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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Describes curing by a medicine man.
- Brief description of how to make a canoe.
- Description of transportation by dog team.

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SUMMARY

Christine and brother (William) Gordon had a store in Ft. McMurray and one in West La Loche. Adopted boy, George, from Edmonton. William died in 1932 and Christine soon after. George Gordon also died about 1975 but family still in McMurray today. They had a lot of land so they sold it and made lot of money. Although Christine said she was poor, a trunk full of money was found in her house. Arsene's dad, Baptiste Fontaine, was store manager for William Gordon in West La Loche. Brought supplies by canoe and wagon from McMurray. Baptiste was kind and helped people in hard times. Over in La Loche the people were poor; then Revillon built store there. The Hudson's Bay Company warehouse is now where the Revillon store was.

There was no work in West La Loche. When back from trapping, they planted gardens then went by horse and canoe to work in McMurray at either the Bay warehouse or McInnis Fish Company. Lots of people from La Loche worked there all summer. They got about 80 /hour.

People used to work hard. Now they are living like kings on

welfare but Arsene never drew welfare in his life.

MEDICINE:

Before the La Loche hospital really sick people were taken by canoe to Ile-a-la-Crosse. It was a long trip in rough weather. When Arsene's mother, Rosalee, was sick, the family went. They stayed in a tent. The doctor came every day to check mother but there was no room for her in the hospital. She soon recovered but many people died at that time. The doctor couldn't do anything for them.

Alfred Cheecham's dad was a Cree doctor. He was given gifts when he helped a sick person. He was a good doctor. Didn't sing, just used roots from the bush to cure lots of people. Also stuck you with needle and sucked blood out, cleaned with medicine and tied paper on. Especially for sore knees. Arsene's uncle, Alec Janvier, cured Simeon's broken leg by making a wooden box for a cast. Simeon walked again after one month in cast.

Arsene's great uncle, Laboss, amputated a man's arm by using a long shaving razor. That man even made canoes and snowshoes after that using a crooked knife.

BIRCH CANOES:

(Arsene gives a detailed description of how they made birch canoes.)

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Birch canoes were light and could be packed all the way up north to Muskeg Mt. in Alberta. Lots of people carried canoes to and from that beaver country. Later Arsene took canvas and made them anywhere, 12ft. for one man and a 15 footer for two. Often if canoes were left bears destroyed them so new ones had to be built. Before when trapping no one used tents or cabins. Only made a cabin for family but when on trapline the men never used even a tent. Arsene bought his first tent from an old lady. Put a wood stove inside and found it to be like a house. In the tent he could skin the foxes instead of having to haul them frozen all the way back to West La Loche.

DOG TEAMS:

Usually had 5 dogs to a team. Arsene would pay almost anything for a good dog. He trained his own dogs. Good to train in deep snow so the dog likes those conditions. The dogs were fed moose meat because there were lots of moose before. When camp was made in the bush, he made a bed of spruce bows for each dog and fed them well.

WINTER CAMPING:

After the first cold night in fall they would get used to the cold. When ready to camp, they dug the snow away with a

snowshoe, made a bed of spruce bows and went to sleep in their good blankets. The Big Dipper was a good watch. Sometimes had to travel before dawn but the dogs knew the trail. Arsene trained his dogs not to bark. Only barked if wolf nearby because they were scared.

WOLF AND DOG STORY:

When Arsene trapped with Ed Park, his brother-in-law, one dog broke his chain and disappeared. The men heard wolves and guessed the dog was killed but then they saw him coming. The dog lost his tail. There were about seven or eight wolves but they just played with the dog. Didn't bite him at all. His brother-in-law shot his gun. Scared the wolves away and his dog came back.

Another time Ed saw wolf tracks, chased them and shot one timber wolf. When Arsene came, he packed the wolf on sled and they left. Upon stopping to make a fire, Arsene went to get his axe and wolf was sitting up looking at him. Arsene was scared, yelled, then ran and got a gun and shot the wolf again. This time they skinned it right there.

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SNOW WATER:

When they didn't have water, snow was put in pail and put on the stove. The snow under the top layers was best for making lots of water.

LOOSE TEA:

Before they had tea bags they used loose tea. The Bay manager weighed it on a scale and put one pound in a paper bag. They used to drink the tea with leaves in it but didn't mind.

THE OLD BAY STORE:

The manager was behind the counter and he served everything to the customers. One man, Blackhall, would even cut 5 worth of tobacco or measure out 10 of tea. One manager, Philip Powers, like one Ile-a-la-Crosse man was wounded in the war; went crazy sometimes. When he came to La Loche, he had prayer beads and attended church but the priest thought he was fooling and told the people that. When Philip heard what the priest had said he refused to enter the church again.

Sometimes when Philip got mad he'd chase everybody out of his store, then half an hour later, he'd open the door and call everyone back in. One treaty time he kept his store closed for three days because he got mad.

TREATY DAYS:

Treaty days were always in June. Treaty party came from Big River by canoe. A trader, Burnoff from Beauval, came right

after the treaty party with three canoes full of things to sell. Every person got a fresh \$5 bill and the next day the chiefs were given bacon, ammunition, clothes, and nets to divide amongst the people. The chief got a special black suit with brass buttons. The Gov't and the people chose a chief who could speak for the people. They were paid about \$50/year.

No one ever robbed the treaty men because everyone was good then, before the liquor. No fights or anything. When the road came and the bar at Buffalo Narrows was built, that's when liquor came. Before that people made "brew" from raisins and sugar but there was no trouble and no need for police.

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Arsene's dad, Baptiste, was a deputy law enforcement officer then (about 1931) became D.N.R. officer. He was paid \$250/month but never bothered anyone.

LIVE FOX:

People caught live foxes in the summer often and would pen them up. They were fed moose meat and were killed when their fur was prime. Arsene and his brother (Robbie) used to do that at Steep End River not far from the Clearwater River.

Ray: What about this, her name was Christina, Christine Gordon?

Arsene: Christine.

Ray: And she never got married, eh?

