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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Discusses origin of proper names.
- Brief discussion of Indian beliefs.

Mr. Mackay: Two years after, I think. So we had quite a territory to cover. We covered Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba, Lake Winnipegosis. It took them a whole summer, three months to make that tour. So I guess... And then they changed, they put in another agency up in that district to take over. And then they found out that there was another travel agency 125 miles inland so we had to make that trip. Then they moved up here and then there was only, let's see, they had four kids, I think, when they come up here. Let's see, there was three older girls, they were in the convent then. And your mother

and my father were the two youngest kids when they moved up here so they made a home here. Naturally, then they -- some of their parents, like my grandmother's side, her parents come from Pembina and Churchill Mountain, up that way, her brothers. She had no sisters, she was the only girl in the family.

Mr. Whiteway: They originally come from Three Rivers. She was a Ouellette, that was our grandmother, old Angus McKay's wife. Joe Whiteway's wife, I forget what her name was, but she used to talk broken English. She came from Three Rivers.

Margaret: So you bring both strains together, English and French.

Both: Yes, oh yeah.

Mr. Whiteway: I remember the first three or four different ones, there's Scotch and there is Irish and French and Indian all mixed up in us. (laughs)

Margaret: Well, we're all mixed, you know.

Mr. Whiteway: That's why I say it. We got a little bit of everything. (laughs)

Mr. Mackay: Take that little fellow, he's got about seven different nationalities. He's even got German in him now, Sioux. Yeah, it is quite a thing. And that is how my father came to get married with a native woman, after he grew up here, and this is where we come in. Our mother come from Little Grand Rapids. They were already... And when they made treaty with them they gave them a deal. They felt that there was enough room here to make this reserve a little bit bigger. At that time they were giving them cattle and things to get by with, you see. And they figured that there was more hay growing around here than Little Grand because they only have a small patch there. So I don't know, about five or six families moved down here and this is where they were put into this reserve. But their name was, they still carry their old name.

When they became treaty, that is where you get all these fancy names of the Indians. When they made treaty it was their Mooses and everything else like, at that time. There was too many Mooses so they had to give them a different name. You take MacDonalds or MacLeods -- of course these were all Hudson's Bay people and they were already through this country, so they gave them a lot of these names. You take this Berens River, that was an explorer that went up the -- his name was Berens -- so they made the first chief here, his name was Trout, I believe, you see. And there were too many Trouts again through the country so they gave him a different name. They gave him the name of Berens, named after this explorer. One of the first explorers through was Berens. That is how he got his name.

Margaret: And your people kept their name. What was that?

Before they made treaty?

Mr. Mackay: Well, on my grandfather's side, my mother's father, their name was Goosehead so they still have the name. Some call them Gooseneck. (laughs) But there is... But I think they are the only ones that have this. No, Nanakoff is too. They are the only two families that got still their original name from the treaty times. See, there is Nanakoffs and that is the only two.

Margaret: What is the word in Cree, it would be?

Mr. Mackay: Nanakoff?

Margaret: Goosehead in Cree.

Mr. Mackay: See, that was their religion, I guess their main god was... See, it seems funny. Indians have... at that time they used to have it like of their own tribe. They were in little bunches and their god was like an eagle, we'll say. Well, maybe these were the gooseheads, you see, or a goose. What do you call it?

Margaret: This is like the totem pole?

Mr. Mackay: Well, this is it. To distinguish themselves between each family, this is where they called, one was that his god was a goose or whatever it was, and this is the way...

Margaret: His spirit.

Mr. Mackay: Yes, and then there was Eagles you see. And then some did keep Eagles so there was a lot of Eagles too, through

the country at one time. You see, the same as Trout. So they had to give them new names. Loons is another kind of a mark for each little tribe because they all went in little groups, you know. They had a better system in their time than we have today, I guess, amongst the Indians. At that time, they went in the certain parts of the country. Of course, they used to do a little bit of fighting amongst themselves this way, because if one guy went into the other guy's territory, well, if he was caught there, there was just no law then, you know. He would just shoot him with his bow and arrow and so he would have a lesson so another guy wouldn't come. They would do that to each other so they kept all these boundaries of the trapping areas, like these families and one thing and another, you know. That is the way they kept the rules between themselves. Because they all became... There would be one medicine man in one of these groups like, and then when they would have a big do -- they would have it twice a year. One in the spring and one in the fall. Then all the medicine men get together and they used to have that in Pigeon River. That is how they call this the "big pole tent grounds". They had to stick up the poles and make a big hall there, dancing, camped, yeah.

