe it would come back to me somehow after a while but I wouldn't have a clue what to do in algebra now. Yet, I passed all my classes. I had all eighties except one. I didn't like algebra. That's probably why I hated it; it never stuck to me. But I made it enough to pass. I just asked the teacher over and over again, "I don't understand. You have to explain it to me." Some days he would just shake his head and go over again. I'd do one problem, I'd go to the next and I was stuck again. I think he helped me with the whole book. I find Métis people are not as smart as other people. I don't know if that's all in my head or what it is.

EVA: They could be if they want to, I guess.

EVELYN: I always wondered about that all along. You have so many White politicians and White lawyers and all these things but very seldom you see Native or Métis. I used to always think we were dumber than them.

EVA: I think it's because they don't try hard enough.

EVELYN: You let discrimination overtake you. It's probably almost the same as me and my girls. I'm tired of fighting with them, so I just give up.

EVA: Us too, it was too hard when we went to school. Too dumb. And I can't do much. We had a hard time to understand.

EVELYN: I just wonder if it's that lack of opportunity that causes it. Even when we went to school us, we didn't have copy books a lot of times. But the nuns would give us copy books. We probably never had the opportunity to buy books and read. The resources weren't there you know. Now they are.

EVA: Could be too because now they have libraries and stuff like that. They all have the chance to get to read.

EVELYN: No, but like you guys when you were growing up there, did you have books that you could read?

EVA: No. There was no books at school.

EVELYN: Probably if you had parents that had money you could buy them.

EVA: The teacher had their books and then we have the only book we write in.

EVELYN: I think even when we were kids we even used to steal pencils and stuff like that `cause we didn't have the money. We were probably lacking a lot of stuff.

EVA: Maybe we'd resort to stealing, I don't know.

EVELYN: If they'd have had the money they might have been able to buy us story books and paper to practice on.

EVA: We didn't even have lunch kits us. We had pails. We brought bread in a lard pail. We'd punch three holes in the cover.

EVELYN: Those little red pails. We'd have bannock.

EVA: Yeah, bannock.

EVELYN: My brother was just talking not too long ago. He said that mom used to send him to school with bannock and wild meat. Well, he wasn't going to come in to school with that. He used to hide it he said. He'd eat his bannock outside.

EVA: Yeah, meat, bread, jam, boiled eggs, sometimes.

EVELYN: We'd have lard and mustard. We ate a lot of lard and bacon fat. That's why we've all got heart disease. It used to be a creamy lard. Bacon fat was good, eh? With salt, pepper and mustard. It's very good. One time I was making just a bread with mustard and the girls said, "Oh God, you're gross! How can you eat that?!"

EVA: It's raining quite a bit. It was dry lots when we grew up. In 1930 it was too dry though. The horses were dying of thirst. It really dried up most of the ground.

EVELYN: The sloughs all dried up.

EVA: We didn't have too much but it made a difference. My parents, they have lots of chickens, their own pigs, and stuff like that so in Fall we could slaughter a beef and a pig and some weeks we kill a chicken. Lots of eggs. Garden stuff. Lots of potatoes. They didn't buy nothing much to eat. She used to milk cows and then she'd sell the butter and they'd actually be glad. Well, it was cheaper. She was with child her too. We only had one brother because we had three brothers but then the other ones died

when young. She used to leave in the morning and go and make hay all day and stock it. Anything.

EVELYN: Stocking the hay. No wonder she was all crippled up. Her hands were turned one way and the fingers the other way. It was some kind of arthritis that cripples it and it turns your knees in.

EVA: She was crippled like this. Her knees were turned-in like this and like that.

EVELYN: She was suffering at the end there. It was actually a relief to see her go. I seen a lady yesterday, she was like that. Her hands were all crooked. It must be painful.

EVA: And Auntie Alice too. You should have seen her how she got small like this with her arthritis.

EVELYN: She didn't really hunch over that much. She shrunk. She had a bone disease. She must've had osteoporosis because her bones were like chalk and very brittle. They didn't break but at the end they told her to stay in the wheelchair because of this disease.

EVA: She broke her knee the last time she went in the hospital. She never went out after that.

EVELYN: She had her skin ripped right open when she fell.

EVA: Her skin was just like silk.

EVELYN: Yeah, they even tried gold treatments on her to fix that arthritis. They inject gold in the spine. And pills, and pills and pills. Oh, God! She died three or four years ago. We had just been to see her in Saskatoon and she was doing pretty good there and then she fell again. She went into cardiac arrest. They brought her back but it had been awhile before they found her unconscious her so there was brain damage. She never regained consciousness. The family gave the doctors the okay

to take the respirator off. She was sixty-eight. She had went through a lot of suffering.

EVELYN: Why did they give out those canned meats back then? That Spork or Klik?

EVA: They gave cases to some people.

EVELYN: But what was the reason for that? What was going on then?

EVA: They were going to go vote then. They wanted to get in.

EVELYN: Oh, so they were doing it for that.

EVA: Yeah, that was Diefenbaker.

EVELYN: I couldn't figure that out.

EVA: I wouldn't vote for him today!

EVELYN: He was trying to buy votes. I remember that.

EVA: That's what they were saying anyways, I don't know.

EVELYN: I just vaguely remember when we ate that meat a long time ago: canned meat. Well, for us it was a treat. I didn't even know if there was some kind of relief program or what. In those days it was called relief, eh?

EVA: Yeah.

EVELYN: That's another thing: people used to laugh at us all the time because we were on relief. Kids would say, "You're living on relief! You're living on relief!" I can still hear that. I even heard a lady talk not too long ago about all these mothers having babies and living on assistance. I almost told her, "You're a farmer; you're always on assistance!" Their social program is the same darn thing. I don't know. Things have got to change. Too much of our people are on welfare programs. The majority of them are in prisons. Poverty, I think, has a lot to do with it. Most of those people in

prisons are not in there for murder and rape. It's all robbery with violence or armed robbery or break and enter, over and over and over. It's to support their addictions, a lot of them: alcohol and drugs. I'm not familiar with the justice system. But ninety percent of them in the court were aboriginal when I was there. I've never really been to court for anything but I've been there a couple of times when Priscilla got caught for shoplifting. She got charged on the first offence so they dismissed it that time around. They gave her a Native lawyer. What was his name? He used to work for the Friendship Centre. Gerry Morin. He was dealing with the Native population as kind of a legal aid. He represents aboriginal people. He pleaded her case and she didn't get a record. She must have been sixteen. I think she went through so much embarrassment that it was enough to cure here, thank God. Jennifer went through the same thing. She didn't go to court though. I think every kid tries shoplifting once. She happened to get caught the first time which is good. Priscilla didn't get caught the first time. Jenny's wasn't as embarrassing as Priscilla's. Priscilla got to go to Zellers and face the security guard that caught her, then management, then she had to write a note of apology to the store. They posted it in the store for two weeks. Then she had to go to the program at the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre. I commend that program highly. That's where you have the first offenders go through that. Mostly what the kids are there for is shoplifting. They are sent for four or five sessions. They are made aware of the consequences of having a criminal record, which is good. So many things are involved: your job later on and even going out of the country.

EVELYN: I don't know what else we can talk about.

EVELYN: We had a Richard reunion here in St. Louis. We organized it. That was the nicest weekend in my life I think.

EVA: It was about three years ago.

EVELYN: Oh, ma, it's longer than that.

EVA: It happened, it's going to be three years. I got a cap, I don't know if it says the year.

EVELYN: I don't think it says the year, or maybe it does. I'm sure it's got to be at least five years. That was nice. Gerry and I went in Halloween costumes as the horror bride and groom. We had a dance Friday night and we had another one Saturday night.

EVA: I can't find it me, my blue cap. Maybe somebody took it. I don't think someone would steal it.

EVELYN: Oh, I see it there.

EVA: Maybe some place else.

EVELYN: 1990: Richard/Vandale. We included the Vandales because Marlene is married to a Vandale. It was nice because we met with so many people there. Some came from B. C., Alberta and some from Meadow Lake, like Sonny's relations. Everything went so good. The town let us have the grounds between our Hall and the Curling Rink and we rented the Hall. Then we'd all pitch in to barbecue out there. We had horseshoes and darts going and a talent show. It was nice. I'd look forward to getting up in the morning and just going there. It was on for three days. We had beautiful weather. There must've been a little over a hundred people, eh?

EVA: Oh yeah.

EVELYN: Oh, for sure one fifty to two hundred.

EVA: There must've been a good two hundred people, if not more.

EVELYN: Then we have an uncle that's kind of like an MC and he sings. He had records there years back but it never really went any place. He did it just on his own. So anyways, he took over the whole show. We had a band there on Friday night and we had a band there on Saturday night. Everybody put in donations for it. We didn't go in the hole. We donated a lot of our stuff. We put it on so we donated a lot. Sonny had brought up all the paper plates and cutlery. We just accepted donations, the food and whatever. We did a lot of cooking.

