

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: MARIA PELLETIER
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: 118 FAIRVIEW DRIVE
REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN
INTERVIEW LOCATION: 118 FAIRVIEW DRIVE
REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN
TRIBE/NATION:
LANGUAGE: ENGLISH
DATE OF INTERVIEW: AUGUST 17, 1982
INTERVIEWER: MARGARET JEFFERSON
INTERPRETER:
TRANSCRIBER: JOANNE GREENWOOD
SOURCE: GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE
TAPE NUMBER: #IH-SD.95
DISK: TRANSCRIPT DISC #190
PAGES: 23
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Margaret: I am speaking with Maria Pelletier of Regina. Mrs.
Pelletier, can you just tell me a little about yourself, where
you were born?

Maria: Well, I was born in Ft. Qu'Appelle.

Margaret: What year, do you remember when it was? When were you born?

Maria: I don't remember.

Margaret: You don't remember? Can you just tell me a little about how it was living in Ft. Qu'Appelle?

Maria: Well, it was a pretty nice place. We had a garden, we used to live good.

Margaret: About how old when you, when did you move to Ft. Qu'Appelle?

Maria: Well, I got married when I was fifteen.

Margaret: Fifteen. And then did you stay in Qu'Appelle?

Maria: No.

Margaret: No?

Maria: My husband used to work at Pipestone they called it. He used to work over there, he used to stay over there...

Margaret: In Qu'Appelle?

Maria: Yeah, Ft. Qu'Appelle.

Margaret: And did he work there all the time?

Maria: He used to work around there, used to have good times, burshing, used to have cattle. And of course, they're not ours, they belonged to the farm. Cattles, horses, sometimes I hitch up in the buggy and far away from the store. And I would hitch up the buggy and I would go get the groceries.

Margaret: Now when you say it belonged to the farm, what do you mean? Who's farm did it belong to?

Maria: The Brooks.

Margaret: Brooks, who were they?

Maria: Farmers, they were the farmers.

Margaret: Did you, you lived with another family?

Maria: No, no, you had a house there you rented.
(Inaudible)

Margaret: Well, were they native as well or...?

Maria: Eh?

Margaret: Were they native as well, the Brooks?

Maria: Yeah.

Margaret: And you lived with them?

Maria: Yeah. I worked there.

Margaret: What kind of work did you do?

Maria: Oh, do everything, brushing and picking stones. Used to pick stones and pick brushes and everything like that. Pick potatoes. Carried head cabbage and turnips and carrots and everything like that. I used to like that. That was nice, we gardened ourselves.

Margaret: Did you ever, your husband have to travel outside of the Ft. Qu'Appelle to find work or could he always work there?

Maria: No. He could always work.

Margaret: He could always work there.

(Break in tape)

Margaret: When did you leave Ft. Qu'Appelle?

Maria: Oh dear, I left Ft. Qu'Appelle, twenty years now.

Margaret: Twenty years ago?

Maria: Yeah.

Margaret: And why did you come to the city?

Maria: Well, when my husband died that, I didn't want to stay there.

Margaret: So you lived in Ft. Qu'Appelle pretty well all your life then?

Maria: Yeah.

Margaret: And what else did you do in Ft. Qu'Appelle?

Maria: Oh, not much. Never had to go anyplace except I would go to a dance and sometimes we'd go to powwows.

Margaret: Where were the powwows?

Maria: Right in the Ft. there. Sometimes at a few reserves.

Margaret: And what were they like, the powwows? How were they?

Maria: Oh, they were nice to run, eh. Gifts. Very nice.

Margaret: Did they have, all the Metis people went to the

powwows?

Maria: A lot of people did.

Margaret: Where were the powwows? On the reserves or...?

Maria: Yeah. One of them. (Inaudible) Right on a few reserves.

Margaret: Oh yeah.

Maria: Go there in a wagon. My dad left him, my grandfather to give him a team, eh, a team of horses (inaudible). We used to go in a wagon in the morning and camp there somewhere. Used to have good times.

Margaret: Were there a lot of people?

Maria: There were a lot of people, yeah. My grandfather and my grandmother and my mother and my dad, they all go together. Used to be good times.

Margaret: And did you dance in the powwows?

Maria: No.

Margaret: No.

Maria: No.

Margaret: You didn't ever put costumes on?

Maria: Just my mother and my dad, they were dancers.

Margaret: What kind of dances did they do?

