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SASKATCHEWAN
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SASKATCHEWAN
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Mrs. Osecap, granddaughter of Chief Strike-him-on-the-Back, was born in 1881 and died in April 1975. She has brought up six children and lived on various reserves in Saskatchewan. (For complete biography, see IH-066, p.2)
 - Details of life on the reserve when she was young: milking, sheep-shearing, fishing weirs, houses, etc.
 - Story of a woman whose husband turned into a lizard.
 - Story of Wisakedjak.
 - How Thunder Blanket killed his wife and himself.
- Story 1 EARLY DAYS ON SWEETGRASS

The Indians used to fish a lot. They would make their own fish weir and sometimes a policeman would come and try to break the fish weir. A lot of old men used to gather and make a fish weir, which Marie says looked like a bed. They would sometimes catch a lot of fish, and they would all share it. Her father, who was an old man, would help make one, and another man whose name was "Pa-teek-u-was," and "Me-ha-wa-we-no," would also help.

There were also no stoves, and they used to make their

own. They would get four sticks, put some stones on it, the women would then plaster it with mud and hay. They would keep adding stones, plaster it some more. They would then make a hole inside of this stove, where the fire was to be. The men knew how to do anything which helped them survive. Another thing they did was make their own doors; they already lived in log houses. They would also use tanned hide for windows. The Indians were very poor and they knew how to keep the cold out of their log houses.

When the people went to Delmas to see their children at the Roman Catholic school, they would go through the old village. They would see suckers swimming out of the spring. They made a good livelihood. The children were raised properly. Today, the Indian children are very different from the children of long ago.

There was an agency building and a church in the old village where they would milk cows and everyone shared the milk and cream. The men and women had a milk house. There were planks along the wall and the Indian agent used to supply them with milk pans. The milk was put in the pans on the shelves. They would also make cottage cheese and a lot of butter. The only thing they threw away was the buttermilk. Marie says her and her sister would go and milk cows after her sister's husband had tamed them. Her brother-in-law was not afraid of cows.

The Department of Indian Affairs used to supply cows, and sheep. The women would chase sheep into a corral and catch them. They would then cut the wool off them. The Indian agent used to take the wool and the Indians would be paid and fed dinner.

Sometimes a sheep was killed and fed to the Indian people. Then, sometimes, a coyote would come and kill one. When the sheep was found, the Indians were fed the sheep. The sheep would wander away because there were no fences. At night they were put in a barn and fed.

In the wintertime, they would cut wood for heaters, cook stoves, and for building log houses and also make fences. They had no wire so it was all wood. There was a lot of hard work but there was also a lot of hard-working men.

The Indians never camped at or around Drumming Hill because of the weird singing which was often heard. The people were scared of this hill. One day, Marie and a lot of other women went to the side of Drumming Hill to pick wild onions. The onions were long and had to be dug out of the ground. These onions were taken home and shared. Some people made soup out of these, there were many different uses for these onions.

In the Sand Hills, they would see little men, and they would also hear them, but as soon as they came near these

little men would run away.

Also, on Strike-Him-On-The-Back Reserve there were a few graves. One time there was a fire, where the graves were. So the men and women went to put the fire out. The women cried because the graves were on fire. The fire fighters thought they saw children and adults in the flames and they also heard children crying. Marie says, before she was born Strike-Him-On-The-Back had died, but she did see where he was laid to rest on a platform in a tree.

During the battle of Cut Knife Hill, a lot of men were jailed for taking part in the rebellion. Marie's dad, "Mus in as," was also jailed for a few years, along with Four-Sky-Thunder. Four-Sky-Thunder was doing six years. "Mus in as," was jailed only for about four years.

The Indians also made kind of a winter house out of poles set up like a tipi and then these were mudded. Marie remembers across the creek where they used to go and visit there was a mud tipi there. These tipis were awfully warm. "See-See-Quance," was a very good singer. They used to hear him singing. The tipi across the creek belonged to him. The first log houses had no wood floors.

STORY 2

Wisakedjak

This story Marie tells is about birds, and an Indian man who loved nature.

One time there was a man who liked taking walks and he liked looking at birds and trees, animals and other nature things.

Well, anyway, one day he went for a walk as usual and he came upon some baby birds. He used to talk to animals and birds. He said to these baby birds. "Where is your mother?" The baby birds answered, "She left us." This man then asked, "What is your name?" The baby birds answered, "We are called Prairie Chickens." This man did not believe they were prairie chickens, so he defecated on the baby birds and then he went on his way. As he was walking he came upon a creek and he said out loud, "I will cross the creek. First, I will run to the creek three times, then I will cross it." But the mother of the baby birds was listening to him. After he had run three times, he ran as fast as he could. He was going to run over the creek when all of a sudden a flock of prairie chickens flew up. This frightened him so he fell into the creek. He said to himself, "I will not let anything scare me again."