EVA: We had turkey that first night, eh?

EVELYN: We had a turkey supper; a big supper for the reception but after that it was all barbecue.

EVELYN: Jennifer has been working at BonBons for six months now. They like her there but she's got to learn to be a little more responsible. If I'm not home to wake her up, a lot of times what happens is they'll phone her but then she dozes off again. I told Bonnie, "You've got to be very, very firm with her and explain to her because it's her job at stake here. I don't want her not to be working but I realize you've got to rely on her and you can't say, "Well, Jennifer, you coming to work tomorrow?" and at the last minute you've got to look for somebody else." She's only got two others working for her and one's her nephew. So I told her to have a very serious talk with her. What would happen if I wasn't there? They want to move away and hold down a job. How will they do it? Like Priscilla is a hard worker. If she's given a job she is so dedicated but her problem is getting to work. Not all bosses are understanding like Bonnie. Some would have told her already "That's it Jennifer!" In fact, Bonnie gave her a chance already. I said, "Don't think that I'll be offended if you have to let her go because I'll understand." She's running a business. I'm not going to fight on Jennifer's behalf if she's being treated fairly. If she was treated unfairly it would be a different thing but not this way. I can't fight and go out to bats for her because she's got to learn to be responsible and get there on time. They always say, "Mom, you talk

for nothing; you talk for nothing." I said, "I've never had a job where I said I would be there at ten and I go there ten fifteen or ten thirty with no excuse. That's how you keep jobs. I usually phone my clients and say, "I'll be there between nine and nine-thirty. So that gives me a half hour leeway. If I'm ever late, well I phone and say I can't make it `till then." But, they don't seem to understand that. BonBons gets a lot of clients so they're very busy at times. They're just about going nuts with just the two of them. It's not much of a job right now but it's a paying job. It's better than nothing. I find that she's not learning responsibility fast enough. Last month she got a hundred and seventy-five dollar advance. On the 15th she got another hundred and seventy-five advance. At the end of the month, the 30th, she got paid again: six hundred and fifteen dollars. So, that's almost eight hundred dollars. That was more money than I was bringing in `cause my cheque was six hundred and thirty-two. I told her to give me twenty dollars a week. That's eighty dollars a month. That isn't much. I says, "You can't go on squandering your money like that. You're not putting nothing away. You want to go to school and you're not trying to save." I don't know what she's doing with her money. I got a feeling sometimes they actually dislike me because I'm always harping at them. I don't know how to do it. If I'm nice they still don't listen. I can't always be responsible for them. I can't! I'm going away for ten days to Edmonton. I'm taking two weeks off. I can't afford it but I'm taking them anyway. I can't afford not to. I just hope I can last that long. With the work load coming up it might keep my mind occupied. It will take more physical strength than mental strength. Those eight hour days I can't hack because next day I've got a hard time even trotting my body around. If you do three or four houses for Home Care a day you're lugging that vacuum cleaner all around, all day long. You're on your knees washing floors every house you go. And my knees are already bugged up. In many houses they don't have mops to use but you still have to do the cleaning because they're paying for quality care so they expect quality work.

EVELYN: Gerry, last week, he went to the cemetery and he came back and he says, "I've got to borrow a twenty-two somewheres. There's gopher holes in every grave." He comes home one day here and he says, "I've brought you supper." I got the bag and I thought `well, he got some fish from somewheres.' He opens the bag and it was filled with a bunch of dead gophers. Gross, *hee, hee!* They make a mess sometimes.

It's dangerous to walk around there too with the gopher holes all over. You could trip and twist your ankle pretty darn bad, boy.

EVELYN: We used to have to walk quite far to go watch the late movies. We'd come and watch TV at Gerry's parents. They had a TV back in the late fifties. Then, we were scared to walk home `cause we had watched all these horror shows. They don't have those any more. I remember watching this show where this UFO [Unidentified Flying Object] had landed and he left this big egg on earth and it hatched a million things. That show bothered me for years, *hee, hee!*

4.4 Priscilla Richard

I was born at the Holy Family Hospital in Prince Albert on April 14th, 1972. I'm now twenty-one. When I first started off in school we lived in Prince Albert in the West Flat area. I went from kindergarten to grade three at St. Michael's and then we moved to St. Louis in 1980. When we came to St. Louis I was shy. I had relatives here but I didn't fit in with my calls right away. I kept to myself. My mom says I was a loner. I got up to grade five and then had trouble. I failed grade five. My attitude was the problem. One day the teacher asked me if I cared if I pass or fail and I said, "I don't care if I pass or fail," so I failed.

In grade seven I hung around with one particular friend. We went all over together; we were inseparable. We decided we wanted to go to Wesmor, a school in Prince Albert. My mom and her mom went to the Wakaw School Division to see if we could attend that school and we were allowed to. We went up until January. My friend got pregnant and then I wanted to come back to St. Louis because I didn't want to go to Wesmor anymore. From there I started - well I was only thirteen years old - drinking, going out more and getting into trouble. School didn't seem like it was important any more. I didn't quit but I had problems because I was having trouble. In grade nine they put me on modified programs like English. It's the same work but they gave me less questions on my test. Then I failed grade nine. I didn't get along with that teacher. I think she was racial against Métis people and Natives too. I made it through grade ten and grade eleven and I'm struggling with grade twelve. My exams are coming up this June but I don't think I'm going to pass them all. The principle is giving me an extension until December. If I don't get all the marks I won't be able to go to post-secondary school right away. I'll probably upgrade at Kelsey because I heard you can go to Kelsey or to SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] and try and get credits.

One of the first memory of my childhood memories is my first day of school. I was on my bike and this big German Shepherd started running after me. He bit my leg and I had to go to the hospital. I didn't get stitches. I got a tetanus shot. I remember them giving me balloons and candy. I was always scared of dogs. I'm not scared of the dog I have. I didn't know I was Métis then, not until we moved to St. Louis. In Prince Albert I'd hang around with my friends and a lot of them were mostly White people. I had one good friend who was Native. She lived right next door to me. We

would go to her house then over to mine. She always had popsicles, fudgesicles; everything a kid could want. Her father would say, "Give me a kiss" or, "Come and sit on my lap." I was about eight years old then. About four years ago, my mom told me and Jennifer that he had been charged for sexually abusing little kids. So we were lucky. It never dawned on us when he'd say, "Come and sit on my lap and give me a kiss." You know, we didn't think anything of it. Maybe he got his thrills out of that.

There were a lot of arguments back when dad was drinking. Mom went through a lot for him. I remember this one time when dad's brother and girlfriend were over. They were all drinking; dad was drunk. Me and Jenny were in bed. All of a sudden we could hear them screaming. Mom was telling him to leave my dad alone. They argued, his brother left and then he came back and started fighting my dad. We got out of the bedroom and went to talk to our uncle and we jumped on him. We jumped on his back and told him to leave our dad alone. He had hit my dad in the face. My dad was full of blood. So me and Jenny were scared at that time. That was in Prince Albert. I remember that but I don't really remember dad drinking too much when we were young. I'm glad I don't. He never did anything to us but it was just his drinking. I remember one thing about dad's drinking. Mom was in hair dresser's school. So dad would take us to Coronet. This was where me and Jenny would go while dad would go and have a few beer. We thought it was okay because me and Jennifer were sitting there and getting treated by the waitresses. We were getting good service. We got burgers, fries and pop and we were happy. We didn't care that dad was gone for a drink. We were on our own. We stayed in the restaurant for an hour, two hours. Then dad would come back and he was probably half cut by that time. We didn't notice.

When I was in Prince Albert I never thought I was Native or have any part Native blood. We moved to St. Louis when I was eight years old. I'm twenty-one years old now so we have been living in St. Louis for thirteen years. Most of our relatives are here: both our grandmas, all our aunties and uncles and cousins. We hung around with our cousins a lot. We'd go to the lake for the weekend. It was in my high-school years when I thought, 'Oh my God .. I'm part Native!... I don't look Native. My skin ain't brown!' I found out by my parents. People don't know I'm Métis until I tell them. Jennifer and I'm sure I went on a trip to California and got a pen pal from Finland. She writes to us and she knows we're Métis. We explained what that meant because she didn't know. We told her that we're half French and half Indian. She was interested in

what we were. We were interested in what she was because she was Finnish and from a different country.

Mom was really involved in the Métis meetings. She could be president if she wanted to, but she doesn't want to. When we were old enough, she wanted us to get a Métis card. So I got a Métis card when I was sixteen and went to a couple of meetings. I'm usually the youngest one there, unless Jennifer goes too. When you go you don't feel like you've got the say as the older ones do.

