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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Residential schooling in La Ronge.
- Detailed description of the settlement of La Ronge in the  
(?)1920s.
- Keeping a wolf as a pet.
- Learning to trap.

This is Janet Fietz speaking and I am going to tell you a few things of the changes I have seen in La Ronge. I was born in La Ronge and went to school here and in those days, all the travelling was done by canoe and dog team. My parents used to travel from La Ronge to get a trap line at the north end of McIntosh Lake in the fall, where my dad's dad used to trap long ago. Now he is trapping there. And now my dad is gone. My brothers trap there today.

There were lots of people used to pass by because that was the canoe trip also to Paul River and up north, the water routes where they used to travel. I have seen quite a few changes from that time till today. There were quite a few, well, there was about three stores that I can remember in those days. There was the Hudson's Bay, and the Review Brothers and there was another store, E.D. Smith they used to call it. But the Review Brothers sold to the Bay and after that we only had the two stores.

And in the wintertime people used to travel by dog team. Sometimes you would come to La Ronge for Christmas or Easter to

come to the services. And there would be lots of people coming in from the trap lines by dog team to come to church. They thought a lot of their church in those days. The church would be full of people and then after church and after they got all their groceries picked up from the stores, they would travel home again in groups, travelling with each other. They used to have a lot of fun along the way, camping and making tea and having lunch along the routes. Going back home from La Ronge.

And in the summertime, there wasn't very much work around La Ronge in those days. The work they had was cutting wood for the school that was here and then cutting hay for the team of horses that they had at the mission. And only a few people got these jobs and the rest of the people would travel back to their trap lines and hunt over there and fish to feed their families.

And when these people left La Ronge in the summertime for their trap lines, they had gardens over there. They tended these. There used to be lots of lovely gardens, carrots, onions, turnips, and stuff like this that these people planted over at their trap lines. And also here in La Ronge, they used to have real big gardens in the reserve and also they had one at the school where they planted all kinds of stuff for the children. I guess they planted a great big garden there - potatoes, carrots, onions, and stuff like this. But we never had onions or carrots or anything like that in school. We just had potatoes. The staff had the other things like cabbage and

onions and carrots and stuff like this. But we had potatoes with our fish. Our fisherman's name was Buster Brown. He was the one that fished. He used to bring the fish to the school and some girls would cut them up and put them in a great big pan. There was two of these pans and they would put the fish in there and put it in the oven and cook it. We had fish dinner and supper so this old guy did a lot of work fishing for the children in the school. We used to call him Santa Claus because he always carried a bag on his back.

The people I remember that looked after the stores, the managers of the Bay as far back as I can remember was, one was Norman Irving. He lived here for a long time. He married a woman from here, a MacKenzie woman. I don't remember her first name. His sons are still here. William Irving, Sandy Irving are still living here in La Ronge. And the other one I remember was a MacEwen, Tom MacEwen was his name. He was here as a young man and he went back to Prince Albert and he got married over there. And as far as I can remember, he had two boys and the oldest one they used to call Chubby. I don't remember his real name. And there was quite a few but these are the ones that I can remember clearly. And at the Review Brothers store here, that was a French store that sold out to the Bay, Mr. Nunn. I don't remember his name but his name was Mr. Nunn and his wife and their son, Graham, Graham Nunn. He had a store in Waskesiu. We used to go and see him once in a while when he was in Waskesiu when the highway got here. And Mrs. Nunn used to keep the post office at Spruce Home so we stopped

there once in a while to visit her too. We knew her in La Ronge. And I think those are the only people I can remember just now.

And some of the people at the school I remember when I went to school, the first ones were - they were mostly people from England. We were told these people that came up to this mission to look after the children, they were mostly people from England. The girls' supervisor was Miss Putny, they called her. And the matron of the school was Miss Seal; I don't know her first name. And then the kitchen supervisor was Mrs. Eva Smith and the one that worked in the laundry where they did all the laundry and the mending was Miss Westerman. She came from Prince Albert this one. And then we had a nurse there, Miss Patrick, and then a teacher's name was Miss Simmons. And then there was a Miss Farrel and Miss Field, these were the first ones I remember being there. And then they got workers from closer to home here and they came from somewhere in Canada or in Saskatchewan. The next one I

remember working in the kitchen is Miss MacDonald. She came from Prince Albert. And then there was a Miss Norton that worked in the laundry. And then there were quite a few others. I can't remember right now. And then there was our engineer, Mr. Hastings. His son is still living. He traps at Bisenart and he went to school there too. He had a brother by the name of William and he died in school. I remember these boys quite well because my dad's mother looked after these boys when their mother died. Their mother died at Reindeer Lake where Mr. Hastings, I heard, was looking after a store, managing a store up there. That is where his wife died and their daughter, Susan, was born. Susan is now Mrs. Sampson, Robert's - and she stay's in La Ronge. And her son is a pilot. He runs a plane for the band here in La Ronge today.