Mr. Whiteway: They all took their tents and they made this big frame of saplings and make them all down, and tied and weaved together. And they all moved in and take their tents and they would cover this whole thing. Sometimes it was sixty feet long. They moved with their families there. The drummers were there and they would have these drum dancers and they would dance all the way around in the centre. And they would all stay there for about a week.

Mr. Mackay: Oh yes, see, they had the Jackhead, Bloodvein, and Poplar, Grand Rapids and here -- there would be four different locations of people. But in their own reservations at that time, then it became the reservations and then this is where they... Maybe half a dozen medicine men come down from Little Grand and the same as Jackhead, maybe three or four of them and so on. They came there with their families.

Margaret: Did they always come to the same place?

Mr. Mackay: Oh yes, this was one of the special places.

Margaret: Was there ever any rock around there that they brought things to?

Mr. Mackay: Oh yes, they had a big round boulder. I don't know who has got that. I think the old chief still, the family got that. Do you remember you used to have that big round rock at the flag pole?

Mr. Whiteway: Yeah.

Mr. Mackay: Well, this is one of their godstones. They would have this like a totem pole at one end of this... See, all the medicine men would be at one end of the tent. And then they would have this big round boulder. And I don't know, of course, I didn't see. We just heard about these things. This is before our time like.

Margaret: I was told a while ago that there is a rock, a large rock near Grand Beach, south of the lake, where people would bring new clothing, tobacco, all kinds of things, and just leave it there. But this is a large rock on the shore and it is part of the shore.

Mr. Mackay: Well, they have different places like this. We have a spot on the Grand about 80 miles up, somewhere around there, that moose-painted rock, remember? It was moose-painted. I don't know who, you know. That painting was put there maybe 80 years ago and it hasn't discolored.

Mr. Whiteway: Whether it is painting or it is just natural in the rock I don't know.

Mr. Mackay: They done the same thing there. This is supposed to be a moose-painted rock there, you see. And they really believe in that law and anybody who went by there, an Indian never go by there unless he threw a piece of tobacco towards

the ledge. And if he wanted real gift, he would go and put some clothes there, you know. That is the same way. They had a special rock or...

Mr. Whiteway: Something to do with the spirits.

Mr. Mackay: Yeah, if you want to see it.

Mr. Whiteway: If you didn't donate something there you are supposed to be running into back luck or something.

Mr. Mackay: Oh yes, this is what they believe.

Mr. Whiteway: ...they were afraid one summer, Tache had his own outfit. I forget now who he was with. I had old John Gibeau. He was my partner. Old John was awful superstitious about this moose-painted stone as he called it. And he cut off pretty near half a plug of smoking tobacco and he threw it in. It was one of these (inaudible). I seen them coming behind. No, it was the other way around. Darcy was there. Darcy threw the tobacco in. Old John, he comes along and says, "Is it still floating?" He grabs it and took a little piece off it

and threw that back in and he put the rest in his pocket and Darcy pretty near conked him. (laughter) That happened a couple of times. (Inaudible)

Margaret: Did you ever go on the freighting trips?

Mr. Mackay: Yeah, I caught the tail end of the time. I done a little bit of freighting. My dad and his dad were partners here for about fifteen years, I guess. His dad died in 1923 and my dad went broke in 1924. He had five trading posts, three in (inaudible), one here, and one down south. So when I became old enough, we were still freighting at that time. That was the first time we saw those outboard motors. Oh, they were man killers but it was all right. You could sit there and listen to them in your canoe. Otherwise you would have to row up and row back in your canoe. But that was a great thing when they started coming in. And then they became, let's see, that was in 1922 when they first had the outboard motors here. Because 1921, no, 1921, I guess. Because that was, see, I was married in...

(End of Interview)

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