It was probably when I was older when I found out I was Métis. I might have known all along but I didn't think I was because I didn't look like it. It bothers me a little bit because I'd always look down on Indians. I said earlier that I didn't realize I was Métis when I was really young but I did because we'd go to Batoche Days every year. We used to work in the canteen booth. We'd make a lot of money for Local #28. Native or Métis guys would always follow us and whistle at us when we were there. I didn't like it. Not when you have five guys and there are only two girls walking. We'd be walking around the site to see what was happening. I thought, 'I'm sure I'm sure I'm going to go out with one of these guys here.' Anyhow, we now go for the jigging, the fiddling, the dance, baseball and to meet boys. We're going to go every year.

Grandma and mom told us a bit about our history. They just said, "Did you know that you got a great-great-grandfather that was in the Rebellion? His name was Maxime Lépine." I didn't know. Maxime was the grandfather of my dad's mom. He's a hero. I don't know too much about our ancestors. I'd like to hear more about it. We've hardly thought about it until now that we talk about it.

When the park opened at Batoche I went with my school and then we went as a family to see it. You go around the trail and the guides tell you about it. They tell you where the Rebellion took place and show the church. We also saw the movie in both English and in French. I didn't understand the French one very well because it wasn't in the French I know. It was in slang French. It wasn't like the Métis French.

Being Métis means that you got a French background. It's not real French, it's slang, it's Métis French. I can't understand the French on television but I can usually understand what my mom is saying. I understand the Métis French but never spoke it.

I never learned it. I just learned English but knew that my mom and dad talked Métis French. They speak French in front of us and on the phone all the time. When she talks on the phone you know right away it's grandma or a relation or dad. If it's a business person she'll talk English. So right away we know it's not an important call if

she speaks French. Sometimes our neighbours across the street - they're older - will ask us in French if our mom or dad are home and they'll start speaking French to us. You have to know a little bit, just because of our heritage. I am an English Métis. Mom would be Métis French and grandma would be Métis French too. Maybe before they would've been Cree. Probably before our great-grandma. They were probably Native because along the line there had to be someone who was Native for us to get Métis blood. Someone must have married a Native. If I marry a White guy and he couldn't consider himself as a Métis, our kids could be Métis. If ever I get married I want my kids to be Métis but I don't know if my husband will agree. We'll do things with his culture and we'll do things in my culture. I would want them to get involved in the Métis Society. I would take them to places that have Métis people with activities that deal with Native and Métis people. I would try to get a youth group for them. I want to see them active in it. I would take them to Batoche every year.

Being Métis is about history. In school you got taught about Batoche and Louis Riel and the Rebellion. It seems like that has lots to do with being a Métis person. It goes back to when we weren't around. They didn't really teach us too much in school about the Métis people.

I think that the school should teach more about Métis people and not just about the Europeans and their wars. They should have a class especially for Métis people. Not just social studies, history and things like that. If I was teaching the class I'd teach what it is to be a Métis person. I would ask them if they realize if they are Métis. I would ask them if they have been treated with racism because they are Métis. I would teach them about the Rebellion. I would help them to find out if they have Métis ancestry so they would know. I would give them a chance to learn about being a Métis person. If a kid didn't believe they were Métis when I found out that they were, I would tell them, "Talk to your parents about it. They'll tell you. Go and talk to your grandparents. They'll tell you. Talk to one of the family members because it's only your family members that can tell you."

I know that I don't feel too different about being a Métis person. I don't feel that I should be treated special or any differently than anybody else. I should have the same rights as everybody else. I should have to work the same as everybody else. I should be accepted the same as everybody else but not be looked down on because I'm a Métis person. If I know the person who is being put down it bothers me more. It depends, if you see someone who's getting picked on because they're Métis, you think,

`that's not fair. If there was somebody else standing there, you wouldn't do that to them.' Being Métis is not being Indian, it's not being English. You're in between. You have Indian blood. You get benefits for a while. You've got more of a chance to get into school if you're half native or aboriginal. You still got to pay tax if you are Métis. You can get a Métis card but it's not the same as a Treaty card. You get your Métis card from your Local. The Native Treaty card is for all over; it's not just one area.

The Métis people have their own little group in one area. We work together to make the Métis people better in that area. We have a Métis hall that could be used for such things as the Home Care course that they are trying to deliver. We have dances. The Local gives donations to Métis people who need money for certain things like if you have a sick kid and you have to go to Toronto and the family needs money for transportation and accommodations. The Local also gives donations to the school. It sponsored me to go to the Phantom of the Opera with my school. I like the way everyone in the Local meetings agree on things and disagree. Some say they want so much money to go to that person and then some of them don't agree. I just sit back and listen mostly, I don't talk.

The meetings are Métis meetings because they have their own group and they're speaking for themselves. They're working for the Métis people not for just anyone. They want to do things for us. Last year I got a job through the Métis Society and I worked for the summer of 1992: July until the end of August. They paid me minimum wage, five bucks an hour, seven hours a day. I was the only one from our Local that got this job. I cut grass and cleaned out back alleys around town, worked at the school yard and did the cleaning at the Métis Hall. I cleaned cupboards, washed all the walls and cut the grass there.

Others in the community don't have a Local because they don't get together and go with what they are. Everybody should be treated equal. The Métis people or the Natives or the Black people aren't treated equal. There is hassle and discrimination. You get looked down at. "If you're a Native, you're a drunk. That's all they do is drink and play bingo you're on welfare. You don't live right," That's what people see and say when they look at a Native person. They look at a Métis person the same way because a lot of Métis people have the qualities of Native people, but they are not as much as a Native person. Some Native people too have really light skin. The Métis people get more advantages than other people but Natives get even more but they get

a lot of hassle too. Native people may seem like they have more benefits but it's them that have to live with the racism towards them each and every day.

Two of my girlfriends from school, Renée Rabut and Nicole Rancourt, go out with Native boys. They became interested in Native Studies after they started dating them.

At graduation time we had to put our names and the names of our escorts up on a board in the school. Some guys wrote "buck" next to Renée and Nicole's escorts' names. The guys who did that are really prejudice and make fun of those two boys in class. A lot of them are Métis - some of them admit they're Métis - and they laugh at the Native guys. They're a tight group. The two girls get criticized and put down because they go with two Native guys. Renée and Nicole stick up for the Native people and they're two White girls! Me and Jennifer went to California with Renée and Nicole Rabut (not Nicole Rancourt). Me and Renée shared our seats, and Jenny and Nicole shared their seat. We did a lot of things together. We'd go to the lake together and go out together. We did Candy Striping together with them and two others.

There's a lot of discrimination against women. There are jobs you can't get because you are a woman. They say you can't do it because you're a woman. Someone can go out there and do a construction job just as good as a man, such as on the highways or as a police officer. Police officers today want to be able to wear braids in their hair. They should be allowed to. Same with those who want to wear their turbans because it's part of their tradition. If they want to keep it alive they should be able to show what they are and not hide it and let it get away. If you can't wear it when you work when can you wear it? I don't think there are too many Métis people on the police force now but there probably will be more. There are more with the RCMP than with the police. When cops see a White person driving by and a Native person passing by they will probably stop the Native person first. They do it because they think the Native person doesn't have a license and is probably drunk. They could just be driving and doing nothing while a White person could be drunk without a license and nothing happens to him. You can tell by reading court documents. You can tell just by their names if it's a White or Native person. There are a lot of Native and Métis people on the court documents. Judges probably treat them like everybody else after they get caught. Native people don't know how to defend themselves. It's their fault for not speaking up. You have to speak up for yourself.

The population in the alcohol treatment centres is three quarters Native. I don't know if you like alcohol more if you are Native or Métis but you drink more. There

must be a reason why it's mostly Natives in jail and alcohol centres. Maybe it's because of low self-esteem or discrimination, racism or lack of education and jobs. Métis people do not face these problems as much because most people can't tell if you're a Métis. You don't have to say you're a Métis if you don't want to. If they don't notice then it's better for you so don't tell them. In some ways people can tell I'm Métis and in others ways they can't. I think maybe they can tell by my voice, my parents, by the food we eat and the way we live. My mom looks more Native than my dad. My grandma and uncles often get asked if they have a Treaty card or, "Do you pay tax?" Just the other day my twenty-one year old cousin was asked if he paid tax. He said, "If I paid tax I'd tell you." To my cousins, that's an insult. And they're Métis people! It's not that they're ashamed it's just that if a person wants to show their card they would. They shouldn't have to get asked about it. They just judge you by your looks. When my auntie buys something expensive, like a VCR [video cassette recorder], they'll ask her if she pays tax and she'll give them a number. She gets away with it. She said, "If they don't ask me I'll pay." It's their fault because they should look at the card for identification and not just take a number. The tax should be for everybody I think. Native people should not be excluded. If Métis people are going to be considered part of the Native culture, then we shouldn't be paying tax either. I think, though, that everybody should pay tax because of the debt. The only way they'll make it back is by the little tax that they charge. Cigarettes and beer cost so much but we've got to pay the price or chose not to smoke or drink. Those are luxuries but you shouldn't have to pay tax on water, food, and other things you need. We pay tax on a lot of things we need.