Maria: They would powwow right there with them, they had all kinds of friends.

Margaret: What else did they do at the powwow?

Maria: Just like my dad, my father knows it, you know, you have a good time there in the powwow. Like, you know it,

something, you know. Two days after when they both stooking you know, you know what stooking is?

Margaret: No.

Maria: Stooks, hay.

Margaret: Oh yes, I see.

Maria: They went to stook there. I guess he was going to get off the rack, he fall there, he dropped there. He had a heart attack.

Margaret: Your father?

Maria: Yes.

Margaret: Did he feel that he was going to before that?

Maria: Yes, he expected he was going away?

Margaret: Well, how did he act?

Maria: He was too happy?

Margaret: He was happy to be at the powwow?

Maria: Yeah, he was happy and he was joking his brother-in-laws. Like he knows it, with my mother.

Margaret: What kind of life did your mother and father have? Did they ever tell you?

Maria: Eh?

Margaret: Did your mom and dad ever tell you about how it was when they were young?

Maria: Oh, they used to tell us together. They worked hard.

Margaret: What did they do for a living, together?

Maria: They get relief.

Margaret: Oh, they got relief.

Maria: After my mother had grandchildren on her own.

Margaret: Did they ever get any...

Maria: Yeah, they used to do pretty good, pretty good living.

Margaret: Did they ever go, did your dad ever go out and do any hunting or anything?

Maria: He used to go hunting, yeah. Rabbits, deers, he brought a bear home. (Inaudible) They had a pretty nice home. He wasn't that old. My mother (inaudible). Especially when he left. He died with a cancer, you know.

Margaret: So how large was your family? You had brothers and sisters...?

Maria: When my mother died, when my dad died, when I got married, I left. My sisters, they left too. My mother (inaudible).

Margaret: And then where did you go? You left to go to where?

Maria: I lived with my husband.

Margaret: To come to...?

Maria: Went back to work before my mother died (inaudible).

Margaret: What kind of house did you live in?

Maria: It's nice house.

Margaret: Did you have to build it yourself?

Maria: No.

Margaret: No.

Maria: The people used to, they were very nice to us. They give us a house there, everything to use. Used to stay there all winter, all summer. Them old people, they getting old too.

Margaret: You had to pay them, did you?

Maria: No.

Margaret: No? They just let you stay there?

Maria: Yes. They were nice people. They were very nice people. Used to be, used to call me 'my daughter'. They were kind of old people. They could do what they knew they couldn't look after the cattles or horses. I used to look after them. We did pretty good. Yeah.

Margaret: What language did you speak at home?

Maria: Well, I talked Cree.

Margaret: Cree?

Maria: Yeah.

Margaret: And your mom and dad...?

Maria: Yeah.

Margaret: They spoke Cree too?

Maria: Oh yeah.

Margaret: Was everyone in Ft. Qu'Appelle speaking Cree or all the native people?

Maria: Yeah.

Margaret: They didn't speak English mostly?

Maria: Yeah, well, they talked in a bit mixed.

Margaret: And what about French or anything?

Maria: Yeah. Oh yeah. They were very nice people.

Margaret: How old were you during the Depression? Do you remember anything about the Depression?

Maria: (Inaudible).

Margaret: The Depression, during the 1930s. Did your mom and dad ever tell you anything about...?

Maria: No, not everything. They never tell about the Depression. Not that I know.

Margaret: Was everybody, all the Metis people were receiving relief were they or...?

Maria: Yeah. We had a lot of old people getting relief.

Margaret: And how did they get it? They just, how could they get it? Could they just go down...?

Maria: Yeah, well they, over there it's easier to get it now, not here. Try to get it here. Over there it's easy.

Margaret: Why is it easy there?

Maria: Well, that man, that, I forget what his name is (inaudible). She was very nice to us. Give him, you know, if my dad's working and put my mother to work. They were very nice.

Margaret: What about your husband, they helped your family get relief?

Maria: Yeah.

Margaret: So when you were...

Maria: My dad used to work at the Wells' you know, Dick Wells. That's what died, that's what killed him. He had a heart attack around at that time. He hired him just to help him. (Inaudible)

Margaret: How old was he then?

Maria: I don't remember.

Margaret: But he was quite young was he?

Maria: Yes, he was quite, yeah, he was young. (Inaudible)

Margaret: What about, well, did you have many friends around

that were, that used to...?