Arsene: She never got married. His brother never got married. Been living that way all his life. And I'm glad they went to, got no kids, you know, not one. Just two of them just by themselves. And he's got all kinds of money. They had a store, have a store himself. And he's got one store here too all the time. My dad, he worked for him, you know. So he went to Edmonton in the summertime. So he found that boy there, George Gordon. So they found him and take him to the RCMP. They don't know where it come from that kid. Couldn't find them. No mother, no dad, I don't know.

Ray: He was lost, eh?

Arsene: He was lost maybe. So the RCMP told him just take it back like that, and then sometime when his family is looking for it so we'd give him back. So they took it that way and after that he never heard about it. So it's just like his boy as far as that goes. George Gordon, he feels like his dad, something like that.

Ray: You don't remember that old, old Gordon's name, eh?

Arsene: I don't remember that.

Ray: Chistine's brother.

Arsene: No. I don't remember it. Somebody will remember that anyway, but I just forgot it. I used to know but it's a long time, you know. Never think about that after that. So, he kept that boy until he got old and got married, got a family. So help him with that money, you know, make him do things. Oh that old man, he bought lots of land.

Ray: Yeah?

Arsene: Yeah, in McMurray. He was smart guy, you know. Still they're making money right now, McMurray, I heard that. So they sold the land, you know, a big town right now. Sold the land. Sold it for a lot of money.

Ray: They must rich now, eh?

Arsene: Oh, but he died that old man, but his son was still there.

Ray: When did he die?

Arsene: I don't know, quite a long time ago, five years ago or something.

Ray: And his father died when, 1932?

Arsene: That's what he said. Yeah.

Ray: How about Christina? Did she live a long time?

Arsene: No she didn't live very long after her brother died, because just about the same age, you see. But still work and died that way. When they opened up that big trunk it is full of

money right there. And the poor guy asked for money, "Where I could get the money? I couldn't find the money, I'm just like you. I have to sell my potatoes before I get my money."

That's what he'd say, you know. (laughs) And my dad used to work for him all the time. Yeah.

Ray: Like in the summertime?

Arsene: Summertime and the wintertime just the same. When my dad, he hired a guy from here with about two, or three canoe, go down to McMurray and they just bring the stuff from there for trading, you know.

Ray: Over here?

Arsene: Yeah. Over here with a paddle all the way through.

Ray: And they carried things on the portage across the trail, eh?

Arsene: Yeah. Yeah, but they used the horse there, you know. My dad always had the horse.

Ray: Horse and wagon?

Arsene: Yeah, wagon. My dad has always lots of horses -- five or six horses always.

Ray: Did they live up there then?

Arsene: No West La Loche, West La Loche. They had a store there. Yeah.

Ray: Your daddy had a store?

Arsene: Yeah, they kept store for Gordon, you know.

Ray: Oh.

Arsene: Yeah, all the time.

Ray: So he didn't work for the Bay, eh, he just worked for Gordon?

Arsene: Yeah, just for Gordon, buying furs and things like that.

Ray: In his house? In his own house?

Arsene: No, he's got another house. Yeah, that's what my daddy was raised me, you know. We used to be the poor people that time. But not us like that, you know. Because my daddy always had a store. We were living out of that. That's why. We're not suffered like most people, you know. Oh those people. My dad was just like a king that time. Yeah, everybody liked us.

Ray: Yeah.

Arsene: "I'll work for you, I'll work for you." Well, my dad has always got, had a good-hearted guy, you know. He told him, "All right, do that for me." In the garden, or woods, something make him do it for a winter. All give him the groceries, you know, some clothes. Help him with that. We used to be, you know...

Ray: Were they, you know, some people living here a long time ago?

Arsene: Oh yeah.

Ray: Were they poor people?

Arsene: Oh yeah.

Ray: What kind of people lived here?

Arsene: Chipewyan.

Ray: Yeah.

Arsene: But they got nothing, you know. No store here. And after that...

Ray: Just stayed with the mission, eh?

Arsene: Yeah. And after that Revillon had a store here. So it turned a little better. But when the manager's no good, well, the people's no good to him, you know, because they don't get no cheque from no place. Or else he didn't get a job. He can't get anything from that Revillon, you know.

Ray: Was that the only trader over this side, Revillon?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: Other people too, or no?

Arsene: No, no only one. He's got a big store there. You know that Hudson's Bay Store there and the next warehouse there?

Ray: Yeah.

Arsene: That's the same place, the Revillon store there.

Ray: The warehouse?

Arsene: Yeah. That's the same place, they broke that one down and they make a warehouse right now. It was there for a long time... about... not quite ten years. Still there that old house, but it was a big house, you know. And that where's the store right now, that Revillon store right there, used to be.

Ray: Right on the corner, eh?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: Part of the...?

Arsene: Yeah, that same place where's the Bay store now. Yeah, and it's right on, where he's living right that warehouse, you know. That's his own house.

Ray: Oh, the warehouse used to be the manager's house?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: Oh. In the corner of the Bay was the old store, eh?

Arsene: Yeah, that's the old store.

Ray: You can still see the roof coming off, yeah.

Arsene: Yeah. Yes, that's what they used to, people that live, you know. It used to be no work here.

Ray: No.

Arsene: No. Even I was just the same. Everything will have to finish before... soon as when we come back from trapping we'll have to work in the garden right away. I want to finish that right away. So soon as when I finish that I can go down to McMurray by boat, by canoe. Take a canoe to the portage with a horse, and go down to McMurray. We stayed there all summer, because I work there all summer, you know. My brother worked too; sometimes my daddy work too.

Ray: Who did you work for there?

Arsene: The Hudson's Bay warehouse.

Ray: Yeah.

Arsene: Yeah. I work for the Bay there, because they need lot of people in that big warehouse, you know. That's the only place like, you know.

Ray: And carry things and...?

Arsene: And the other places too. McInnis, you know. That fish buyer, you know.

Ray: Yeah.

Arsene: So the people that work there, not only us. Lots of people go down some time and stay there all summer, and will have to come back in the fall time, sometime right to the ice. Boy, for twice I come back that way, in the rapid, you know.

