Ray: This is Ray Marnoch and I'm speaking with 76 year old Marie Lemaigre, in La Loche, Saskatchewan, on March 17, 1980. Marie speaks with us in her native Chipewyan language. Her granddaughter, Jackie Janvier, translates on this tape.

Marie: I was born in 1904, October 4, in Garson Lake. Both of my parents lived in Garson Lake.

Ray: Where did the people in Garson Lake come from originally?

Marie: I don't know. My father's home town is Fort McMurray, Alberta, and my mother's home town is La Loche, Saskatchewan.

Ray: And then they moved to Garson?

Marie: My father used to come from McMurray to Garson just about every day and then when he stayed he used to come down to West La Loche and then my mother and father got together and then they got married.

Ray: Oh, so this would be her grandfather that came from McMurray.
Marie: Yeah.

Ray: But it wasn't McMurray then, eh? It was probably not very much of town there then?

Marie: Quite a few people lived in McMurray but a lot of them moved often from place to place like West La Loche and here and Garson. I can't say their names, because -- yes...

Ray: It's okay. You can tell me their names.

Marie: (Inaudible) Arsene MacDonald. They made canoes out of birch bark, and speed boats. After the boat was finished, the whole family would come on board the boat and they would travel place to place all over and then they would come home.

Ray: What were they looking for when they travelled?

Marie: The men that are doing the travelling, they do a lot of fishing and trapping and hunting for their living and also then they tan the moose hide and make the moccasins and mukluks and jackets and pants and everything to make them warm.

Ray: Did you used to wear those kind of clothes?

Marie: Just about everybody used to wear those clothes. Not women. Women in those days wore dresses made of moose hide.

Ray: What did you make your winter parkas out of?

Marie: We made the linings out of blankets and the outside would be moose hide. They kept us really warm. When it was really, really cold, I would be still walking.

Ray: Did you wear moccasins on your feet?

Marie: Yes. We wore moccasins all of the time. Summer and winter. All seasons. In the winter we put linings in them. We also had rubbers shoes.

Ray: Did you get the rubber shoes at the Bay?

Marie: We used to have a store in West La Loche. It was quite a big store. A Hudson's Bay store. There was also another Bay store in Garson. We used to get supplies and everything shipped by boat from here to across the lake and the plane used to ship it here from down south.

Ray: The plane would come up?

Marie: Yes. Then all of the goods and supplies and everything, the people from West La Loche, they would come down by boat and then they would load the supplies and then go back to West La Loche.

Ray: The supplies came by plane to La Loche?
Marie: Yes.

Ray: How long was there a Bay store in Garson Lake?

Marie: About four years since they build the Bay.

Ray: How old were you at that time?

Marie: I can't remember how old exactly I was but I was still a teenager. I lived with my father then. The man I married was 30 at the time and I was 25 years old at the time I was married.

Ray: How did they get married at that time? Was there a priest?

Marie: I got married here in an old church. When there is a mass here, people come all the way from Garson Lake by horse every week for the mass.

Ray: In the summertime too?

Marie: The summer is the best time to travel by horse and everything. When we were travelling, we travelled by horses and if we would leave in the evenings, we would spend the night in the bush and then the next day we would come for mass and stay for about three days or so and then go back. We would leave right in the morning and then we could go one day. If not, then it takes two days to get home. In the wintertime, we went by horses pulling a sleigh. Six horses pulling the sleigh.

Ray: How did you keep the horses? Did you have a big stable or barn or something?

Marie: The people built many barns because every person who had horses had built a barn. In the springtime the people, the men, would go and burn all of the bushes and then in the summertime that thing grows again and it has grass and hay and then they cut it down and put it into bundles and load it on the horses and then bring it back.

When my father was gone to town then I used to look after the horses. In the morning I took them to the river to water them and then took them back. Sometimes I would go hunting too with the horses. I usually trapped squirrels and sometimes rabbits. Nothing too big.

Ray: Did you trap with snares that you made or did you buy wire at that time?

Marie: Sometimes I used a trap for squirrels. Sometimes we would tie a willow and then another willow on top and snared rabbits with that kind of snare. They would hang themselves. We could buy wire from the store and make our own snares by
heating it and bending the wire.

Ray: Did you snare squirrels with the willow too?

Marie: Yes.

Ray: How would the men snare the bigger animals?

Marie: I remember the men had rifles they bought from the Bay and used those to kill the larger animals.

Ray: What about trapping beaver or snaring a lynx or something like that?

Marie: They shoot the beaver too. Sometimes people trap with big ropes. To kill a bear, they would put a big stick across the bear's hole and they would tie the big rope to another stick. If the bear would walked into that thing, the stick would break and that is how we used to kill bears.

Ray: Then the big stick would fall on the bear?

Marie: Yes.

Ray: So he would hit the small stick and the big one would come down?

Marie: Yes. Last spring, Jean and I were snaring rabbits. The bear would eat the rabbits and like the old time days we killed a bear with the stick across and the rope. We caught it and killed it.