Maria: Yes. My dad's sisters, my dad had four sisters. They would stay and (inaudible).

Margaret: And what did they, did they receive relief too or...? So how do you like living in the city now?

Maria: Oh, not too bad.

Margaret: Is it better living here than in Ft. Qu'Appelle do you think?

Maria: I think Ft. Qu'Appelle is better. Used to be nice over there. Now it looks different. I wouldn't know it now. Where I used to live, it's different.

Margaret: Used to know it pretty well, eh.

Maria: Yes, I used to know it very well. Now I don't know it, it looks different, eh.

Margaret: Well, do you ever get the chance to go back out there?

Maria: I don't know. I (inaudible) find a place. I don't like it now.

Margaret: You've got used to the city.

Maria: Yeah.

Margaret: There's a lot of people that are moving.

Maria: Yeah.

Margaret: Moving out of the little towns and coming to the city. Why do you think they're moving?

Maria: (Inaudible).

Margaret: When you were younger, did you ever have to see a doctor or have any kind of hospital treatment?

Maria: Just once.

Margaret: Just once?

Maria: Yeah. I had a, troubles with my nose, you know, nose bleed. Oh (inaudible). The doctor sure, it was a nose bleed. Couldn't stop it, so they took me to hospital, they rushed me to hospital.

Margaret: And where were you coming from? Ft. Qu'Appelle?

Maria: Yeah.

Margaret: Which hospital did you go to?

Maria: Right at Ft. Qu'Appelle.

Margaret: Oh, in Ft. Qu'Appelle. And how did the doctors treat you?

Maria: Eh?

Margaret: How were the doctors? Did they treat you good or...?

Maria: Oh, (inaudible) they put me to sleep.

Margaret: How did that happen?

Maria: I don't know. I got up through the night, I started bleeding.

Margaret: Oh, you just started...?

Maria: Yeah. I don't know what's wrong. That's all I know.

Margaret: What did you do when you weren't working, when you were younger?

Maria: I don't know, just little jobs you know. Like picking stones, I picked them, you know, on the hill. Stones and...?

Margaret: What did they do with the stones?

Maria: Their truck picked them up and threw them away.

Margaret: Oh yeah. When you finished work, then what did you do, after you were finished work?

Maria: Just came home.

Margaret: (Inaudible) Did you do anything for social activities?

Maria: No.

Margaret: No.

Maria: (Inaudible)

Margaret: Your husband was never in the army or anything?

Maria: No.

Margaret: Was your father or anyone in your family?

Maria: No.

Margaret: Is there anything that you can tell me just about your mother and father, the stories that they used to tell you?

Maria: I don't know, I don't remember that.

Margaret: You don't remember. Do you remember anybody, any of the elders or your mother ever telling you anything?

Maria: No.

Margaret: No.

Maria: I tried to remember when my mother passed away a bit. She told me, she told me (inaudible). "My girl, find yourself, marry this fellow," she said, "and go away with him. I'm going to leave you," she said, "I've lived long."

Margaret: So you weren't married when you were...?

Maria: I was getting married.

Margaret: So did you, you married your husband?

Maria: Yeah, I married my boyfriend.

Margaret: I just wondered, like, who were the people as you were growing up that have to form your ideas and...

Maria: Nobody.

Margaret: Nobody.

Maria: No help.

Margaret: No. You did it yourself did you?

Maria: Yeah, I just done it myself. I couldn't stay at the Ft. with my mother gone.

Margaret: But as you were growing up, you didn't...?

Maria: Sure, I can't read, I can't write. (Inaudible)

Margaret: Did you ever want to go to school? No?

Maria: No. Them days you had to pay to go to school. I was too old to go to school.

Margaret: Did any of the other in your family go to school? Any of the other...?

Maria: Oh yeah, my sister used to go to school.

Margaret: How could she go to school? How was she able to go?

Maria: I don't really know.

Margaret: What grade did she go up to?

Maria: I don't know that. I remember, oh yeah, that was the time I broke my leg. I broke my leg (why don't you take this kid somewhere Trina?). You know midnight mass at night? I was walking in the railroad you know, in the tracks.

(Break in tape)

Margaret: You broke your leg on the railroad.