Ray: Up the river, eh?

Arsene: Two big canoe. I have to tow one from the back. I got a motor, you know. My daddy is getting old so, just some... One time just by myself, my sister, and my mother, and me, my dad. There was two big... full of stuff, you know, bought lots of stuff. Every time I get paid I give it to my dad.

Ray: How much money did you get paid?

Arsene: Not very much. About eighty cents an hour or something, used to be, yeah.

Ray: That was when, long time ago, eh?

Arsene: (Indian) Hudson's Bay warehouse.

Ray: In 1919?

Arsene: McInnis was from a long time, you know, yeah.

Ray: Is this George McInnis?

Arsene: Yeah, George McInnis. That's from long time.

Ray: And he used to come and get the fish from...

Arsene: Yeah, the people used to work -- now they just live like a king. They get up goes there and gets a cheque. Go to the welfare and get a cheque. Only me, I think, I don't get no cheque from the welfare. That one thing the welfare never helped me yet, all my life, and I never bummed neither.

Ray: No?

Arsene: No, I never asked once.

Ray: Just worked hard, eh?

Arsene: I never asked once, no. Even if I'm sick I don't go to them. Sometimes I can use it, you know, if I don't work a long time, I don't travel something, you know. Sometimes I'm sick and they ask me to go there. When I get there, talk different way, talk different way. That's what I don't like, and so I just told them, "Never mind." Just try to make my living. They used to talk over too much about it. "I come back and forth to here like a bummer," I used to tell them that, you know. So I never get no help from the welfare all my life yet, not once yet.

Ray: In the old times when people got sick like that where did they go to? There was no hospital here, what did people do?

Arsene: Oh, just keep them here.

Ray: Yeah.

Arsene: Yeah, just keep them here. Sometimes when he's really bad we'll have to take him to Ile-a-la-Crosse by canoe.

Ray: By canoe?

Arsene: By canoe. One time my mother was sick for a long time, about a year. So my dad said in the summertime -- I was small at that time -- so my dad said, "Let's to go to Ile-a-la-Crosse, take your mommy there." So we went down, all the time when we went there.

Ray: Your mother's name was what?

Arsene: Rosalee.

Ray: Rosalee?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: What was her name before she married your father? Do you remember that?

Arsene: Jeremy.

Ray: Jeremy, Rosalee Jeremy. Then she was Rosalee Fontaine.

Arsene: Yeah. So we went there. We went to Ile-a-la-Crosse. We stayed there in about a week. Big wind, you know. And after that, you know, we went down, we went back, you know. And the one man from Garson Lake there, you know, you know that Ellen Meek(?) from Garson Lake now, that old lady.

Ray: Yeah, yeah.

Arsene: Ellen, you know that, eh?

Ray: Yeah. I've talked to her.

Arsene: That his husband, and he was sick and it was headache all the time, you know. And gosh it looks like he's going to die. So my daddy took that guy too, to the hospital and that guy got something (inaudible), you know, and I don't know what they mean, in his brain. So about two or three weeks after, he just die, that guy (inaudible). My daddy took it up there.

Ray: How long did it take you to get go to Ile-a-la-Crosse in a canoe?

Arsene: Well, it wouldn't be too long if there's not wind, you know. Lots of big lakes, you know. From right to Bull's House, you know. Lots of big lakes. When the wind, you got to stay there; that's how. But when you just go there... Well if you go there right now with about twenty horse, you know, it won't take you very long.

Ray: No. But in the old days they didn't have motors, eh?

Arsene: No, we had a motor. My daddy had a motor at that time. Yeah, but a small one, you know, about five horse, or something, you know. But still we went to Ile-a-la-Crosse. We stayed there in a tent. Set the tent and lived there. My mother, every day the doctor come to check them. I wonder why he didn't took to the hospital, eh. Don't do that.

Ray: No.

Arsene: No.

Ray: Maybe too many people in the hospital.

Arsene: No, no, but the hospital wasn't big like now too, you see. It's kind of a little small. So my mother was all right after the doctor cured her, but that guy died there.

Ray: Eleanor's husband, eh?

Arsene: Yeah. He died. Lot of people went that way. You see, right now he would be lived that guy, but he died after, you know. Because no doctor, can't do nothing. When some Cree, and some Cree around here, you know, that's the time that was a doctor, really doctor. One old man is here is Alfred Cheecham; that his dad. That old man, he's a Cree, you know. That's from Alberta, that old man.

Ray: What was his name, do you remember that?

Arsene: Oh no, I couldn't say.

Ray: From Alberta though, eh?

Arsene: That's from Alberta, Alfred.

Ray: From Chard, Alberta?

Arsene: No, McMurray, yeah. From Anzac, Anzac, that's where he come from. Until he married here, you know. So that Alfred's dad, that Cree. Alfred Cheecham, his dad. Yeah, his name is Cheecham. That's right, yeah. But I don't know his name. He had a nickname, you know, Stinging Beast. Stinging

Beast in Chipewyan and that's what they call him, you know, and that was a good doctor to call him. Yeah, every time somebody's sick you have to come and get it, take it there, and give him something, you know, not with the cash but... and he helped the people. Well even the clothes give it that, roses, things like that. (laughs) That's a good doctor. That was a Doctor Hoffman(?) that time. (laughs)

Ray: He could fix the people, eh?

Arsene: Oh yeah.

Ray: Did he used to stay here too, or you have to go over there?

Arsene: Who?

Ray: To Alberta?

Arsene: No, he stayed here.

Ray: He stayed here with Alfred, eh?

Arsene: Yeah. You know that right in that school, in the side of that school there, he's got a little house there. It was where he used to live. And Alfred was living there until he was a big man. And after that he built another house. Then his mother died, so he kept that old man there for a while and he died. He was pretty old too. Yeah. That was Doctor Hoffman(?) that time. (laughs)

Ray: Did he used to sing too, when he fixed the people?

Arsene: No. Not things like that, just with the medicine.