(END OF SIDE A)

Marie: The parents had to pick the man their daughter was to marry. You had to marry the man your parents picked for you.

Ray: How would your parents choose this man?

Marie: If the man seems to be not doing anything, they don't like that. They choose whichever they think is the best hunter, best worker.

Ray: How did you feel about that? Do you think it is a good way?

Marie: I think it was best that way. That way you would have only one man till death. If you pick your own, you might separate or something like that. It was best that your parents picked your husband. The parents were wise.

Ray: Were you allowed to see boys before you were married?

Marie: Only once in a while. Then when the boyfriend comes to visit he stays for a while and then he leaves.
Ray: Did you have dances or some kind of get-togethers where you could meet boys?

Marie: The only time we celebrated was Christmas Day. We used to have lots of fun. All of the people from Garson, West La Loche, La Loche, and a few other places, they would all come together and everybody meets and they would all dance and celebrate together.

Ray: What kind of dancing would you have? Would you have a big Christmas dinner or what kind of food would you have?

Marie: Each family, when they meet together for a big celebration, each family had to bring their own food like moose and caribou and pemmican, all of those things.

Ray: Did they give presents at that time or not?

Marie: No, we didn't. In those days we didn't know what a gift was about. Since the white man came, they learned of presents and things from the white man. Before that we didn't.

Ray: Before that time did you celebrate differently? Do you remember your father or grandfather talking about things they used to do?

Marie: My grandfather or father never told me any stories about that.

Ray: What happens when somebody gets a big moose or caribou or something like that? Would they have a big feast then?

Marie: That's what we used to do. If somebody killed a moose or something, everybody used to get together and they'd share it.

Ray: Were there many caribou around?

Marie: Just about everybody would get together and go hunting. They'd come home and the women had to do everything. We'd do the tanning of the hides and the smoking of the meat and the making the pemmican. Then on Fridays we would eat fish and only fish because of the church.

Ray: How did you make pemmican? What did you put in it?

Marie: We didn't mix anything to make pemmican. It is just dried meat.

Ray: Does it last a long time?

Marie: When the people went hunting they would kill a moose and when they would bring it home, the women would skin the moose and tan the hide and then make lots and lots of pemmican.
They would also smoke the moose meat. They would put it in a moose hide bag and put everything else in. Then they'd cover it and tie it. The men built a sort of storage shed and that was where we kept a lot of our supplies. It was about this high off the ground. Then the men would cut down trees and things and put them over the shed so the animals couldn't eat the supplies.

Ray: How did you keep things cold in the summertime?

Marie: We had no refrigerator or anything so what we would do with our food was smoke most of the meat or make pemmican out of the whole caribou. So nothing would have to be kept cold.

Ray: Do you remember any times when a lot of people got sick or died from the flu or smallpox or something like that?

Marie: In those days a lot of people died from chicken pox and smallpox and some survived and some didn't. Even the children would die. We didn't know what the cause was.

Ray: Was that when you were little?

Marie: In those days I was small but even now I am still small. (laughs)

Ray: Why do you like to go to the show and to the dances so much?

Marie: That is the only thing I like to go out and do.

Ray: What do you enjoy so much about it? You don't understand the English.

Marie: I don't understand some of it but what I like is when the people are fighting and all of those things. I love the action parts and the laughing parts.

In the old days we would have dances and I would never miss them. I would never miss a dance now even though I do not dance any more.

Ray: Are there some funny stories you remember from your youth?

Marie: I know well about Tsa-ki-tsa.

Ray: Can you tell one of the stories?

Marie: One time Tsa-ki-tsa is walking around and walking around. He likes to steal and steal and steal. One day they came to a village and there was a king and a queen.

So Tsa-ki-tsa came and before these two people go to
bed, this king and queen, he didn't believe that this Tsa-ki-tsa used to steal lots of things. So he told this Tsa-ki-tsa before they went to bed, "If you steal this blanket that I am sleeping on then I'll know that you are a stealer. In the meantime I won't believe that people are calling you a stealer."

And so Tsa-ki-tsa made a big crow out of straw and he was outside standing by the prince's bedroom and he was showing him the crow through the window. Then the queen said, "That's Tsa-ki-tsa. Stop him. Go and shoot this Tsa-ki-tsa. He's peeking through the window." So he shot that thing and when he shot it Tsa-ki-tsa threw that thing on the ground and the king thought Tsa-ki-tsa had died.

They looked out of the window and the wife said, "I think you killed him. So we should go and see if he's alive." So those two went out to see if he's alive and, when they went out, Tsa-ki-tsa came in and stole that blanket.

So then the wife came inside and went to bed again. Then Tsa-ki-tsa came and told this lady, "I think I killed Tsa-ki-tsa so I'd better take this blanket and bury him in this blanket somewhere else." The wife didn't realize it was Tsa-ki-tsa. She thought it was her husband. So later on the king came back and said, "I couldn't find him at all. I don't know where he is." Then the wife said, "I thought you were just in a while ago saying you were going to bury Tsa-ki-tsa in this blanket. So you took this blanket outside."

