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INTERVIEWER: MARGARET STOBIE
INTERPRETER:
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Very general discussion about fishing.
Margaret: Would you mind just telling me what you did when you
were growing up and...?

John: The first thing when I was 12 years old, I was a cook.

Margaret: For what?

John: For a lumber camp.

Margaret: When you were 12?

John: Yeah, I was 12.

Margaret: How was your cooking?

John: I was helping the head cook. When I was 12, for two years, I guess. After that I worked -- no, more than that. I must have worked three or four years. Remember Queen Victoria? I remember when she was dead in 1898.

Margaret: 1901, wasn't it?

John: 1898. Fourteen, when I went to school in Brandon. I was there about five years.

Margaret: Did you go to the Brandon school too?

Jenny: Yeah.

Margaret: Many people from this area seem to have.

John: And when I come back I started work. They had a ranch up here, up the river here. It was Roger ran that ranch. And I stayed there eleven months. There was nobody, just cattle and a moose. (laughs)

Margaret: Not much variety in the conversation.

John: We had about sixty head of cattle.

Margaret: Did you ever hear the word 'byre' used for a cattle shed?

John: Byre here?

Margaret: Byre, for barn? Did you ever hear it?

John: There was a trader here but he was called Roger. That is all I know.

Margaret: Well, how long did you stay with the cattle and the moose?

John: About eleven months. (laughs) There was nobody around. Just the wild country, that's all. Well, that's all right. I worked for eleven months and the next year got married. (laughs)

Margaret: Better company.

John: Yes. (laughs) That's how I made a living around here. I had some cattle. I was fishing the same time. That's how we were living here, you see. There was not much cattle around and how many kids. I had about fifteen head. So, I was getting old and fishing all the time and I just quit about three years

ago, fishing.

Margaret: Well, you have done your share.

John: I have done my share, yes. I got my money back anyhow.
(laughs) Bought that paper license.

Margaret: Did you do any hunting or trapping in the wintertime?

John: No, just once in a while. I didn't go, not too steady, you know. Just once a week, I guess, that's all. More here is fishing. Winter and the fall. That's all.

Margaret: Well, there would be... You'd do a certain amount of hunting, wouldn't you, for your own...?

John: Yes, that's right. I may get one moose in a week. That's all.

Margaret: There was a man in Norway House who was telling me that when he was a boy the men were still using muzzleloading shotguns. Do you recall them at all?

John: Oh, those are those old muzzleloaders, something like that. We didn't... yes, there were some here, mostly rifles. Mostly rifles around here.

Margaret: Well, when you went fishing did you make your own boats?

John: Yes, and... Well, especially fishing we used a skiff but we made them skiffs ourselves. For a few years here we used these yawls and motors. But at the time I would fish first we had to row. One time in the springtime we row about,

oh, must be about ten miles every morning. I would go there, find the fish, every morning. Of course if you had to go against the wind, you had to stay home. Yeah.

Margaret: Did supplies come in fairly regularly by boat here? I mean they come in now with the Kenora and so on. Did they come in fairly regularly?

John: Well, now they goes out every week, now. First there was, in the fall they come every day, pretty near every day. Here, at the end now, every two days. There used to be lots of steamers here and they had no gasboat or something like that. But they used these steamers, this was a few years. Nowadays they use a gas boat and some big boats, gas boats. Now it's... I never went out whitefishing. First they used sailboats. And now they use gas boats. I guess every company had the big boats to take the fish to south.

Margaret: When he was out fishing, what did you do Mrs. Sinclair?

Jenny: Stayed home and milked the cows. I tend to my babies.

Margaret: How many children did you have?

Jenny: Thirteen.

Margaret: That is a good family.

Jenny: There is eight living.

Margaret: Are they around here?

Jenny: There are some. One girl is married to a soldier so she's not here.

Margaret: But the others are mostly around here?

Jenny: Yeah.

Margaret: And it is developing so that there is enough for people to live on?

Jenny: Yeah.

Margaret: What about when you were growing up, what sort of things did you do? I mean you probably married fairly early, did you?

Jenny: Well, I don't remember when (inaudible) I was in the school. I was eight years old when I went to the school and I was there a while. I worked for the minister when I came home.

Margaret: Oh, I see. What sort of work did you help with?

Jenny: Housework. I teach for a year, all winter, four months and then I came here.

Margaret: Good. Did you ever have any hard times when you were out fishing, big storms?

John: Oh yes.

Margaret: Do you remember any?

John: Sometimes I had to stay in three days. In the wintertimes. Three days in the camp. But we had camps on where we were fishing. Sometimes we stayed three days it was so stormy. And in the fall it's just the same, you can't go out in a skiff. You had to stay for three days.

Margaret: Break-up and freeze-up are the two hard times anyway, aren't they? It isn't safe to go on the water.

John: No, it is dangerous. No, not them days but now they have stronger boats. They've got these big boats, yawls.

Margaret: Well, a good many things are easier than they used to be.

John: Oh yes, now.

Margaret: Electricity and...?

John: There's not much of it yet around here. Just a few people, I guess, they use it.

Jenny: We used to scrub by hand, wash.

Margaret: Yes, I've done that too. Well, is the settlement here largely based on Norway House people or was there a fairly large settlement before the Norway House people came over? Do you know?

John: I don't know. I can't seem to remember that.

Jenny: When my mother used to tell us that they were the second in. "When I came here there was nobody here," she used to say. There was an old chief, Chief Rundle they used to call him. That was the first chief that came here. And he discovered this Fisher River.

Margaret: And then other people gradually began coming here?

Jenny: Yes. From Norway House.

John: Well, it is a... A chief can come out first, they look for a place. They came down here first at Riverton. That is where they look for a place. They look around there and there was nothing much. And then they come around this way and they found this bay here. Had to come around this bay and they found the river here. I guess they come up here and they found lots of hay along the river. At that time there was nobody around here. That was before me. That was quite a while ago. I guess they lived up here in a small home, they seen lots of hay here and there and they picked this place.

Jenny: My mother said when they came here in the -- what you call them boats -- York boats they used to call them. They had to cut the trees as soon as they get off, and then they start to build a log house.

(End of Interview)

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