Ray: The medicine, where did he get the medicine?

Arsene: Well, just the roots.

Ray: Roots and plants.

Arsene: From the bush. But he cured lot of guys with it, oh yeah. They cured lots of guys with it except they'll take your blood too, you know. Oh yeah, he's got a big pipe, you know, long handle, pipe, you know, smoke pipe. Brand new one, but he never smoked with it. And he just do that with a needle, you know, put a needle in right and cut in little stick like this, little willow, and put the needle like this. Sharp needle just about this long out, you know. And then he just do that with it; poke you with that. And when the blood come out, so he's got to suck the blood from there and the guys with that pipe. Put a pipe here and from the handle, you see, took the blood like that. And then after that he put the medicine and put on the paper, and just put it on, tied it on. Somebody knows, sometimes people sore knee, something, you know. Oh, he cured a guy with that lots of time. Must be good medicine. Yeah. He used to do that, that Cree. Alfred, maybe Alfred just like doctor right now, don't know. (laughs)

Ray: Maybe he learned from his father.

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: What about if you had a broken leg, something like that? Did he fix that too?

Arsene: I don't know, maybe he fix it. Well the people they used to do that. My uncle, my mother's, his brother, his name is Alec. He used to be just like doctor too, you know. When the people broke his leg, one his son, his boy, you know, broke his leg -- that guy's still here, he's in Descharme now.

Ray: Who is that?

Arsene: Simeon.

Ray: Simeon.

Arsene: Yeah, that his grandfather. And we walk in the bush, you know. We had a bow and arrow, you know. So that arrow's up there; couldn't take it down. We're small; we're about this. So he climbed there and he fall down right on the big roots there, you know, the big timber there. So broke his leg right here. So I run to the town and I told dad, and come and get with the canvas. That old man he make a box, you know, just like... he made a box right to the earth, just like that. On his feet like this, and then he put it in there and then he tied it; just kept him like that. And that guy didn't go this where.

Ray: No.

Arsene: No, eh. He must be a good doctor, eh?

Ray: So he made like a wooden cast?

Arsene: And that guy you could fit it right now, hung like this, you see. Could feel that just like this. (inaudible) broke, I guess, that's why I know. And that old man he just cured him about a month time...

Ray: He had to walk around with a big box on his leg.

Arsene: Yeah, he had a box on it just hang like that for about a month, and then he took it out, made him walk. That guy's all right, still travelling, still make his living, you see. That's what they used to do. And one of my, no the other one, that old man, my mother's dad, his brother too. That one, he's just like doctor too. They call him La Boss. They used to call him La Boss, but I forgot his name anyway. That's just like doctor. The one time the guy that shot this arm here, you know, with a shotgun, in a canoe. So he load that gun and he forgot it so he pull it this way and he shot himself with a shotgun here, right here. And they then keep him like that all summer. My mother said his arm was about that big, she says, and he was really sick, you know. And (?) brother went there he said, "If you don't mind it, I'll cut your arm and I'll cure you. If you don't cut your arm you're going to die." So that guy, he says, "All right, try it." So that bone was not together much, I guess, eh. It was rotten too, you know. So they had... you know that shave that used to be, that long shave, razor, you know, just like knife? They had it sharpened. I think they had about four, he said. So they tied him right here and one guy help him in the house, in the tent. That guy he's to keep him out, outside in the tipi, you know; so just tied him right here. "Now," he says, and that guy just like that, he said. They just cut him right through like that, and just threw his arm away and there's ready medicine right there on the paper, you know. Put the medicine ready to stop the blood with it. And then as soon as when they cut, he said, his brother told him the story, I guess. "Soon as when I cut it his arm was just like this," he says, "and the blood was just, just like a shot," he said. So he put that medicine on it, and

he just tied it there. And that guy even he make canoe after that, a birch canoe on this side, you know.

Ray: With one arm?

Arsene: With one arm. He lived long time after that. Must be good doctor, eh? Must be a brave guy, eh?

Ray: Who was the man with the one arm? You don't remember his name.

Arsene: (Indian) I just forgot. It's a long time, you know. When I was small like, my mother was giving the story.

Ray: Who was the doctor?

Arsene: Yeah, that's my uncle, that Francois Jamie.

Ray: He was the doctor?

Arsene: Yeah. That was the doctor, that his name.

Ray: Doctor Hoffman.

Arsene: That was a Doctor Hoffman too. (both laughing)

Ray: He made a birch bark canoe after that, eh?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: With one hand.

Arsene: He'd do anything after that. Make snowshoes just one side his arm like this, you know. Had a crooked knife. We call them a crooked knife. Yeah, about that long, you know, like a plane, you know. Sharp when them guys made that. I always had that. That's two years ago I gave it to my sister, in Buffalo. So that's on this side. Just make it with that, make anything with it, snowshoes...

Ray: Did many people make canoes in the old days?

Arsene: Oh yeah.

Ray: Birch canoe?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: Yeah. From trees around here?

Arsene: Yeah, but not, used to be a big, big, big stick here, you know, big trees. So they got it out of this lake sometime, and sometime we go to Clearwater mostly got a better one, ones that got a better canvas. So he goes to the Clearwater and

goes down the river with a...

Ray: Better canvas.

Arsene: Yeah, that would be sixteen ounce one you get there. (laughing) So if he wants to use about eight ounce, well, just around this lake, find that. That's the way they used to do, you know. Yeah, the people they sure could work, for himself, yeah. But it didn't take long to make canoe with that.

Ray: And how did they put it together?

Arsene: Well, they put the rock like this. The way like, like canoe, you know.

Ray: Yeah, shaped like a canoe.

Arsene: About that size rock just put all around and just right up to here, and they put a mud there.

Ray: Mud?

Arsene: Yeah, and put a sand there, and little over there, and then they put that and make a stick first, you know. And then they put that...

Ray: Bend it over?

Arsene: No. And then they just put it there. That canvas, you just put it there.

Ray: The birch, eh?

Arsene: Yeah, that birch. You just put it there and sew it together, you know, the bottom.