There is a few other people that were at the school, I remember. There was a Mr. Mills. He used to be the gardener and he used to water the garden and weed the gardens and stuff. And sometimes he would ask me out to the garden and I would water the garden. I used to be so proud of myself, watering the garden and walking around where the vegetables were. Sometimes picking up weeds. And I really thought I was a big shot being asked to do these things.

When I first got to school, the principal of the school was Mr. Charlie Hives. He was the minister that looked after the church and he was the principal of that school. And at that time I don't know how many years after we got to school when he left here. He had two children, Arthur and a daughter, Jeanne, and his wife of course. And when they left here, I think it was in 1929, our next principal was a Mr. Fisher. They had planes at that time already and when they came up here I guess they flew from, I don't know where they flew from but, old Mrs. Fisher used to tell us they were at Hay River. They moved from Hay River to La Ronge at that time. Well anyway, coming in from south and coming to La Ronge, they crashed along

the way, along the Churchill River I think. I don't know just what happened but I thought I heard them say they had a plane crash. But they were found and they weren't hurt or anything and some people from Montreal, they brought them down the Montreal River to La Ronge. I remember very well seeing them get here. I don't remember the men that brought them in. I think one's name was William Bird and, well anyway, he was our next principal. They took over from the other people that left. And also when Charlie Hives left La Ronge, they went in a plane. These planes that they used to land on the water like, they looked like a boat. They didn't have floats at that time.

I remember the time when I was in school, they used to use horses to freight the stuff to La Ronge by horses, by horse teams. The one that used to freight for the school was Willy Bear was the name of the guy that was looking after the school, bringing in the stuff for the school like flour and beans and salt pork and the tea. And they used to come in once a year in December when the ice was strong. But I remember one winter it didn't freeze soon and we were running out of food at the school. So the principal, Mr. Fisher was the principal at that time, he bought some rabbit snares for the boys and these boys would go in the bush. In the mornings they would snare rabbits and then they would bring them to the school and the girls in the kitchen would clean them up, take the fur off and cut them up and put them away because we were told that this was our Christmas dinner saying that they couldn't bring anything at Christmas. And they also caught ptarmigan and we had these. We were glad to have these because this is what we had at home and we had rabbit stew I think for Christmas at that time.

I think the teams came in from Prince Albert around after Christmas. I don't quite remember. But they got here anyway. They were late for their freighting and I remember there was about six teams of horses that came in because the ones in front used to plow, used to push the plow. And we got our food at last so we were okay after that. We had to get some stuff from the Bay too at that time for the school - like flour and baking powder and lard and stuff like this because we were running out. And they used to have chickens at the school too to get eggs. And the staff had bacon and eggs and all this stuff. The children had porridge, milk, bread, fish. On Sundays we had for dinner cake and about six prunes in a saucer. This was our food on Sundays. And we had fish every day, dinner, and supper. We had porridge every morning with milk, bread. This is what we had.

...Crisco and that Crisco I remember. I usually buy Crisco. Sometimes nowadays just to take me back to the good old days maybe I should call them or, I don't know what to call them.

We had, we used to play basketball in school too. In the yard, our teacher used to teach us how to play. We sure had fun although I didn't make too many scores but we learned after

a while and we would play by ourselves after supper or before school in the mornings, after that in teams. We used to have a lot of fun. We had a tennis court there for the staff. They used to play there. Miss Simmons, the teacher, and our nurse, Miss Patrick, used to play a lot. Boy, I used to like watching them and then my teacher asked me if I would like to play and I

said, "Oh yes, oh yes," and she said, "Well, we will play after school or before breakfast. We will wake you up earlier so you can play." So once in a while she would come into our dormitory and she would wake me up before breakfast and we would go and play. Boy, I sure liked playing tennis. She used to have Emily Bell for her partner, Miss Simmons. And my partner used to be Mr. Mills, the gardener at the school. Oh boy, we sure liked playing tennis. And after that the girls used to tease me and call me Mrs. Mills but I, you know, I didn't mind that. I liked playing tennis and in the springtime, as soon as it was dry, we would go out and clean the tennis court and then we would start playing once in a while, not every day. And it was close to the principal's house and Emily used to work for Mrs. Fisher doing the housecleaning and baking and stuff like this. Mrs. Fisher used to teach us how to bake bread and buns and make cake and stuff like this. She used to teach us girls these things.