We eat things like tacos and spaghetti. We make spaghetti by buying spaghetti sauce, hamburger, mushrooms and green peppers. At Christmas we have bangs and meatballs. Bangs are fried dough. We call them crooked fingers also. They are made with flour, water, lard, salt, baking powder and baking soda. Then we deep fry them. They don't look like fried bannock. I made them at school two years ago for Christmas because we had to make something that represented our nationality, our culture. Someone else made cabbage rolls because she was Ukrainian. Another made bannock because she was Native. A Métis girl made meatballs with gravy sauce. We also love bannock but prefer to eat it somewhere else than at home. We like going to our Native friend's house because every time we go there they have fresh bannock. That's one of her specialties. We eat it with home made jam and

margarine. She also makes ice cream. We don't go there often but when we do we know we're going to get bannock. I've tried to make bannock. I made it once but then a couple of times I tried and it flopped.

Grandma makes the bangs. That's a specialty in our family. People even go to her and see if she wants to sell them. She sells a dozen for three dollars. Auntie Marlene makes the jam jams and also sells them by the dozen. A lot of people don't know how to make jam jams. To make the bangs you have to save the lard from the fat. They're good but they're fattening. We only make them once a year but we still have some in our freezer. Grandma has made meat pies before. I like them. I don't like mincemeat pies though. Mom makes rice pudding with raisins, rice and a sauce. She also makes stew with fresh vegetables and pork or beef. It's good on bread. I can make some of these things with mom watching over me. We make ragout. You put hamburger pieces and potatoes into water and make a gravy mixture out of water and flour. You have to make it just right or else it gets lumpy. We also make bullet soup which is sort of a meatball soup. I never tried to make buffalo burgers, I just heard about them. It seems like that would be a part of Métis roots. Those are the only foods I know about.

No one in my family hunts, traps or goes fishing but my cousins and my mom's brothers do. I like deer meat. It's not necessarily a Métis thing because everybody does it nowadays. It's not a Métis food. We eat it if mom's brother gives us some deer meat or sausage. We pick berries. Mom, grandma and us, we go pick blueberries or chokecherries. We go to the bush from dinner time until about seven o'clock at night. Mom and grandma last the longest. You'd think because we're young we'd last longer than them but grandma keeps on picking, and mom keeps on picking. Me and Jenny will have half a pail and grandma will have a whole pail. It's because they've done it all their lives and they enjoy it more. We give our berries to mom and grandma and they make jam out of them. Blueberry jam and choke cherry jam. If they wanted to they could make wine out of it but at grandma's they've never made wine. My Uncle Raymond makes wine out of berries every year. I think he goes picking especially for that. His home made wine is powerful. We also pick paquants [like hazelnuts]. I'm not sure what the word is in English. There is a nut in the prickly shell. I don't like picking them because they have a prickly shell and you get little slivers in your hand. They grow in a bush. You can get them west of here. You have to drive to the St. Laurent and Batoche area. My Auntie Eileen and Uncle

Raymond take me and Jenny. We go by truck and you can see the short bush from the road. If you have to go in the bush your legs get all scratched up if you're wearing shorts. Quite a few times dad went and picked potato sacks full. You generally let them dry out. We eat them as a snack instead of having chips.

On Christmas Eve we are at home until ten thirty at night. We start getting dressed up at around ten o'clock, then we, me, mom, dad, Jenny and Angela, leave for the church. Mass begins at eleven o'clock. They have two masses: one in English and one in French. We always go to the eleven o'clock mass. Every year they switch the English and French masses around. We go to mass then after, straight after mass, we go to grandma's. Grandma has all our relatives there, even the ones from Edmonton. Her little house is packed. She makes a turkey with stuffing - you got to have a turkey - mashed potatoes, bangs, meat balls and gravy, salad, juice and jam jams. Jam jams are cookies. You make the dough in a circle. You put the raspberry or strawberry jam in the middle of the dough and then you put the other circle of dough on top. That's jam jams; they're real good. That's another Métis food. Grandma always has a real tree, never an artificial one. There's always presents under the tree for the young kids. Every year we each pick a name instead of buying for everybody. Whoever has a gift under the tree opens it. After that we just sit and talk. Me and Jennifer always want to leave around 2:30am because we want to open our gifts at home. We all exchange gifts. We give mom hers and my dad his and mom will give us hers. I usually buy mom moccasins or a new watch for Christmas. I buy the moccasins at the Hudson Bay store. Never bought mukluks though. Mom has a pair of mukluks. The next day we have Christmas dinner at grandma's again. It's pretty busy at her house. We usually have left overs from the night before plus cake. Grandma does a lot of the cooking.

We celebrate Thanksgiving also. We have a turkey, potatoes, salad and pumpkin pie. I'm not sure if we do anything at Easter except get chocolate bunnies. I don't think we have a big Easter supper.

When we're all at grandma's at Christmas it's mostly French. We're probably the only ones that will speak English. Grandma, mom and all her brothers will speak French amongst each other. It doesn't bother me because I know what they're saying. My grandfather speaks English to us but speaks French to my grandmother and my mother. Mom and dad speak both English and French when they want to. When they're in bed I think they speak French. My cousin Yves Laroque is Métis and

French-Canadian and lives in Montréal. He has adapted to the French from there. He says that our French is really different from his. My Auntie Lorraine, her husband Rock Bonnet and Yves speak French. When they were here they were trying to learn how to drive so I went with them. I would tell them in French, "Tournez à droite" and, "Tournez à gauche" instead of saying, "Turn left, turn right" because they'd get confused.

I'm not too involved in religion right now. I'll pray but I'm not involved as much as mom and dad. None of us are: not me or Jennifer or Angela. Angela mostly goes with mom and dad to church. We used to go when we were younger. It's just been in the last few years that we've quit going. Maybe because we're teenagers. I always used to go with mom and dad to the Pilgrimages. I went this year to the one in Wakaw. Last year we carried a torch around at the St. Laurent Pilgrimage. It's mainly Métis people who go to the St. Laurent Shrine. At Wakaw it is mainly Ukrainian people. There used to be a convent in St. Louis. The nuns used to go and pray at the Grotto. When the convent got run down the Grotto became overgrown with bushes. My dad, the Vermette's and Denise Pilon talked about getting it going again. My dad was the one who started working on it then Joe helped and got other people to help out. They would have Mass there about once a week. The priest, nuns and anyone who wanted to go could come. Mass was on Wednesday nights at seven o'clock. It was held in both English and French because it wasn't really a Mass. It was more of a Rosary. You'd say the Chapel of Virtues and the Rosary once. If I said it I would speak in English. If dad said it he would say it in French. Now my dad would say it in English probably. There's always French still. My parents now go just about every night. My dad goes every day with the dog and sits there for an hour. He lights candles and puts them around the statue of Bernadette. It's just a little place to pray, think things over and rest.

It's mostly Métis people that go to the Grotto, but not all. Métis people from Prince Albert come too. It seems like a lot of people are prejudice about the Grotto. It's the Roman Catholic ones that go to church all the time - the high class ones. They think they're better than everybody else. They just go to church to make it look good. These people are nice in their own way. People around town think it's a cult or they think it's some sort of bad place. They blame things on it, like Vivian and her husband split up and they said it's all because of the Grotto.

There are always miracles that seem to happen at the St. Laurent Pilgrimage. There is the outdoor grotto and the old burned down church. There is a buffalo pit where the Indians used to make the buffalo run off the cliff. Mom showed us the place where the buffaloes all died. I think the buffaloes were used mostly for food but they didn't have to kill all the buffaloes. The Métis hunted buffaloes with spears or maybe they had guns. They probably had to cut them up down there to bring them back up. It's quiet there, and peaceful. It's a pure tourist attraction. Even though I don't go to church I still go there because it seems like it is part of my tradition. It's a family thing. Churches seem so dull and so phoney sometimes when people go there and just sit and look around to see what others are wearing. We used to go to church during the week instead of on Sundays. We would go for a one half hour Monday Mass. Dad would tell us not to go to Communion because we should have gone for Confession first on Sundays but he would tell us only after. He made us realize that we're not supposed to go to Communion unless we attend church regularly. About four times a year there is a special night for Confession. The day before my parents always remind us not to go out for the night in case we might miss it. There are four priests, one from St. Louis, one from St. Laurent, one from Wakaw and one from Prince Albert. At school we have Mass with Confession at the beginning of the year to welcome us.

Land rights should have been settled before and not now. The Natives say it's all their land. I can't see someone just owning land. It's been one hundred years and they want it back after they sold it for next to nothing. In some cases, like maybe with the Métis, the land was lost or stolen. They should be able to get their land back.

I don't know if I'll complete my grade twelve this year. If I do have to get any more credits I was thinking of taking a Native Studies course and maybe a Law course.