Ray: With what? What did they use to sew it?

Arsene: Oh, the roots. They make the roots, you know. About the same size of roots as this, a little bigger than this one, a long one, you know, of the spruce, you know, in bushes. And then they peel. I don't know how they do that. But, boy, it make a good one -- soft. And they're sewing with that.

Ray: You boil it?

Arsene: No, you didn't boil it.

Ray: It was just soft, eh?

Arsene: Just, oh, really soft. But when they kept for a while have to put them in the water, I guess. So that they make that and then just make a canoe like that. Put the ribs on it, put the stick first, put two places for the ribs, you know, and then it was just like this for the men. And then the sewing there with that roots wherever, and right at the end,

you know. Boy, it looked nice. And then with a pitch, you know. He's got to get a gum from the bush.

Ray: From the trees?

Arsene: From the trees. And that one they boil it, they boil it. Boy, that made a good glue with that. And just like this they put it in his hands. No water in it. You only put it in the water and little bit of leak just put three coats like this, you know, and put a little rope there and hang it there, and put the water just a little bit like that. Where it's leak, well take something and mark it there, and take it down. And never get any water in it. That's better than canvas too sometimes they made it. Some guys they make a good one, really nice, you know. They used to do that.

Ray: And then it was light too, eh?

Arsene: Yeah, light too.

Ray: To carry.

Arsene: Yeah. I used to take it all out lots of times from here right up north in the springtime, you know. Have to pack all the way through.

Ray: You carried it?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: All the way north?

Arsene: All the way north.

Ray: Past the Clearwater?

Arsene: Past, yes. Muskeg Mountain, you know, there in Alberta, quite a ways there from here.

Ray: You carried the canoe?

Arsene: I carried it right to the river right there. Because there was lots of beaver in that country, you know. Still that way. And just right through there.

Ray: What river is that?

Arsene: Oh I don't know, I got no map now.

Ray: Firebag, no?

Arsene: No. The Firebag this way and that river was going this way. So you get that in Firebag River. It's quite a ways.

Ray: And you carry your canoe all the way?

Arsene: Oh yes all the... not only me it used to be lots of people. Some guys that bring it back to here, because he's got no canoe here, and hard to make it, you know, sometimes. So he have to bring it to here, but not us -- not me. When I take it up there and I just...

(END OF SIDE A)

Arsene: After that I used to make lots of time canoe. It's easy. I just buy the canvas from the store and a little paint. Sometime I don't get the paint, well I just use the candle, you know. Candle, I put it in the fire and make it melted and just paint it with that. That's a real one.

Ray: Put wax on it?

Arsene: Yeah. I used to make, well sometimes I made it in one day, the canoe. Oh yeah, that Francis Janvier here, they make it lots -- still make it like this, yeah. When I go up, after that I may go up north, I just take the canvas when I got no canoe, and I just start to make it. Get a stick and I make good. Nice too, you know, sometime when I have my time, you know. When I rushed not like that, but sometimes I make good canoe.

Ray: And what did you use to sew it up?

Arsene: Oh, just a needle.

Ray: Needles?

Arsene: I just use the needles, because it's a small canoe, you know, for a hunting like that -- sometimes about twelve feet, fifteen feet make it like that, you know. Two guy with fifteen feet is good enough. And the canvas was kind of narrow, so I have to sew it with my hands, sewing there and put them on -- just as good, yeah.

Ray: And you just leave it there?

Arsene: Oh yeah.

Ray: Come back?

Arsene: No, just leave it there. Next year I go there, sometime they very broken up when I get there -- break, torn, everything, break all the stick. I have to make another one again. (laughs) The beaver is really bad builder too, you know.

Ray: Did you have a cabin there?

Arsene: No.

Ray: No, stayed in a tent?

Arsene: The guys had never had a cabin before. Even me. How used to trap, we never had tent, never have a cabin. Everybody like that. One of the guys from here goes to Deschorme or the other places with his family and they make a camp there, they make a cabin there, you know. They made big ones. Jonas Clark used to make lots of them. Go stay with his family, you know.

But from there where he's trapping between us never had it. Just outside all the time. It don't matter how cold you got to be outside, fire. It don't matter how cold.

Ray: You just make a fire?

Arsene: Not even a tent. Of course the people didn't know about that, I guess, knew a thing about that.

Ray: And never think about it since?

Arsene: No. And after that there was lots of fox one time. So I went up north and I had lots of fox there. Well, sometime I get about eighty, ninety in one trip, you know, foxes. And one guy, who's still here, that American, Herman, he was with my partner, you know. So I told him, "Your auntie's got a tent." I says, "I think we better, I think I better buy that tent. I think it would be good for the bush. I was thinking that," I said. So when we got back and I sold my fur I told that old lady, I told him, "Can you sell me your tent?" I says. "No," he says, "I can't sell it. I use it for summer to go around the lake." So I told him, "Well, when I come back I'll buy you a canvas again, and you'll make another one. You'll make a new one for yourself again." So he said, "Okay." Give me that tent. So I took a little stove, you know, but I took the wrong one stove pipe, you know. You know that little small one, I bought it from the Bay. So I took that but that was too small. That's the only thing. So we set the log like this and about this high, so we set the tent on there. Well it's just like a house. Everything never froze (inaudible) we just throw it there and just skin it. Before that, you know, when that was about that much frost, have to bring all with the dogs, frozen, right to the West La Loche. Boy, a big load sometimes, but I always had a good dog.

Ray: How many dogs did you have?

Arsene: Oh sometimes five, six, but mostly all the time five. But I always watch a dog, always had a good dog.

Ray: Where did you get your dogs from?

Arsene: Well, we raised the dog. I'd train it with what is good so I use that; my brother's is the same. So when I see a good dog somebody had it, I don't give a shit how much money, even seventy-five dollars on top of the one dog. He'll sell me that dog. But I didn't pay that much. I paid right up to fifty dollars. She will give me fifty dollars because she's got no money, you know, give me fifty dollars for the dog,

sure. Well I get a dog, one good trained dog better than skidoo anyway.