He had a beaded pouch which he often carried his tobacco in. His pouch fell onto a little branch but the reflection looked as though it was in the creek. He would swim down to

where he thought his pouch was and try to grab it. He had no luck. Then he decided he would try and use a stick to get it out. As he got out of the creek, he saw it hanging on a branch! He took his pouch from the branch and went on his way again.

STORY 3

One time there was a lot of beautiful girls who lived in a log house and then a handsome young man came to where they lived. The young man spotted a very beautiful girl and he fell in love with her.

So when he was going to leave, he asked her to come with him. She was also very fond of him so she went with him. As they were walking along, they found some kind of tracks. A man came to visit with them when they were resting. He showed them a place where there was a log house and he told them they could live there. The girl was glad and so was the young man. So they lived in the log house which was given to them.

Later that night they went to bed. Next morning, the girl awoke and found out she was in bed alone. So she got up and stayed at the house all day.

The young man returned later that afternoon and told his wife never to open the door for anyone but him. So, again that night, they went to sleep. In the morning, the girl woke up to find she was alone again. She wondered about her husband, why he went away during the day and returned only at night.

He had a shed by the house and he had warned her earlier never to open the door. So one day, when she was at home alone, she went over to the shed, and opened the door. Inside the shed was a lot of water and she saw a huge lizard laying on its back. The day was very hot so she did not bother the lizard. Later that night she waited a long time for her young husband to return. He did not return for a few hours and when he did, he was a lizard.

She woke up during the night to find a lizard trying to get onto her bed. She was very frightened by this lizard. Early next morning she went back to the shed again she saw a lizard lying on its back. She saw the lizard twice but she did not know it was her husband. Finally, she knew her husband had turned into a lizard so she decided she would leave. She did not care where she went, and she knew she could never go home. So as she was walking along, she saw a house. She went into the house and saw a woman. The woman asked her why she left and she explained about her husband turning into a lizard and the shed she was never supposed to open. The woman said the girl's husband had tricked her into going with him. The girl stayed at the house with the woman.

STORY 4

Thunder Blanket and His Wife

One day Marie's aunt, Nuk-kwa-sis, and Thunder Blanket's wife, who had run away from her husband after he had given her a beating, were walking along going to the creek to get water. Thunder Blanket had been waiting at the creek. He had a gun and he asked his wife to come home with him. When she refused to go with him, he shot her and she fell down wounded.

Nuk-kwa-sis ran away when she saw her friend get shot at and when she fell down. Nuk-kwa-sis ran back to the camp and told her husband, Coming Day, that his daughter had been shot and wounded by Thunder Blanket. Coming Day was blind. Nuk-kwa-sis ran over to Fineday's house and told of the tragic news. They all went back to the creek where the woman lay, barely alive. Also Thunder Blanket had already shot and killed himself. The Indians went over to see the bodies. The woman died shortly after that.

They went over to see the Indian agent and he reported this to the police. When Thunder Blanket's time came to be buried, the people dug a hole and threw him in any old way and covered him. He is buried in the old village just outside of the cemetery fence. His wife is buried right in the cemetery. Thunder Blanket had tied his horse quite a ways from the creek and it was not found until way after Thunderblanket was buried. The horse was very weak and thin.

I have seen where Thunder Blanket was buried.

STORY 5

Ni-Kwa-mas was a very hard working person. He used to build houses and he knew how to do anything. He had a few cows and he also had chickens when his wife was alive.

Marie, her family, and some other people would go down to the river every year to kill fish. They made a fish basket to catch the fish in and also a bridge for them to walk on so they could cross the river and also to take a look at the fish every now and then. They also built a chair for the men to sit on while waiting for the fish to get caught. They often saw sturgeons. This fish is very beautiful.

After the fish was caught and cleaned, they would make a tipi with a fire under it. This is where the fish was dried and smoked. They used to burn willow leaves to give the fish a nice flavor.

They used to keep the fish for themselves. The bridge

they made was out of good strong trees and it held three men at a time.

When they woke up one morning they saw a policeman trying to break up the things they put up. They all had a talk with the policeman and he decided it was better to leave them alone. Another policeman had tried to do this to them on Little Pine Reserve.

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