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RESTRICTIONS: WOULD NOT LIKE ANYONE TO USE THIS STORY ABOUT
GRANDMOTHER WANTING TO "SEW HER UP".

Margaret: I'm speaking to Annie Lavallie of Regina. Annie, can
you tell me a little about yourself, your background?

Annie: I was born on the File Hills Reservation, Peeksees
Reservation, in 1912.

Margaret: That's fine if you don't remember your dates, that's all right. Do you remember much...?

Annie: But why I said I was born in 1912, May 26, my sister always said that I was born just two days after the treaty (phone rings).

Margaret: Oh, I see.

Annie: Those years the treaties were paid out at Ft. Qu'Appelle, in Ft. Qu'Appelle.

Margaret: Okay, just one minute. Okay, do you just want to explain that a little more.

Annie: Those years the treaties, the treaty money was given out to all the band reserves you know, through Saskatchewan. They gathered at the Fort and treaty money was paid out to them on the 24th of May. And it was two days after the treaty, it was supposed to be my first treaty. But I was born just two days after that and that's how come my sister said I was born May 26. Those years didn't have no calendars, nothing...

Margaret: May 26. And when were they giving out the treaty money and that, on May...?

Annie: They used to give them at the Fort.

Margaret: Oh, I see.

Annie: Yes, every year. Now all the Indians in Canada, not Canada but Saskatchewan gather at the Fort and there would be a big camp. And all these bands, treaty bands would gather there and get their treaty money. Treaty money, five dollars a head.

Margaret: Everyone in the family received that.

Annie: Yes. Yes, everyone in the family received their five dollars. And then I grew up on the reserve and I did not go to school till I was twelve years old on account of I was sickly and my dad wouldn't give me to school. Those years the priests used to go around bartering for children to go to Lebret school and whoever took the deal, their children went to Lebret school. Like they'd give them flour and blankets and things like that.

Margaret: If they went to the Lebret school.

Annie: Yes.

Margaret: Were there many children that did?

Annie: Oh yes, there was quite a bit on our reservation that went to the Catholic school. But my dad would never give in because he always told us, "This is the way we were put into this world. This is our belief." He'd make us go and see the

sunset and the sunrise. How beautiful it was. And the birds, he'd make us listen to the birds and just hear, you know. And

he made us understand that all those living creatures and we'd watch the worms on the ground, the little ants and everything, and he'd tell us, "All these things are created by the Great Spirit." And it wasn't until I went to File Hills Boarding School that I learned that this Creator of mine, he had a name, God. You know, from there.

Margaret: Your dad never, ever referred to him as God?

Annie: No, he used to refer to him as the Great Spirit, the Great Loving Spirit. Kitse Manitou, Loving God.

Margaret: How did that make you feel?

Annie: Pardon?

Margaret: How did that make you feel when you found out?

Annie: I don't know, I felt kind of glad and I thought, "That's my God." (laughs) So I went into believing that, you know. From early childhood I was made to see the beauty of the earth and everything. And then when I went to school (inaudible) so I think I really had a, what would you say, spiritual background.

Margaret: From your father. And how was it in school? How did, what type of religion did they teach in school?

Annie: They were, what you call it, Protestant. The United Church.

Margaret: And how was it different from...?

Annie: It wasn't much different. Only our teachings were from the Bible.

Margaret: Oh yeah, and you learned all the biblical stories and things.

Annie: Yes. I believed what was in the Bible. Besides, I loved the beauty of the earth and this was really the way we were born, the way we were put in this world. And they tried to stray away from it. All this went back and I taught my children that too, you know.

Margaret: How long did you go to school?

Annie: I was there nine years. And I was only twelve when my dad put me to school. But I did not know one word of English.

Margaret: What did they speak at the school?

Annie: English.

Margaret: They were speaking English...?

Annie: And all my little friends, you know, my little playmates, my cousins and everything, make fun of me because I couldn't understand what games they were playing and everything. I suppose that gave me the spirit of determination. I was determined I was going to...

Margaret: What did you speak at home?

Annie: Cree.

Margaret: Cree.

Annie: My dad, that's all he spoke at home. Cree and Saulteaux, my grandmother was Saulteaux and she always spoke Saulteaux to us.

Margaret: So when you went to school you had to learn English then.

Annie: Yes. (laughs) I had to learn yes from no. It was quite hard.