Ray: Oh yeah.

Arsene: Yeah, even lots of snow, I don't give a shit. Can just go and do it themselves. I used to have a good dog all the time, yeah.

Ray: Somebody walk in front to make a trail for the dog?

Arsene: No. When it's a good dog, good leader, you know, you don't need to go ahead.

Ray: Even in deep snow?

Arsene: Oh yeah, just do it themself. It's like that; some dogs like that, when you train them like that. One time I

raised a dog, me and my wife, about that big. I bought little pups from guys, you know; so we raised them. And it was the four of them. It was a big dog, boy, nice dog. So I train them. Well, they're all just about the same and I got a good leader from before that, you know. Big dog, you know. I bought it from that dog too, Joseph Preece's(?) dad.

Ray: Oh, that's Gilbert?

Arsene: Yeah. I bought that dog from him for forty dollars in the summertime.

Ray: When was that?

Arsene: Oh quite a long time ago. Not too long, but about ten years ago, twelve years ago. So I had that dog, you know, and that dog when I go up north and I train him there in the snow, you know.

Ray: What did you train him to do?

Arsene: Well, just put him in a harness and I just go far, just follow me, you know, for a while and after that, that dog was a strong dog and a healthy dog, you know, so he's just like that. And sure when he hit the road he doesn't like it. When he goes on the road it's hard road for him, you know. Don't feel like to go there. Soon as when he hits the lake, just leave that good road and just make his own road, don't matter how deep -- he likes that and then that's the time, boy, he travels. Even from here West La Loche has good road, when we go to the lakes he just don't want that road. Tell him to go on that road, you'd make him go, no, he'd just go ahead. Right straight to the point, you know, where's that road. He don't

like the road, but when lots of snow on the road, you know, boy, he likes that. Then he travels.

Ray: Makes his own path.

Arsene: Yeah, he travels good. When you train them on the road, you know, when he's on the road lots of snow, boy, it's kind of hard for him. But when you train them in the snow like that he likes that; he don't like to hit the hard road. Only when he get there it's just like he get tired right away; he don't like that. (inaudible) right when he's at the bushes he just break himself -- boy, he likes that.

Ray: He was your leader dog, eh?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: And the other dogs followed him?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: Do they fight sometimes?

Arsene: No, no, they don't fight.

Ray: What did you feed them, fish?

Arsene: Oh, moose meat.

Ray: Moose meat?

Arsene: Yeah, with lots of bones.

Ray: So you always take it with you, eh?

Arsene: Yeah. Always carry moose meat, but I always keep a dog good, like the way I'm living. Made a good place for them when I made a cabin, make fire well, take all the snow off and put lots of spruce for them, keep them good, and feed them good. And they like me.

Ray: So when you camp you cleaned the snow off, made the spruce place for them to lie down, eh?

Arsene: Yeah, yeah. Right to the ground, had to take everything out.

Ray: Right to the ground?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: Not on the snow?

Arsene: No, not on the snow. When you put it on the snow it get too cold for you. It's no good. You have to clean lots of snow right up with the snowshoes, you know.

Ray: So that's how you shovelled, eh?

Arsene: Yeah, that was the shovel. (laughs)

Ray: You made places for the dogs too like that.

Arsene: Yeah, make a place for the dogs like that.

Ray: And nothing over top of you?

Arsene: No.

Ray: Nothing, eh?

Arsene: No.

Ray: Just the sky?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: And the stars.

Arsene: Yeah, just the sky and -- but it was just like we don't care about it, because we get used to it, you know.

Ray: And you didn't get cold?

Arsene: And the first time, you know, when you go in the fall time it's kind of cold, you know, first time; it's cold. But after you get (?) even the month of January was cold at that time, you just don't care about it. As long as lots of wood that's good enough.

Ray: You keep the fire going all night long?

Arsene: No. Just leave the fire, but you got to have a good blanket, you know. And then go under the blanket and go to sleep. And the morning, before daylight, sometimes you don't have a wash like now. Well, you got to put your blanket and look at the stars and things; well, just get up. Just like, just like our watch, you know, that star. Oh yeah. When it goes this way. You know that Dipper?

Ray: Yeah.

Arsene: When it goes this way, you know, and it's coming this way and right in the middle of that there you got to get up; that's before daylight. Soon as when he turned this way that's a daylight, you see.

Ray: When it comes around...

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: Clockwise.

Arsene: You see, right now it's this way now.

Ray: Yeah.

Arsene: And it just goes this way, you see, and then it just go right... that's a good watch. So when you see that still down, well, you got to sleep good again. (laughs) That's a good watch. And then when it's cloudy, you know, you don't know all along, so sometimes before daylight you got to get up long time, you know. But they don't care, get used to that, you know. Have to wait till daylight. Sometimes you want to make home from a long ways, well before daylight you can go and the dog he knows where the road is.

Ray: In the dark, eh?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: Did the dogs ever wake you up?

Arsene: Pardon?

Ray: Did the dogs bark at nighttime?

Arsene: No.

Ray: No.

Arsene: When I had the dog in the bush never barking around even right here. When he was young he used to holler to something, you know, just take a little whip and just stop him right away. As soon as when you hear them barking just take your whip just like that and he just quit right away. You won't hear nothing. When I had dogs always that way.

Ray: You trained them not to bark?

Arsene: Yeah, I trained them that way.

Ray: What if a bear was coming?

Arsene: Well, the dogs would be barking at that time, I guess. When something, wolf or something, you know. But the wolf, you know, the dogs just hide themselves. Oh yes, they know.

Ray: They're afraid, eh?

Arsene: Yeah. When he hear the wolf call he don't want to go, stay away from you, just want to come closer, you know. And he knows it. They're darn smart, you know.

Ray: Yeah. So you know there's trouble, eh?

Arsene: Oh yeah.

Ray: When the dog comes crawling.

Arsene: Yeah. One time me and my brother-in-law, who died last fall, Edward Park, you know.

Ray: Oh yeah.