I think there will be information on the Métis in the class because I know some people who took it already. They also say it's kind of hard because there's lots to learn and we don't know too much about it.

The Gabriel Dumont Institute is something to do with Métis and Native people. It was a school, a training place. Even the first time I heard about Pathways is when mom had to go to present a Home Care course. I heard about SUNTEP [Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program] a long time ago. Gabriel Dumont Institute runs that. I'm not interested in going into teaching but I'm interested in going into Home Care. I'd want to take the course in St. Louis because what's the

use coming out to Saskatoon when you are just working for minimum wage. I can always find a job in Saskatoon next year after I'm done my course.

My mom sometimes gets mad at meetings when she goes if things aren't run right and when people get treated badly. It's because she cares. She's not there just to say that she went or just there for show. Like that one incident about Gail St. Germaine. She had a low rental house and everything they were saying Gail was doing wasn't true because we knew her well. Mom would come home and talk about it with us. She'd talk about it with dad and we'd get into it too.

Me and Jennifer went to a Métis Youth Conference this year on March 26th to the 28th. Our rooms were paid for from Friday to Sunday and our meals and transportation were paid for. We had to attend meetings from nine to four and then it was free time until the next day. We were asked to go from the Métis Society to listen to what they were talking about and see what's out there for Métis young people today. There were a few people that were wearing moccasins and the beige colours. There were different speakers including a guy from jail, a lawyer and a Métis football player from the Roughriders. We took notes. Their message was that you can do something with your life. Lots of them had been involved in drugs and drinking before and they decided to change their life and do something with it. They said that we can do it too. We have to because we're the ones taking over.

I know some things about the political situation of Métis people. They're getting more young people to represent certain areas in the Métis Society and Métis people, like youth directors, counsellors, area directors. The area directors don't have to be young but there are more people. There are different places you can go to get a job and get educated on it and need help. Some politicians are all talk, no action. If some of them were here right now I'd tell them to keep their promises. They are supposed to help people. I've met Gerald Morin, we had him speak at the youth conference. He has a lot of experience. He'll be able to do something if he works hard enough and if he keeps his promises. He wants more funding for more education but he needs money from the government and you're only allowed so much money. Education is a benefit for Métis people so they are not on the street or they are not in low rental houses or having kids when they're single and to do something so they don't just sit around. Métis people are in these situations because of a lack of education. That's what I see most in the mothers there. The young guys all drop out of school when they're in grade nine and the girls they'll have kids before

they quit school and they'll have kids right after. Then they don't bother going back to school and look for a job because they are taking care of their kids. And they don't even have enough to live on. They're not suffering. They're just depending on welfare, seems like. They're going to grow up without everything they need to know. They won't spend money on them to go to school, and get money to go to College because they don't have no money. The same thing will happen to the kids if they don't get funding or anything, unless they decide if they want something better for their kid. You see, the kids go down the same paths as them.

My mom and dad want us to do something. I don't think she wants to see us sit around and do nothing all our life. She wanted us to graduate and she probably wants us, me, to take that course when it comes along. She knows that Home Care is needed out there. Maybe she sees how I am with old people. I can relate to them good. Not the best but I'm patient around them. Some people mom worked for in Home Care were not even old, they're young. It's just that they can't do everything. They're sick but not sick enough to be in a hospital. They can do some things for themselves but some things they can't do. To get into the Home Care course you have to have your grade twelve or equivalent and you're supposed to be pre-employed by a Home Care District. I don't see how we can get a job with Home Care if we don't have the course. I asked my mom this weekend, "What does this mean? It says you've got to have a job in Home Care already?" "I suppose you don't have to," she says. I never applied.

One of my friends - we were best friends - she grew up and she was on a farm across the river and she'd never go out, never. Then when they moved to St. Louis she wanted her freedom. So she started going out. We were hanging around. She started to go out with some boys and we took grade seven together. In grade eight, when we decided we wanted to go the Prince Albert School and we were able to, I set her up with this one guy from Wakaw. She started going out with him and they got involved in sex. But she got pregnant half way through the year and she told me right away. She said, "I think I'm pregnant" and she was only fourteen. She's only nineteen right now, and she's a White girl, she's not a Native girl or Métis. She didn't tell her mom until like four months down the road. Her mom and dad took a fit and since then she quit school in grade eight and now she didn't go back to school until two years later and then just upgrading. Now she's finished her grade eleven. She's going to grade twelve upgrading. She's getting married on August 7th with that same

guy. They're living together. He's not supposed to live with her but he's there all the time. He's going to school too. He just finished grade eleven. I was supposed to be her maid of honour but I don't know, she's going to have a small wedding and she's got her other friend but I'll still be at the wedding.

On Friday nights in St. Louis we just stay here, go to the bar, then a party and go home about five o'clock in the morning, sleep probably until twelve noon the next day, two o'clock maybe, get up, go out, go to my cousins, my friends, whatever. We go drive around, drink at somebody's house. Things like that. We listen to music on a juke box, play at the pool table, shuffleboard, drink beer. That's what I usually do on Friday nights. When I get away from St. Louis, I don't do those things on Fridays or Saturdays. When I had my car we used to go beer cruising quite a bit. I don't have the car now, when I had my car I had a little to drink. Went a little bit over it a little to much. A lot of times mom and dad would stay up late and worry about us when we were not home yet, wondering if we were sober or drunk. Then if I drank I would get someone to drive, then if there was no one to drive, I'd end up taking over. They still thought that I would drink and drive. If we had a Métis youth group in St. Louis we could get together on a Friday night and go to Prince Albert or Saskatoon. We could go to the gym and play a volley ball game or badminton or have baseball games. On Saturday afternoon we could go swimming at the water park and go on a picnic. We could go to the show. It wouldn't always be just for fun. We would go to conferences and meet Métis people from the other Locals. We would find out what they do in their group and we would tell them what we do in ours. We would be grouped together and maybe play baseball. I would allow other people to come and play baseball. If you are not a Métis person you couldn't vote in the youth group. We would be hooked on with the Métis Local from our town. I sometimes attend the Métis Local meetings now. I don't speak but maybe one day I might. I would tell them if I agree or disagree and what I'm thinking. If I move out of home and go to Saskatoon I'm not going to be able to have a youth group here. I'll get involved in one over there. I'd go to the Friendship Centre. I'd join the Local in Saskatoon.

I've worked at the Rehab Centre in St. Louis for work experience for school. It's extra credits you get for you to graduate. If you don't have enough credits, then you have to work at different places in St. Louis. You have to work one hundred hours in each place for one credit. Two hundred hours is two credits. I started this in grade ten. The first year it was one credit hour. I had a hundred hours in at three different

places: thirty four hours each. The first place I worked at was the Riverview Café when I was in grade ten. Then they would hire me off and on whenever then needed me. I didn't get paid. I still work there if they need me but now I get paid. Me and a friend worked at the IGA for work experience. We'd go there and we'd stock shelves and price things and things like that. Just kind of stock boy or stock girl. That was in grade ten, two years ago, and just this September they phoned and asked my if I wanted a full time job there. I couldn't take it because I was taking grade twelve. She had told mom, "When Priscilla worked here, I found her a really good worker" and that they wanted me to work because they had a position. They hired somebody else because I couldn't work. The third place I worked at was the library. I'd file books, type file cards and catalogue new books. Then in grade eleven I went to the Riverview Café, again, to waitress and cook. Then I went to the St. Louis Hotel where I was a waitress and made drinks. At William's Farm Service I served gas, took money, and made money orders with visa cards. I would also clean up the place and painted benches. When I wasn't busy, I washed windows and checked oil.

In grade twelve I went for work experience at the Rehab Centre. There I was working in the kitchen with Marlene and Eve mostly. I helped them prepare their meals and do things for them. She'd get me to bake cakes, muffins or different things. Then I'd serve them at dinner time. I got to know some of the clients because I would take time to listen to them. They would tell me their problems. I got along with them. I now realized that I abused my privileges there because the kitchen staff aren't supposed to do any counselling and that's what I was doing. I was more interested in meeting new people and sitting around with them. I got to know one of the guys pretty good that way. His name is Darren. I got to go to see him many times in there. We sort of went out because we got along so good, while he was in there. He gave me his address and I wrote to him. When he got out of the Centre we kept in contact. When he got out of jail, about three months later, he forgot about me. I still think about him and wonder where he is and what he's doing: "Where are you Darren?!"

I'm back at the St. Louis Hotel right now, waitressing and going for drinks, and renting out movies. This is a way to pass grade twelve. I took Chemistry in grade eleven. I got my Psychology in grade eleven too. I had good marks in Psychology: seventy-six percent.