Margaret: How did you like it? How did you like changing your language from Cree to English?

Annie: Oh, I was just determined I was going to beat it. So I did.

Margaret: Did it...?

Annie: In nine years, I accomplished what I done. And I felt, "I'm going to show my little cousins then."

Margaret: Could they all speak English?

Annie: That I could beat them, yes. And I was just, I just had that determination in me that I was going to, I was one of the first nine girls in Saskatchewan to go to high school.

Margaret: Oh.

Annie: I was in grade 12.

Margaret: Where did you go to high school?

Annie: Brandon, Brandon Collegiate. But we boarded at the Indian boarding school.

Margaret: That was in Manitoba?

Annie: Yes. That was in '30.

Margaret: In 1930.

Annie: Yes.

Margaret: And the other children didn't go on to high school?

Annie: No, some, at eighteen you had to leave school. So when you became eighteen you just were automatically dismissed from school and then you do whatever you wanted to do. And there was no real, there was really nothing to make a living from, eh, on the reserve. And during hard times, all my dad done was to cut wood and take it to town. Twice a week he used to do that. In order that we could have our jam. (laughs) In those days you could stretch that dollar into unbelievable things. You paid five cents for a pound of butter, seven cents for a dozen eggs. He sure made that dollar go far.

Margaret: How did you feel coming off the reserve?

Annie: When I first came out, when I got back from Brandon, I felt there was no future, no future at all in my reserve.

And that doctor, Doctor Simes took me in his care. And those years there was only two hospitals that took Indian girls for nurses and that was the Denver Hospital in Winnipeg and in Saskatchewan it was the Holy Family. And that Holy Family hospital was under the Roman Catholic.

Margaret: So did they take you on then?

Annie: Yes, they took me. And at that time, I think I only put three or four weeks of probation, the first seven weeks it was to be...

Margaret: They were training you to be a nurse, is that what that was?

Lady: So you were a nurse when you were younger?

Annie: No, I wanted to be a nurse. I never got any further because at that time my dad died and that was the most precious being I had, you know. My grandmother was gone already and my dad had died so I just dropped out. I didn't go back. I met my husband. Just to be secure, I married him. (laughs)

Margaret: What happened to your mother, did she die too?

Annie: My mother died in 1918 in that flu that they had. And my grandmother died during the hungry thirties. I was going to high school then, during that time she died.

Margaret: What, so you grew up without a mother quite a bit then.

Annie: Yes. But I had a wonderful grandmother.

Margaret: Oh. What did your grandmother teach you about?

Annie: Lots of things about life that she told me about, you know. What to expect. What to expect and she used to tell me, "When we are born, we are put in this world with a gift. We are born, it was a little, I wanted to be a girl, that's your gift you have. Now it's up to you how you're going to treat that. If you're going to respect yourself, I can't help you in any way." I shouldn't tell you this. "In my words, if I could," she said, "I'd sew you up." (laughs) "And that's the gift that you have to respect. Don't let anybody till you're married. That's your gift is to bear children and that's your gift." And the boys, she had a different story for them.

Margaret: What did she tell them?

Annie: It was a little funny to us, you know, to our language, it sounds funny.

Margaret: What did she tell the boys?

Annie: "When you are born, you are born to be a man. Now it's up to you, I can't help you, I can't do anything for you. Now it's up to you what you're going to do with your gift." She always said, "Go ahead, go ahead, but don't you come running to me with sore balls." (laughter)

Margaret: Did they listen to what she said?

Annie: Oh, I think so, yes. Those years, you know, when I try and compare those years with today, like, we were so innocent. We were brought up innocent. Was it because we were told the true facts and made to respect them but not today. You see, young children.

Margaret: There's quite a difference.

Annie: I don't know what's wrong, something's wrong. I tell my grandchildren that. The same things that my grandmother told me and the same things that I try to respect myself for, you know. And those years we had no, there was no booze in those years. All we done was innocent playing, hide and seek. And there was a, we used to play tag but I didn't know how to remember that too. We used to call it (name). (Name) and we used to play with these old fellows that started us up, "Come on, (name)," and we'd run and chase them until everybody was running, all the young people, all the young girls and young boys. And after those games are over, so the old ladies would make soup and we'd gather around and have soup and call it a feast. (laughs)

Margaret: What kind of food did you eat at home?