Arsene: We went up north trapping one winter. He's got a dog, you know, one big dog. Boy, that dog, you know, he broke the chains one night. I suppose he could hear a wolf, I guess, and some dog was that way, you know, was kind of wild. So he broke the chains and he went to that little lake, I suppose, but he didn't know it. So my brother-in-law told me, "Make a fire," in the morning, before daylight, you know. And I got up and started to make a fire. So when I make fire I said, "One of your dogs is not here," I said. "Broke the chains," I said. "Well, I hear the wolf from the little lake," he says. "I bet you now he got killed," I says. And it was a good dog too, you know, and my brother-in-law he doesn't like that, it was a good leader too, you know. But he said, "I wonder why he break that chain, like crazy," he said. Oh, and he was swearing, you know, (inaudible) coming, you know, seen him (tape is shut off). And he lost his tail about that long. And after that we went to the lake, you know, by the lake. But he'd been played with that dog all night. Funny they didn't kill him. They just played with it. Finally played and fight him like, you know, but they didn't bite him, I suppose. Just sweat all over, boy, just frozen. Well from his mouth, I guess, but they never touch one.

Ray: The wolf?

Arsene: Never hurt. Just playing with it, I guess, and they run, and that dog run away, you know, and the wolf would go chasing again and that's why he broke his tail, I guess, to fight him on his tail. So he broke that off. So that dog is lost half of his tail and he come back. There's nothing wrong but he don't feel good, boy. He get tired, you know. Must have played, you know. Boy, no snow in the little lake, boy, just where they're playing with him. Didn't kill him. There was eight, or seven wolves there and none of them bite him. No blood on him. Just played with it, I guess. He was lucky. (laughs) So that dog got back.

Ray: I bet you he was afraid, eh?

Arsene: Yeah. So he must have learned, you know, and my brother-in-law he took the gun and he shot him; he shot the gun, you know. He said, "Maybe the wolves still there." So he shot that gun and hear the gun, I guess. So that's why they run away and then that dog come back. (laughs) Yeah. And after that, that same road we went up there, and my brother-in-law he seen lots of wolf tracks, you know, on the road. So he chase him, fresh one, took the gun and chase him so (inaudible). I hear his shots, one shot, you know. When I get to that little lake was timber wolf was laying there, you know. I thought he shot him. So he shot somewhere right here, but he just wounded, you know. I didn't know that. So I just took his feet and put my blanket like this and put right under the blanket and I cover it. I figure it needs to be freeze, we skin it. It's too heavy. So I was waiting, you know, my

brother-in-law come to me he says, "What you do with that?" "I just put him under the blanket." He said, "Yes, well we go." And when we get to portage there and started to make fire there, you know. Not all over the fire too in that place -- no wood. Sometimes you got to go a long ways.

Ray: Yeah?

Arsene: Yeah. Sometime before sundown there's a lot of wood You can't pass it; you got to stay there, north. Because no dry wood, no dry wood all over. Some places like that, have to watch that.

Ray: Too much muskeg?

Arsene: No, no, not too much, muskeg was the wood, you know, the high land, you know, that's why all the (?) land and up north, you know. That's why.

Ray: Not enough land?

Arsene: So we make a fire. We started to make a fire, you know. So I figure I won't take my axe and my brother-in-law took an axe, and took the snow with the snowshoes, took the snows off. When I took my blanket, boy, that wolf was just (inaudible) and just looked at me, you know. Boy, just wide open his eyes, you know. He was kind of a little dizzy yet, I guess. Boy, I just hollered, you know, and I went back to my brother-in-law's toboggan and I took the gun there and, boy, I just shot. (laughing) Boy, we sure laughed. I was sure scared. It was right here, you know. Well, when I put my blanket here and the wolf would just look at me, boy, wide open through his eyes -- boy, he sure scared me. It's a big wolf, you know. "Boy," I said, "it's alive!" But I went to that toboggan, you know, and so I just grabbed the gun and I shot him. Oh, we sure laugh about it. And after that, boy, he was fat, you know, so took the meat off and put it on the toboggan, you know. We supposed to meet Jonas Clark there. And that Clark, he ate the whole thing, the wolf. (laughs)

Ray: Big eater, eh.

Arsene: Yeah. Yeah, that's all the story I got, I think.

Ray: You just scoop the snow up in a can, or something like this?

Arsene: What?

Ray: What do you put the snow in, pail?

Arsene: Oh, just put it in a pail.

Ray: In a pot?

Arsene: In a pot, put it on the stove, make a water with that.

Ray: That's good water?

Arsene: Good water, really good. But some creek that like this water, you know, make tea with it and boil it black sometime you could see everything just like, just like a little paint, you know.

Ray: Yeah. Like gasoline on top?

Arsene: Yeah. But when the snow...

Ray: You take it right off the top of snow, or you dig down and take it underneath?

Arsene: Dig once is good.

Ray: You dig, eh?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: It gets nice and clean?

Arsene: The top snow, you know, don't make much water when you put it in a pot. That's when you dig it out and that takes a lot of snow and you get lots of water. And you take one frying pan, snow in it, it would be just full. But when from on top not very much in there. That's the way it goes.

Ray: It's wetter down below, eh?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: Did you ever make tea with the plants, bushes?

Arsene: No.

Ray: Always teabags?

Arsene: No.

Ray: What did people used to use before they had teabags?

Arsene: Well, just tea, like bulk tea.

Ray: Buy a box of it?

Arsene: No, we got one pound of tea, you know, that loose tea like that, just use that. The time when I was young, that kind of tea was nothing.

Ray: Didn't cost anything?

Arsene: No, it was nothing, the store.

Ray: Oh, there wasn't any.

Arsene: But they have a big box, you know, plywood box, you

know. A thousand pound in there. Big box like that just (inaudible), and then had to put them on scales. If you want to get a one pound of tea, have to do that. Yeah.

Ray: So the manager did that, eh?

Arsene: Yeah, do that. Put them in scale and put them in a paper bag. That's one pound of tea.

Ray: How much did that cost at that time, do you remember?