Maria: Oh yeah, I was going to midnight mass that night. I was going to Lebret. There was a bunch of us, my brothers and my sisters and my cousins and I was walking. My crazy brother there, the oldest one, he told me, "There's somebody there," he says. I was going to run away, you know the tracks like this, I fell down and broke my leg. So they had to come back to bring me back there. They couldn't go. They carried me back. "What happened, what happened?" "Well," he said, "the horses run away, she was going to run away from the ice and she slipped." He told a lie. Well, I had to go to the sanitorium. That time there wasn't no hospital in the Ft. They had to lock me way up in the sanitorium.

Margaret: Oh, where was that?

Maria: (Inaudible), in a snow mobile. They had to lock me in there?

Margaret: How did you go?

Maria: In a snow mobile.

Margaret: In a snow mobile. (laughs)

Maria: Yeah, the snow was so deep, eh. Oh, my leg was suffering. I didn't know, I was right out. It felt like my bone was sticking out.

Margaret: How did they bring you back from the railroad tracks? They carried you back?

Maria: Yeah, they got me back. They told my mother a lie, they said that the horses run away, broke my leg, I slipped on the ice. I was in Lebret school at that time. My kid sister, the nuns kept me in a wheel chair.

Margaret: How long were you there in Lebret?

Maria: I was there quite a while.

Margaret: Do you remember how old you were?

Maria: Oh geez, I don't know. I don't now how old I'd be.

Oh, yeah, I must have been around eighteen or fifteen. Fifteen.

Margaret: And how...

Maria: I was a big girl already when I come out of there.

Margaret: How long did you stay in Lebret?

Maria: I was in the winter for (inaudible) and I came home, it was in the spring that I came home. My father...

Margaret: And while you were in Lebret, did you go to school up there or...?

Maria: No.

Margaret: No. The nuns...

Maria: I was in the hospital.

Margaret: Oh, I see. How was it? How did the nuns and everyone treat you?

Maria: Very nice, the Sisters were very good to me.

Margaret: Now, you said earlier that you had to pay to go to school?

Maria: Yes. Them days you had to pay. My dad didn't have money to pay.

Margaret: Was it lots?

Maria: Quite a bit, yeah.

Margaret: Do you remember if your mom and dad were ever able to go to school?

Maria: No.

Margaret: No, they weren't, no. Did you want to go to school? When you were younger...?

Maria: I don't remember that.

Margaret: Were there many families that were like that?

Maria: Eh?

Margaret: Were there many other families that were?

Maria: (Inaudible) I hitch up the, used to have one horse, you know, and a buggy. And her name is Lady, that horse. So I went to the, I had to get a little cheque you know. I had a boyfriend and he put me in pregnant and he was a soldier. He

used to send me cheques from the army. "Hey, Mom," I said, "I got a cheque." "From who?" "From Arthur," I said, "Arthur." "For the baby." "That's good, that's good." I hitched up the buggy and I went and cashed it. I got the baby some milk. (Inaudible) I happened to look in the mirror and my daddy was chasing me. So I hit the horse and I got home. I jumped off the buggy, "What's the matter?" Mom says. "He come and chased me," I said. (Inaudible) "Who chased you?" "Dad, there he is. He's drunk as hell." (Inaudible) So that was okay. I got my groceries anyway, by buggy and took the horse to town. You are lucky, it's kind of hard to come (inaudible). So my brother said, "What the hell you want?" "I want my clothes, get all my clothes." So my mother give, put all these, "Take your clothing and go back." So I ran back again. Never seen them again. Then I heard he dropped dead in the field that fall. (Inaudible)

Margaret: You said that you used to get a cheque from...?

Maria: Eh?

Margaret: Who did you get the cheque from?

Maria: My boyfriend.

Margaret: Oh, where was he?

Maria: He was in the army.

Margaret: What, overseas or...?

Maria: Yeah. Oh no. In the army in Edmonton. He was (inaudible). He put me in pregnant. I had a kid.

Margaret: How old?

Maria: He's big now, he's a big boy. (Inaudible)

Margaret: Is that the one that was here?

Maria: Eh?

Margaret: Not the one that was here was it?

Maria: No, no. That's him. He's in Moose Jaw. I don't see him. He's a big boy.

Margaret: His father, was he native too or was he Metis or...?

Maria: No.

Margaret: No. He was a white man or...?

Maria: Yes, he was a white man.

Margaret: Does he still keep in touch with his son or...?

Maria: Yes. He goes to see his son. Used to go see him.
Now, I'm not sure. I don't see him anymore yet. (Inaudible)
I don't know where he is. That's all.

(END OF SIDE A)

(END OF TAPE)