They used St. Louis as the place for a movie. I can't remember what it was called. They had people like John B. in it and people from school. They were

supposed to be Métis. Some of them weren't even Métis that were in the movie. They just picked the ones with the highest average and a lot of Métis kids go left behind. I didn't think that was fair they had people there that were smarter than us. The movie was about Métis people. There were a lot of Métis people in it but not all. they used our bridge in it. We watched the movie. We were interested in it because it was in St. Louis and around here. It was an okay movie. The setting was nice and it wasn't that long. It was only a half hour. I remember the kids going back to school. They were laughing because all they had to do was one little part, just say, "Hi uncle Alfred" and that's it. They were laughing because they got paid thirty-five dollars like it was not big, deal. It was just the money that they were in there for, and they got to miss school - half a day. That was two years ago. It would have been neat to be in the movie, see your name there.

If I move to Saskatoon I want to do volunteer work. I want to work with my people. I'd be helping them out and it'll make me feel better about myself too by helping somebody else out. It might end up by helping to change them and I would change myself too, a little bit. I have to change my drinking and I've got to learn to wake up on my own and quit depending on my parents. If I'm to get out there I'm going to have to set my own alarm clock and pay my own bills and start being responsible. I think I'm ready if I'm going to move out. It's probably why Jennifer doesn't want to leave because they're so good. She's got a job. She pays room and board whatever, whenever she wants. Mom's not too strict. If Jennifer moves out, she'll be lost. She relies on mom and dad. Well, I do too, but I'll make my own money last. I can't depend on them anymore because the money they give me is not enough for me to live on.

I like new country music, like Allan Jackson. I also like rock. I like classical music now that I've been to the **Phantom of the Opera**. I find it more interesting and relaxing. I like some of the music they play at Batoche too. My dad plays a lot of old country music. My friends come over and say, "Oh my God, what kind of music are you playing?!"

I tried to learn how to jig when I was a kid. I could have did it me, if I would've practised. But I gained weight and go quite out of shape and couldn't keep up anymore.

I never heard of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples before you came here. I see the **Star Phoenix** and see articles on Métis people - they sure got lots. I

read some of the articles. It's positive stuff about Métis people. I read the **New Breed** when it comes out. It comes out every three months I think or once every four months. We get two or three copies of it. I read some of it; not all of it.

I always knew I wanted to take part and talk at the Métis Society meetings. I'm going to go and try and if they don't like what I say, tough, it's up to them. It's good that we're doing this project because we're learning more about being Métis by you asking us questions and us thinking about them. I'm learning more as I talk about it. I wouldn't have thought about this stuff before. It's a learning experience for you and for me. It's not only going to benefit you, it's going to benefit me too. I just want to say one last thing. By doing this report with Giselle I got to know her pretty good and think of her more as a friend than someone who's just doing her job.

4.5 Jennifer Richard

I am a French-Métis Canadian. That means I am half Indian and half White. We're our own people. We're not White, we're not Indian nor French. We're all mixed. The Métis culture goes back pretty far in our family, back to our ancestors. I first knew I was Métis when I was young. My parents never really talked about it, I just knew because of our name and our culture. Métis culture is almost into Native culture - I call Indians "Natives"; the traditions, food and sometimes clothes. Also crafts like crocheting, mending and making things. Bannock and bangs are some of the foods. I never tried to make them. I know I probably could but I just leave mom and grandma to do it. **Batoche Days** is a tradition; we usually attend every year. Our Métis Local used to have a canteen there. I don't know why that shut down. Anyhow, there's fiddling, square dancing and bannock baking. I don't dance or jig and I can't remember ever trying to. Our Christmas is kind of like everybody else's, it's just that the whole family always go to my Grandma's, have lunch, open gifts and talk. Mom says we're losing some of our culture.

I don't know too much about the history of the Métis people, just about the Rebellion and that our ancestors were fighting for land. I learned just about the Europeans and the Indians and how the Métis generation began. I also learned some history from my parents and other family members. They never said too much about it. I probably could get to know more about it if I really talked to my grandma but I have never really sat down and talked to her about it. It's interesting but I just never sat down with her - yet. I don't even know half of it because everybody has their own interpretation. It's just that I'm not in to Métis history and Métis youth. I just live my life like anyone else.

St. Louis is mainly a Métis community because it's filled with Métis families. I don't think people here do things any differently than people from other communities. My life isn't any different from others. My mom and dad probably have a different life because they went through discrimination because of their nationality. Mom talks about how there was the Indians and the Métis back when they were younger and they were picked on because they had Indian in them - but nowadays people are just people. They talked about the negative stuff and happy times in their life. I never heard my grandma talk about it. I'd like to go talk to my grandma one of these days and find out about our ancestors. She's told us some but not really much.

I had a happy childhood, except when dad was drinking and dad and mom would fight. I can remember that. They would argue and of course my sister and I stuck to my mom like glue. We loved dad but were scared of his drinking. I think he drank until I was twelve; then he quit. I wonder if that was a happy house? I remember him drinking. He was an alcoholic. I'm not sure why, probably work and family and stress made him drink - make him quit. His religion made him stop drinking. It doesn't bother me really that there's a history of drinking in the family. It's up to them but they should consider their health. But myself, I don't think I'm an alcoholic, maybe I am, but I don't know. I know Priscilla's drinking has caused a lot of problems, it really has. I think I should try and help her and help myself. I'm so gullible too when it comes to Priscilla and so I get involved in her arguments with my parents. I'm kind of the quiet one when it comes to arguing but I'm right in there. It's not hurting me but I just don't have much to say about it when it comes down to it and I try to tell her what real life is about.

People are surprised when I tell them I'm Métis - probably because I don't look it. They don't treat me any different. Lot's of people think Métis are like Indians almost. I don't mind Indians but when I see them act stupidly, I don't know, I'm not prejudice but, you know, you just get different ideas.

I've helped out with the booths, bingos, and selling tickets for Métis activities because I am Métis. I want to help out the Society. There's a lot of people that are prejudiced against Métis people and Indians because they think that we get more privileges than they do. I don't think the Métis get more benefits but the Indians do. We get a bit more than White people. There is a bit of discrimination toward Métis people elsewhere but not much in our town. There's prejudice against Indians. I've seen it but it never happened to me. It bothered me when I saw it happen to somebody else. They were calling them down. They might as well be calling the whole Native people down because of their blood. They have no reason to do that; they're not perfect themselves either. My mom has suffered discrimination just recently. She was doing Home Care at a man's house and his brother came in, drunk. He called my mother and the other lady "Indians" and accused them of stealing from his brother. That really hurt my mom. That shouldn't have happened because they weren't in the wrong. I've heard people say there's discrimination in my high-school but I've never seen any. Some said that Métis kids who deserve awards never get them

because they're Métis but I think the people who got the awards deserved them. If we really wanted to work we probably could've got it.

I finished grade twelve last year. I want to go back to school again. I don't know when; maybe next year. I want to be a Personal Development Worker, I think. A Personal Development Worker works with the mentally and physically disabled. Or I'd work with people on welfare; maybe a Social Worker. I like working with the disabled and the elderly. I just like helping. I know I like it because I did two years of volunteer work candy striping at the Holy Family Hospital full-time during my grade eleven. I'll ask for the Métis Society or the government to help me out because I need the help, not because I'm Métis. My parents can't afford it and I can't afford it. I'd go see NSIM [Non-Status Indian and Métis student grant program] or maybe the Native Outreach. I'd go to tech school because I wouldn't qualify for university.

Right now I work at Bon-Bons Café as a waitress and cook. Bonnie Regnier owns it and her father, Oscar Regnier, owns the garage. You can work independently there at times. My mom thinks I'm brave for working there by myself. She says, "You have a lot more pizzazz than us older people."

I speak some French. I'm not fluent but I can understand it. I learned my French at school and a bit from my parents. I never really learned it but I catch on. My parents speak French amongst each other. I don't speak it with my grandma but once in a while she speaks it to me. It's not necessary to know French to communicate with my grandparents but it's nice to understand it. It's nice to speak it too. Even though I don't speak French I'm still French-Métis because it's my nationality. To be able to speak French benefits yourself but it's up to the person whether they want to speak it or not. It wouldn't make me more Métis if I could speak it but it would make me more French. You can add French to Métis.

My religion is catholic. I'm not really religious. I'm just like any other person: I have faith and I pray. I barely ever go to church because sometimes I work on Sundays and other times I don't feel like it. I'm not a church person. I usually go to the St. Laurent Pilgrimages although I didn't go this year. It's a family thing we do every year. It's a day mainly of mass, prayer and confession. I went to the Denver Shrine. I think I just went for a trip and to go see it. We fund raised for the trip and got funding from the Métis Society to go. Dad had to pay a little bit though. I go to the Grotto here in St. Louis once every while. It's not just Métis people who go there. Others from St. Louis go too. It's a place to go to if you want to pray and be alone.

I don't play any music; no one in the family does. I tried playing the piano but never the guitar. I just couldn't do it. I had jello fingers.