Arsene: No, I don't remember, but...

Ray: Not very much, eh?

Arsene: Not very much, not much.

Ray: And you just put it in the pot?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: The leaves, eh?

Arsene: Just put them in a pot. We used that sometime too, that teabag was Blue Ribbon tea. That's what we were using,

you know. If it's nothing and sometime nothing in the store. So if there's nothing that, we'll have to use that Blue Ribbon tea. (inaudible) leaves but not (?) in another pot, so we just strain it.

Ray: Strain it, yeah. So you don't get leaves in it.

Arsene: No. Before that I never think of that, you know. Just have the leaves. You just drink like that, you don't mind it. But now I don't like that when the leaves in it. I get used to that, that tea, I guess.

Ray: Everybody used to drink it with the leaves in before, eh?

Arsene: Oh yeah. I don't think it bothered them. Even the white people drink with the leaves like that. There's lots of leaves in it. If you want another cup, well, you have to spill that and give me another cup again. They don't mind that. Yeah, that's what we used to do.

Ray: In the old store did they... could the people just go and pick out what they wanted, or did the manager have to give you everything?

Arsene: Yeah, the manager do that.

Ray: The manager give you everything, eh. Behind the counter?

Arsene: Yeah.

Ray: Everything's behind him, eh?

Arsene: Yeah, a long counter, you know, not like this table like, long counter, you know, (?) the store. So that clerk was inside, so you have to get it from there.

Ray: You can't touch anything, eh?

Arsene: No. Well, if you want to touch it, he don't mind that. People don't like to do that. I used to do that myself. Anything I wanted to get it, just check it, check it. I pack it in and then give it to the clerk, but not everybody do that. They're scared like, you know. That guy who was here, Mr. Blackhall, you know, I was telling you about it.

Ray: Yeah.

Arsene: That was a good-hearted guy too sometimes, you know, when he's good. Even this kind of tobacco, if you've got 5 he'll cut it for you right here like this way.

Ray: Cut a piece off for you?

Arsene: Cut piece off for you. He's got a sharp big knife, you know, army knife. They used to have that in the store, you know. If you've got 5 give it to him and he just cut it for you. Yeah, even tea.

Ray: That's chewing tobacco, or to make a cigarette?

Arsene: This kind of tobacco. This kind of tobacco I mean.

Ray: Cigarette tobacco?

Arsene: Yeah, this kind of cigarette tobacco, this kind of package. Just cut it for you. He knows how to cut (inaudible) tobacco. Yeah, that's what they used to do. If you had 10 he'd give you tea, just their tea, put it in paper bag, here. When he's good but when he's going this way, boy, he don't care for nobody.

Ray: He's crazy too, eh?

Arsene: Yeah. He's kind of like crazy, but when he's drink. Even he don't drink very much, because (?) was saying that, you know. That was... he'd been in the army, got a bullet somewhere right inside.

Ray: That's, that was Philip Powers you said?

Arsene: Yeah, Philip Powers.

Ray: Not the Blackhall guy, eh?

Arsene: No.

Ray: No. Yeah, you told me about Philip Powers.

Arsene: Yeah, that's the guy.

Ray: He went in the war?

Arsene: What?

Ray: He was in the war, eh?

Arsene: Yeah, he'd been in the army.

Ray: He got shot?

Arsene: He got shot somewhere inside that's why. And they figure out the bullet, something inside in it. That's what the doctor says. You know that Neil Boulanger was that way, had a bullet inside and he just went crazy. And sometimes (?) that he's a nice guy, and he used to be a good guy that guy, a good-natured people. You know Boulanger? And after that, that same guy again, he was a nice guy. He still a little cross now. He was a good guy, everybody's friend. But when he come from the army, boy, you can't drink with him. What they say in Ile-a-la-Crosse he takes about three, four times take a shot. He just go crazy like, he just want to fight right away. He'll kill you if you don't stop him, even his wife pretty near killed. Broke his rib, his wife, you know. And when his brother was outside he didn't hear him. So one little boy he went to there and seen him. So he told his brother. So his brother, you know, come down and just tied him with a rope. So they took that woman to the hospital in Ile-a-la-Crosse. That's the last time, and that guy took to the jail, you know. Leave him there for about two years.

Ray: Really?

Arsene: And they got back, he never took his wife back. His wife still at Big River, I think, somewhere. Yeah.

Ray: And that Powers guy was the same way, eh?

Arsene: Same way, same thing. But immediately after that he was all right again maybe. But he was a bad guy, you know. But he won't fight you, but just trying to scare you all the time, getting mad. (laughs) Oh he prays -- Catholic, you know.

Ray: Yeah.

Arsene: Yeah, he's got a beads, mounds of beads. The time he give them to everybody the beads, free, present. Take them to the priest, use this beads. (laughs)

Ray: Gives it to everybody?

Arsene: And he's got a long beads himself. Long one, about that long, they say. I didn't see it. And that Father Ducharme was here at the time, you know. And went to the church, so he's holding that beads like this, you know. So that priest, he might say, I think he says something about that guy. He feel that maybe he don't pray, he's not Catholic but he's fooling. Maybe that's what he used to think, I guess. So he said that to the people, and told that guy, you know, priest had told you this way. So last time he went to the church and he told that priest too and he said, "That's what you told me." He said, "I'll never go to your church again. Even if I die here, don't come to me." (laughs) He don't care for nothing. Well, that priest shouldn't say that to him.

Ray: He knew he wasn't Catholic, eh?

Arsene: That's what he feel the first time when he come here, you know. So Sunday he went to the church, so he's got a beads on his hand, you know, he's carrying beads. So he said that. He said something about that. So the guy told him that (inaudible). So he got mad. That's the last time he went to church, I guess.

Ray: You told me before about sometimes that Philip Powers man, he would get mad and chase everybody out of the store.

Arsene: Oh yeah, he'd chase everybody out when he get mad. Sometime just pull his (?) like this, you know, right up to here, one side on the dress pants, you know. And one side like this. And sometimes it was a big moccasin, you know...

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