Annie: All of us wore little cotton dresses. (laughs)

Margaret: And your grandmother made all your clothing did she?

Annie: Yes.

Margaret: And all the bedding and...?

Annie: Yeah.

Margaret: And what did you wear for...?

Annie: They used to get, at a certain age the old people got rations, rations from the office, flour, sugar, tea, tobacco and rice and beans, bacon. And sleds.

Margaret: How often did they...?

Annie: Every month.

Margaret: Every month.

Annie: Every month they got their rations.

Margaret: And who used to bring them around?

Annie: You went to the Indian office, every man, woman, and child, what, how many children there was, they'd count them and then they'd give her according...

Margaret: So how many children were in the family?

Annie: Oh, there was quite a number of us in our family, there was my sister's family and, but we all got a share in that what my grandmother had.

Margaret: So did your father or your grandfather ever have to go out and supplement what he received from the rations to go out and do hunting at all?

Annie: Oh yes, they took in wood and and of course Grandma always picked berries and sold the berries for us. Made hay. But then that time too, those years, an Indian couldn't sell anything without a permit. And rather than go and get the permit, they'd sell on the sly to the farmers, trade for cattle and my dad done quite a bit of trading. We had got some cows.

Margaret: About when was that, do you remember?

Annie: That was about, no, that was before the '30s, before I went to high school.

Margaret: And it's different now. They can....

Annie: Oh yes, it's different now, you see great big farmers out there on the reserve, all the land is broken up and they even give grants for, what you call, implements. The only grant I know of my father ever getting was he got a mower and a rake. That's the only grant he ever got.

Margaret: And when you were living at home, you lived on the reserve then did you?

Annie: Yes.

Margaret: In what kind of housing did you live in?

Annie: We had little mud shacks, yeah. (laughs)

Margaret: I was asking you about the type of housing that...

Annie: The first house that I remember, that I can recall was a mud shack and we had tenting over that (inaudible) and tenting over that. But I've seen other houses that had hides over that. That was our daylight.

Margaret: What kind of furniture did that house have? Do you remember?

Annie: Furniture, nothing. Just a stove and we slept on the floor. We had all kinds of robes, hides.

Margaret: What about in the wintertime?

Annie: In the wintertime, we slept on the floor too.

Margaret: Did the floor have a grass?

Annie: No.

Margaret: No grass.

Annie: No, until way after, about '25 I think. That they started having lumber, lumber floor. But still mud shack with a lumber floor.

Margaret: How was that in the wintertime?

Annie: It was very cold. All the heating system we had was just a heater and a cook stove.

Lady: A heater? What kind of heater? (Inaudible)

Annie: Those little, what do you call them, they're little...

Margaret: But it didn't require any type of electricity did it?

Annie: No, nothing, nothing. No. I remember the first radio that we had, my dad earned it by chopping wood. And it wasn't a brand new one, it was just from the farmer eh. And we're telling him where the station, we just had those earphones, telling him this is someone talking way in the North Dakota. He couldn't believe it. Turning that radio, "Where is

it coming from?" Looking at that radio and turning it upside down. (laughs) (Inaudible)

Margaret: What kind was that, did you have toys or anything or did you have to make all your own?

Annie: Oh, I think, I don't remember that part. Except in the summertime we used to play tag and the first doll I had was in 1927, my sister gave me a doll.

Margaret: A doll.

Annie: Yeah.

Margaret: Did she make it herself?

Annie: No. Already the dolls, you could buy dolls in the stores at that time.

(Break in tape)

Margaret: Could you just tell me how the teachers treated you in school?

Annie: We just had to talk English. We weren't allowed to talk our own language. If we talked our own language, we got punished.

Margaret: What did they do?

Annie: We got strapped. Sometimes if you were caught two or three times, you got your hair cut off.

Margaret: Cut off?

Annie: Yeah.

Margaret: All of it?

Annie: Yeah, all of it. I remember one girl that had her hair all cut off because she was forever talking her language.

Margaret: Even amongst each other?

Annie: Yes, even amongst -- we couldn't talk. And when someone came to the school, if they wanted an interpreter, then they wanted us to interpret what was going on. And I always thought that was, it wasn't proper for us to interpret when they didn't want us to talk our own language. And you couldn't get the idea over to them and you couldn't get the idea of what they thought over to the, to whoever....