I spend a lot of money on myself: my habits and enjoyment. Sometimes I don't have enough money to pay room and board to my parents. If I moved out of home I would have to have priorities first: needs not wants. Maybe that's why I'm still living at home: Scared of the real world!

One summer I went to Chitek Lake as sort of a summer day camp. I went with Métis and Indian kids and families. It was owned by a Métis person also. We had fun canoeing and making crafts.

I became a member of the Métis Society Local #28 when I was sixteen. My parents told me to become a member; they're members too. It doesn't really mean much to me to be a member. Right now the Society is very inactive. The Métis Society used to have lots of activities but somehow they just died down; probably because nobody is putting their effort to building it up. My mom's involved but not overly. She's the vice-president and could be president if she wanted to. Things might be different but it depends on the kind of ideas she has. She doesn't really talk about it; too bad. I would like it if they had get togethers and other activities for us and the younger ones. We don't need a special Métis group. We could do it ourselves, but it's just that they have the funding to do things and initiative. We went to the Métis Youth Conference last March because they needed reps from St. Louis and I wanted to find out what they had to say. It was mostly about staying in school and your education. The main message was to go out and do something for ourselves and to not sit back and wait for everything to happen. By then I was getting my grade twelve but I was a bit afraid of it. After that conference we wanted to start a Youth Group around here for Métis teenagers and kids but nothing happened. I'm not the kind of person who can just get things started; not by myself anyways.

I can't say too much about our area director because I've never seen him. Well I've seen him a couple of times. Some of the leadership have been making a lot of promises that they can't even keep. Others have been attending meetings and conferences and bringing back ideas but nothing has come of it; not that I know of. If they were doing what they're supposed to do they'd be starting up what they said they would start. At least it would give us something to do so we could get jobs.

No one in my family has a Métis sash and the only one I've seen in St. Louis was worn by John B., Boucher that is. This shows that he's proud to be a Métis. He's a

Senator for the Métis Society of Saskatchewan. He's really involved, not around here but he's involved in the Council. He attends the Local meetings all the time and he's always talking because he's always got something to say. I don't really know what he does though, to say the truth.

The Métis Society of Saskatchewan helps other Métis around the province. Gerald Morin is the head of the Métis Society right now. I met him once at a youth conference where he spoke. Education, health and homes are a big thing for him right now.

I haven't been to Local meetings because there hasn't been any for a while so I don't even know what's going on in the Métis Society. I've heard some stuff about self-government but not that much. It's about having our own government instead of the provincial or federal ones and just perhaps running it ourselves. If they can make it work it would be good. I know that if Métis became self-governing, a lot of us Métis would have better jobs and careers. I think there's enough qualified Métis people to run a government. If they want to do it they can do it. I should say, "we."

You know, I'm surprised Priscilla talks a lot about being Métis because she's not harassed or anything; I don't think so anyways. To me, I'm not like MÉTIS, it's just what I am. It doesn't have any significance, really. I think that's what I'm trying to say. I don't really think about all that stuff about my ancestors involved in the war or Louis Riel, just when people ask me about it.

The following is a written statement by Jennifer, dated October 17, 1993:

My name is Jennifer Bernadette Richard. I was born into a Metis family on May 19, 1974 to Evelyn, Gerry, and Priscilla. Seven years later Angela was born, and our family was completed. We lived in Prince Albert until I was five years old. We then moved to St. Louis after my grandfather passed away and also to be with our relatives. Being Metis, families always stick together and help each other out. We have now been in St. Louis ever since, and really like it. I was lucky growing up never to have been discriminated against because of my nationality, unlike my parents who told me about their childhood years. I'm sure if I was darker skinned I would have been discriminated against.

As long as I can remember, a tradition to our family was to go to Grandma Eva's every Xmas Eve. All of our relatives would be there and we would talk, laugh, and we would wish each other a Merry Xmas. The adults would sometimes have a few drinks and we would have lunch. Our lunch would consist of Bullets, pickles, cheese, bannock, Bangs, and sometimes turkey. We would bring our presents there, open them and thank everyone, come home and stay up for a bit longer to play, and then go to bed. Xmas Day we would all gather at Grandma's again for Xmas supper. That was one of our traditions as being a Metis family. Our family would also attend Batoche Days every year. It was located in Batoche, about 20 miles from St. Louis. This is an annual event where the Native people and Metis would keep their customs and traditions alive. A few more traditions my Grandma and mother still do are: mending clothes, knitting, crocheting, and canning vegetables and fruit. Jam and jellies are very popular too. My grandma kept trying to teach me, but I still never got the hang of it.

We were never up to this day rich, but lived with what we had and were never deprived of anything. Dad worked as a labourer most of his life and ours and worked away for periods at a time. We were always glad to see him when he was home. He is now retired due to medical problems. I have my own job in St. Louis and help out whenever I can by paying room and board, and doing my regular share of chores. I wish I had a better job, but with no schooling or training there isn't too much I can do. I want to further my schooling in the future, but I'm not too certain when. In my community alot of young Metis adults have no intention and ambition to do something with their lives. It seems that alot of us are scared to put our lives in gear and make something of ourselves.

The perfect job for myself would be to work with senior citizens, children, or the handicapped. I volunteered at a hospital in P.A. for two years, and it was a great experience. That really gave direction to my career choice. I always had high hopes that after high school I would move out, get a job, and start a career as soon as possible.

Since our town is probably 1/2 to 3/4 Metis, we have what we call a Metis Society Local #28. Everyone who is a member can participate in local meetings, work Bingos every so often, and help out with any other functions. I find that the past couple years the society has been very inactive. When I was about 11 or 12, I can remember one year two local Metis young women had a summer funschool for the kids. The

society funded the whole thing, and it was terrific for the kids. It kept us out of trouble and kept us busy for the summer. Also every year at Back to Batoche Days, the Metis Society would have a food booth and sell concessions and hamburgers and hot dogs. Everyone would volunteer their time, and while we switched shifts, we would go for a walk on the grounds and see what crafts and displays were there to look at. There were jiggers, square dancers - I'd love to know how to square dance -, fiddle contests, and bannock baking also to watch. We used to have rock teen dances maybe once a month. It was mostly for teens who could all go there and have a good time sober, instead of going out and getting into trouble on the weekends.

Well that's all I have for now, but I'm sure it's not all of it. I just can't think of anymore at the moment.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The life histories presented here describe the lives of four Métis women. The stories may not always appear to illustrate the difference between Métis and other women's experiences on the prairies but in fact it is because Eva, Evelyn, Priscilla and Jennifer are Métis that they have lived and continue to live the lives they do. The Richard family is Métis in every way. They are formally recognized members of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan and, as illustrated by their stories, still practice many of the traditions of their ancestors.

As generations are born, customs continue to be adapted to meet the needs of the younger members of the group. The fact that the Métis persist as an identifiable group suggests that their traditions are alive because those traditions enabled them to proliferate and not be subsumed by another group. One must also be aware that at one time discrimination against the Métis, forced them into isolation and to rely on their traditions to survive. One can see the changes in Métis history as one reads through the stories from generation to generation. Priscilla and Jennifer's assertions that they have not suffered from "being Métis," may reflect a lessening of racist attitudes among non-aboriginal people. It can also mean that both Priscilla and Jennifer perceive discrimination differently than their mother and grandmother did. The important issue is that the Richard women self-identify as Métis. Fredrik Barth's assertion on ethnic boundary maintenance clarifies the importance of self-identification:

When defined as an ascriptive and exclusive group, the nature of continuity of ethnic units is clear: it depends on the maintenance of a boundary. The cultural features that signal the boundary may change, and the cultural characteristics of the members may likewise be transformed, indeed, even the organizational form of the group may change - yet the fact of continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders allows us to specify the nature of continuity, and investigate the changing cultural form and content. (1981:203)

The Métis culture persists because a group of people continue to identify themselves as such. Within that group certain customs, traditions, rules and regulations are practised which distinguishes their cultural group members from others.

Although Barth does not consider the boundaries set up by mainstream groups to keep perceived outsiders out, he lists the strategies most ethnic groups engage in for survival: some with varying degrees of success, according to Barth:

...(i) they may attempt to pass and become incorporated in the pre-established industrial society and cultural group; (ii) they may accept a 'minority' status, accommodate to and seek to reduce their minority disabilities by encapsulating all cultural differentiae in sectors of non-articulation, while participating in the larger system of the industrialized group in the other sectors of activity; (iii) they may choose to emphasize ethnic identity, using it to develop new positions and patterns to organize activities in those sectors formerly not found in their society, or inadequately developed for the new purposes. (1981:222)

Barth's first category describes the strategy used by the people both Eva and Evelyn showed disdain for: those who tried to pass as French-Canadians when the going was rough for the Métis. Had these people persisted, eventually their Métis culture would have been subsumed by their conscious attempts to hide it. The second approach Barth described represents the strategy employed by Eva, Priscilla and Jennifer to maintain their Métis culture. Eva had no choice but to accept a minority status. Though, she did not have the time to openly practice many of the traditions passed on to her from her mother, she was too busy working to feed, clothe and house her family. Priscilla and Jennifer aspire to be part of the mainstream Canadian society but at the same time take pride in their Métis status. They, however, do not see themselves as a minority. It is just who they are. This is similar to Barth's third category because they are able to celebrate their Métiness in many situations including finding new positions within the mainstream society where they can emphasize them. They are not cognizant of this practice. Category three suggests that one would have to deliberately find ways to promote their positions and develop new patterns. Evelyn employs this strategy to ensure the survival of her people. She is actively involved in a Métis political and social organization, the Métis Society of Saskatchewan (MSS), which is based on the principle of equality in mainstream society. Membership in the MSS also enables her to be culturally distinct while pursuing opportunities in the wider Canadian society.