So the next day Tsa-ki-tsa brought the blanket back and then he told this king, "You told me I wouldn't steal in your sleep and now I stole and now you'll believe other people."

So the king said, "Tomorrow I'm going to dump you clear out in the water and you will drown." So the next day the king put Tsa-ki-tsa in a sack and tied it around and left Tsa-ki-tsa on the dock. Just about all the people in town were dancing and celebrating that this as Tsa-ki-tsa's last day.

Then all of a sudden someone was walking and coming down to the dock and he heard someone crying in the sack. So this guy said, "What are you crying about, Tsa-ki-tsa?" So Tsa-ki-tsa said, "The king is going to dump me in the river and that's what I'm crying about. I'm too lazy because he's going to dump me there and there's lots and lots of gold in the water and the king wants me to get all this gold and silver. That's why I'm crying." So the man believed Tsa-ki-tsa. So he said, "Okay, now I'll untie you and you'll come out and then I will go in and I'll be dumped in the water and then I'll get all the coins and silver and bring it back again."

(END OF SIDE B)
Ray: This is tape number two of a conversation with Marie Lemaigre, on March 17, 1980, in La Loche, Saskatchewan. I'm Ray Marnoch, and the translator on this tape is Marie's granddaughter, Jackie Janvier. We continue with the Chipewyan folk tale of Tsa-ki-tsa.

Jackie: And we used to fight over grandmother when we were little, we used to fight over her.

Ray: You used to fight over her?

Jackie: Yeah, because before we go to bed we used to ask her to tell us a story about the olden days, eh, like this one. And she used to say, "No, no I'm not going to tell you any story any more -- just go to sleep, right now." And so we used to cry and then she says, "All right, all right, I'll tell you a story." Eileen, myself, Eileen, all of us we used to sit around her and she used to tell us stories like that.

Ray: Just like this one, eh?

Jackie: And we used to listen, we never used to fool around or anything.

Ray: Are you going to finish the story? I want to listen too.

Marie: They thought they had dumped Tsa-ki-tsa, that king. And so they went home and then one day Tsa-ki-tsa was travelling all around and then he came back with lots of horses, and lots of cows, and everything. And so they came back to his home town where the king was living. So the wife was working outside, and so she came in and she said, "I think that's Tsa-ki-tsa walking down the street." And so that the man said, "I don't think it's him. I bet you he was killed in the river where I dumped him. Maybe some big... whatever... he had been eaten," and all those things. And so the wife said, "No it's him, it's really him." And so the husband came out and then he says, "You're right, it's him. I wonder how he got out." And so he call out to Tsa-ki-tsa, and Tsa-ki-tsa came to him and then he said, "I thought I had dumped you in the water and how come you're here. And so, Tsa-ki-tsa said -- he was with all those horses and everything, eh -- and so Tsa-ki-tsa said, "Where you have dumped me in the water there were lots and lots of horses, lots and lots of animals, and even gold and silver. And so when you dumped me there were these horses, the ones that I have with me now. They have taken me out of the water and that's why I come back from looking." And so he believed Tsa-ki-tsa, so, and this man said, "Okay, now tomorrow I want you to dump me in the same spot where I dumped you." (laughs)

Ray: So the king wants to go nowhere.

Marie: Yeah. He wants to get everything that Tsa-ki-tsa had gotten back, but he was (?) from the water and that. (laughs) And so the man has been dumped in the water.
Ray: The king?

Marie: Yeah. And then Tsa-ki-tsa was staring sometimes and he was just there staring at this lady and then one day the lady said to Tsa-ki-tsa, she said, "How come when my husband dumped you in the water and you weren't that long, came back very quickly, and how come you dumped my husband there, and he never came back at all yet?" So then Tsa-ki-tsa said, "Your husband, the one that I dumped, I bet you he's been eaten by, whatever..."

Ray: Shark?

Marie: Shark or something like that. (laughs)

Ray: Is that the end of the story?

Marie: Yeah.

Ray: So he became the king?

Marie: Yeah, and so...

Ray: And so then he lived with them?

Marie: Yeah.

Ray: He married the queen? Holy smokes, what a story. (laughs) Your grandmother used to tell you stories like that, eh, at nighttime?

Marie: Yeah.

Ray: Was that an old tradition? People, parents have always told their kids old stories for a long time.

Marie: Yeah.

Ray: They still do that now?

Jackie: I don't know.

Ray: Does your grandmother tell stories to her grandchildren?

Jackie: Sometimes she does that. The kids they get to choose what story they want. Their granny used to tell them about Tsa-ki-tsa. She picked Tsa-ki-tsa first because that was...

Ray: That was the most favorite story, eh?

Jackie: Yeah.

Ray: Is that the only story about Tsa-ki-tsa, or are there other ones about him too?
Marie: Yeah, about two more.

Ray: Yeah.

(END OF SIDE A)
(END OF TAPE)

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