Margaret: Did any of them speak Cree themselves?

Annie: No, no, they were all English.

Margaret: What were they, nuns?

Annie: No, ours all belonged to the United Church.

Margaret: Oh, yeah. So other than that, how did they treat you? Other than...?

Annie: Well, we were treated with strict discipline. Made to tow the line and stand at attention and when we went down to meals we had to line up because they had a role call. Then file down to the dining room, sit in our proper places. We couldn't go and sit any old place, you know just sit in our seat what we were supposed to be sitting in.

Margaret: What kind of school was it?

Annie: It was a Protestant school.

Margaret: But the building, was it a log house...?

Annie: No, it was brick.

Margaret: A brick.

Annie: Great big building. It housed 250 students.

Margaret: What can you remember about the Depression or during the '30s?

Annie: Oh, the Depression, yes, I remember. It was very, that's why we had a rough, rough time. My dad had to keep on trying to sell wood. All the menfolk and we used to go out digging seneca root and seneca root was only two pounds for 25 . We had to be on the move all the time. And that was just drilled into us, whether, you know, just to get to know how to survive on our own, like, you know. So we were, we had to work hard too. We weren't, we were all given different chores. Hauling water, we never had no wells, we had to haul water. And the first government houses came out in '25 and they were log houses too. But they had shingles and flooring and just one great big room. Nothing dividing the bedrooms or anything like that.

Margaret: And so everyone had to pitch in and help out.

Annie: Yes, we all had to pitch in and do our share of work.

Margaret: How old were you then, do you remember?

Annie: What's that?

Margaret: How old were you then?

Annie: I must have been about fourteen.

Margaret: When you were working, you weren't going to school?

Annie: Yes, we stayed in school right until we were eighteen years old. And then after that we were, we were, what do you call it, nowadays you say graduate.

Margaret: What about, can you tell me about your husband and when did you meet him?

Annie: I met him (inaudible). He used to work for Mayor Baker, the late Mayor Baker, the late, the former -- he was working as a common laborer.

Margaret: What was Mayor Baker, what was he?

Annie: His parents had a big farm north of Lipton. They still do. This is where my husband worked. And he'd pass through the reserve there. That's where I met him. But I never knew that, I never knew he was married.

Margaret: Oh, your husband?

Annie: Yeah, until after his wife died. Naturally, for security I thought, I said yes to his proposal. We married, we worked here and there together.

Margaret: How long did you know him before you married him?

Annie: I must have knew him about six or seven years before I married him.

Margaret: And what kind of work did he do?

Annie: He was a laborer, common laborer. But he worked hard.

Margaret: Could he always work for...?

Annie: Always, I can say we never, he was a good provider. (coughs)

Margaret: Did you want some water or something?

(Break in tape)

Margaret: Your husband's background was Metis was it?

Annie: Yes, yes.

Margaret: So when you married him...?

Annie: He come from a very respected family from (name), Crooked Lake.

Margaret: Oh, yeah. Do you know what mixture was in his background? What was his father and mother? What were they?

Cree or was there any French background in his parents?

Annie: Yes, he was French, yes. His father was French and his mother was an Indian girl.

Margaret: Oh, from your reserve?

Annie: No, where was she from -- Muskopegan(?).

Margaret: Oh, so when you married your husband, you lost your treaty rights.

Annie: Yes, I lost my treaty rights.

Margaret: And you were aware of that when you were married?

Annie: I didn't sign off right away until about, well I'd say 1945 I signed my treaty rights off and all I got was \$50 but the Indian Agent at that time told me, "This is just your treaty for ten years and in the meantime if you want to come back, you can come back after ten years." And then I tried to get back in after my old, my husband was quite old but they wouldn't accept him.

Margaret: So how did you feel about that?

Annie: Oh, I felt I was wronged by that promise. I was told to come back. I never signed no mineral rights, just my treaty. Five dollars for ten years. So I think it was an injustice.

Margaret: Yeah.

Annie: For me.

Margaret: I guess there isn't anything you could do now about it is there?

Annie: No, no.

Margaret: What other relationship, did you have any other relations with other Metis people?

Annie: Oh, oh yes, in, where my husband, where he came from, there is quite a little colony of Metis people there.

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

**NOTE: Although there is documentation for side B of this tape, the actual tape is blank and therefore will have to be transcribed at a later date when the original tape can be obtained.

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