The strategies employed by the women to maintain Métis identity vary from generation to generation. Eva simply lived the life of a Métis woman and instilled in her children a sense of pride about their heritage. Evelyn grew up with great prejudice toward her and her brothers because they were Métis. Still, she persisted in holding her head high and imparted in her children the same sense of pride that was instilled in her. She continues the struggle for the rights of Métis people. Evelyn's children have benefited from her struggles because they have been protected from racism. Priscilla

is proud to be Métis. She stressed the need to teach children in school about their Métis identity. To her, the Métis would benefit from knowing about their ethnicity and history. She states that her children in the future will see themselves as Métis. This strategy encourages cultural pride and promotes its development. Jennifer has always known she was Métis. Jennifer said that she would like to learn more Métis history from her grandmother. This can be interpreted as a desire to develop her knowledge of her culture in order to ensure its survival.

All four women defined Métis as being half Indian and half non-aboriginal. Eva and Evelyn used the term "Half-breed" as their original name for the Métis. Eva struggled when questioned about the details of her society's past because to her "on est ce qu'on est." Métis is not much different from being Indian, she said. Priscilla stated that being Métis is about history. She also said that you are not Indian or English; you are in between. Jennifer on the other hand considers Métiness to be a combination of "White, Indian or French." She cannot speak French but she is still French Métis "cause it's my nation."

The 1885 Resistance is part of the family's history. The women's knowledge of the events is limited but they are aware of their family's participation in the conflict. They know that the Resistance had to do with land entitlement. Eva stated that her father said that there were no non-aboriginal people in Batoche and area before the Resistance. When the non-aboriginal people came, they bought the land and the dispute ensued. Her parents did not discuss it at great length. Evelyn would like to know more about the historic events at Batoche because she is not sure exactly when and how the land was lost. She suggested that people should talk to the Elders for this kind of historical information before they are all gone. Priscilla remembered her grandmother Alexandrine telling them about Maxime Lépine. Jennifer stated that she did not know much, just that they had ancestors who fought. She felt that it would be impossible to even know the half of it because there are so many interpretations. All the women have seen films about Batoche and the Resistance.

The customs identified by the women are similar to those discussed in the Archival Oral Histories. There were house parties with fiddling and dancing. House parties still go on today, but drinking has replaced fiddling and dancing, stated Evelyn. Crocheting, blanket making, sewing were traditional crafts but Evelyn, Priscilla and Jennifer did not learn them. Jennifer notes that the sash is a Métis fashion although her family does not own one. "Bangs" or "crooked fingers," "jam jams" and "bullet"

soup continue to be a part of the Christmas meal. Eva is able to make all of the Christmas foods and Evelyn most of them. Other foods identified and described by Eva and Evelyn were "puttadie", "torchons" and a variety of wild meats. The foods are no longer prepared by them because they are high in cholesterol and because hunting and trapping are no longer practised. Priscilla mentions that she made bangs for a high-school class. She knows of many of the foods but not necessarily how to make them. Priscilla remembers picking berries and "paquants" and her grandmother and mother preparing them.

Eva remembered freighting wood with her family. It was hard work. Her mother died young, she feels, due to the rigour of the occupation. Freighting was a common source of employment for the Métis. In the Archival Oral Histories freighting is often discussed. They also identified other things, such as foodstuffs, being freighted. The main form of human transportation was by sleigh, during Eva's childhood and those of the women in the archival review. Those women, though, called them "banneaux" or "carrioles" and Eva called them "trains."

Most of the Archival Oral Histories mentioned having gardens. Eva's descriptions identified the reliance the family had on their gardens. This agricultural strategy maintained the family through the depression of the 1930s and other hard times. Eva had several gardens throughout St. Louis. She and Evelyn still have gardens.

Endogamous relationships continued up to Evelyn's generation for a variety of reasons: Métis married Métis out of preference; the communities they lived in were ethnic isolates; and prejudice discouraged non-Métis from marrying Métis. Priscilla said she would not care which ethnicity her potential spouse might be. Evelyn indicated she had no preference for her children's mates, just that they treat her daughters well.

Most of the women of Eva's generation knew of some medicinal herbs but many never really learned to use them. Eva used herbal remedies, such as plantain, and Evelyn continues to use it when it is available. Priscilla and Jennifer did not say whether they knew of any or not.

As discussed earlier, family is very important to the Richard women. They enjoy family gatherings on holidays and special occasions, such as Priscilla's graduation. Eva spoke a lot about her father and the hard life they had experienced. Evelyn maintains that they are a close knit family. She recalled that she never fought with her

siblings. They built a large float for the St. Louis centennial and remembers how the whole family worked together to prepare it. Evelyn stated that the most enjoyable time she has ever had was at the Richard-Vandale Family Reunion. Surrounded by extended family members, she was in her glory. It is not surprising that Evelyn laments not knowing her relations in the States. From observing Priscilla and Jennifer with members of their extended family, the writer can state that family is important to them as well.

Although all the women are members of the MSS, Evelyn was the most politically active. Eva, Priscilla and Jennifer have attended meetings but no longer do; Eva because of her age, Priscilla and Jennifer because they are young and feel they have nothing to contribute. Priscilla has shown some interest in getting involved, and Evelyn has encouraged her to come to meetings and speak up. All the women were keenly aware of the need to have a group to fight for equality rights for the Métis. Evelyn and Jennifer both spoke about self-government. Evelyn's experience in Métis politics made her more cautious of the potential pitfalls of self-government.

As with many Métis families, the Richards experienced poverty. They have struggled to feed, clothe and house themselves. At times, Eva and Evelyn remembered being teased by other children for their lack of appropriate clothing and for eating bannock and lard. They did not have the educational opportunities others had because they could not afford materials that were required. They felt that they were discriminated against because of their poor financial situation, a possible result of their being Métis. Evelyn stated that the Métis have had to fight all their lives and will likely continue to struggle. She indicated that many non-aboriginal people's attitudes are changing but that the wider Canadian society had a long way to go.

Both Eva and Evelyn stated that men's lives were easier than those of women. Both recall doing more chores than their brothers. As adults, Eva and Evelyn had to work outside of the home as well as care for their families. Priscilla and Jennifer did not make such assertions, possibly because they do not have any brothers and still lived at home. Women's roles have changed significantly. Eva witnessed women drinking more when they were allowed into the drinking establishments. Evelyn noted that more women now **have** to work outside of the home in order to make ends meet. Priscilla stated that there is a lot of discrimination against women and that women should have the right to work in areas they chose.

The earlier discussion surrounding Raymond Breton's concept of institutional completeness indicated that membership to an ethnic group is the minimum requirement for its survival. Obviously, the women whose stories are told here have demonstrated their pride in being members of the Métis nation. Formal institutions for the preservation of Métis identity, however, are also available to the Richards. Each referred to the Métis Society, **Back to Batoche Days**, the Gabriel Dumont Institute, the church, St. Louis Grotto and the St. Laurent Pilgrimage. Evelyn was able to list more than the others, such as the Métis Pathways Secretariat, because she is the most politically active. To the collaborators of the study, the family is paramount in the maintenance of the Métis identity. The Métis family serves as both a formal and informal ethnic maintenance institution. Eva, Evelyn, Priscilla and Jennifer Richard have shared their life stories because they are proud to be Métis. Their narratives are testimonies to the pleasures of life and the struggles witnessed by Métis women.

There may be a temptation on the part of the reader to endeavour to ascertain how representative the Richards are of the Métis in general. To attempt to demonstrate their representativeness would deter from the essence of life histories methodology and the importance of the women as individual beings. Any conclusions made would likely be wrong because of the inability of the researcher to interview every Métis in Saskatchewan. Tantamount to how typical they are is where they fit in the Métis culture. The place in society taken by the Richard family is evident throughout the narratives.

The Commission members can use this information to determine their recommendations. The least of these recommendations should be that politicians, policy makers, legislators and the general public begin listening to what the people have to say, no matter how long it takes. Any programs, services or transfer of power and jurisdiction must be based on what is heard from up close rather than what is guessed at from a distance.

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