I remember once before we came to school, that we lived with my aunt, my father's sister and her husband. Her husband was Jimmy McKay. Well, anyway, my dad and my uncle were trapping and they had killed a moose and there were wolves there taking the meat when they went to haul it. A wolf had been there and eating the meat as it was on the ground covered up. And they took the stuff off the meat and eat the meat. Well, anyway, my uncle set a bear trap there for these wolves. They set traps around there. My uncle went the next morning over there and here he caught a wolf in the bear trap. It was still alive. So, I don't know how he managed this but he brought the wolf home in his carry-all. The dogs brought it home and he had it in his carry-all all tied up. And when he got home he came and told my dad that he had caught a live wolf and he had it at the back of his sleigh there, all tied up. So my dad went out and helped him get that wolf out and they put two dog chains together and they tied this wolf and they put a collar on him and they put a stake close-by to the house there where they tied this wolf; and we would feed this wolf. We would feed him about five fish and he ate them up in no time and was kind of looking at us as if to say, "I want some more." So we would give him more and we would give him about ten fish and he would eat it up like nothing. It got to be so he was so tame, we kept him all winter and I think it was about in March that he got loose. The chain broke somehow and he was walking around there with half the chain on his neck. My sister and I, Mary, we were playing sliding down the hill there. There was a great big hill there, and as we were going up the hill, my sister said, "Look at that, that is our wolf isn't it?" And here stood this wolf just looking at us and kind of, you know, looking at us as if he wanted to play. And my mother came out

and she was screaming, "Get inside here, that wolf will eat you up." And we said, "No, he is being friendly. Look at him." He was kind of looking at us kind of smiling as we would say. And we went up the hill and my mother kept calling us to go and this wolf, he just looked at us when we walked by. He didn't do anything to us. He kind of moved back kind of shy or something and he walked around there all day, around the house eating scraps and stuff and finally, in the evening, he took off somewhere but they caught him again and they brought him back. He was caught in one of our traps that we had set along the shore there and my dad went over and they got it back and they tied it up again so we got our pet back.

And then that spring I remember people coming in from La Ronge going up to Rottenstone. They were dog teams, about five dog teams I think. That is the time they opened up the mine in Rottenstone. I remember a Mr. Brooks there. He was a big shot of some kind. He told us Big Ogema they called him. And then there was Mr. Warren Findlayson and Alec Findlayson, he died just lately. He was just a young boy then. And they all camped in our house and we had another house there that nobody lived in. There was an open fireplace there. Some of them stayed in there because there were so many people. They said they were the people that were looking after the mine at Rottenstone.

I remember that winter when my father used to come in for Christmas to get groceries for us and presents of course. And I remember when he got home that winter, he brought us dolls and ...

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(Side B)

...and games like snakes and ladders and checkers. And he was talking to my mother and he was saying, "There is a cat train coming up, and they asked me to go with them from here to Rottenstone to show them the way." Paul River goes through there and there is lots of rapids and places where the ice isn't strong on the river. He had to go and show them this he said. So he told us, "You run out on the ice once in a while and look toward the narrows," that is the south end of McIntosh Lake, "and see if you can see a light. If you see a light over there, that is the cat train coming." So once in a while during the evenings because it was dark then, we would run out there and watch for this light. And once he went down himself and came up and said, "Yeah, they are coming now. I see the light so I better go and meet them." So he went over there to visit these people. He took a light with him and he went and

met them and he visited over there. We didn't know when he got home because it was pretty late. We were asleep by the time he got home. Well, in the morning he told us, "You all have to get dressed because the cook asked us to go and have breakfast with him." And he told us the name of the guy. I don't remember his name. Well, anyway, he knew this man from Prince

Albert and we all went down to the caboose to have breakfast. I don't remember what we had. I think we had pancakes. Well, anyway, we had breakfast over there and finally this man came and said, "We are ready to start work now." So my dad said to his sister, my Aunt Ruth, "You better take the family home. You look after the dog team and I have to go and show these men where to cut, where to go through here." So he went with these men and my aunt took us home. She looked after the dog team. And we all got home safely. They stopped about half a mile from where we lived, so it was quite a ways to go home.

I think that is the year we came to school. As I remember we came in by dog team, the whole family and - to bring us to school, to leave us at that school. I think it was before Easter. And coming from McIntosh Lake to La Ronge along the way we met teams of horses. They had loads of stuff and I remember seeing stoves, windows, doors, lumber, you know, all kinds of stuff to build houses with. We met these teams along the way. There is a place they call Six Portages. There are six portages to go through there and we met a train of horses there. About seven sleighs I think and boy, was I ever scared of the horses. And this man came over and told us that we were supposed to, my dad was supposed to make a trail away from the horses because they might kick the dogs. So my dad had to get his snow shoes on and make a trail beside these. There was a long line of them - to make a trail beside this, away from those horses. And then we got to Sucker River, there was another train of horses there. They had the same thing with the doors and stoves and windows and doors. We were told there that they were building houses and working at that mine at Rottenstone.

Oh yes, and then the men that found this, the first man that found that mine was, his name was John Sanderson. They called him Dunno. He was the one that found some rock over there but he, of course, didn't know what it was and he brought a chunk of it and gave it to these two men. They were Albert Tremblay and Andy Olson. But these were white men and they, I guess they knew it was something - a mineral of some kind - so they brought it in and they got paid for that mine. And this old man, old John Sanderson, Dunno they called him, he never got a thing out of it. I always think of this when I think of

Rottenstone. And the Flin Flon mine is the same. The one that found it was an Indian and all he got was flour and other groceries and the other guy got the money for it. But it so happens that we don't know about rock. Maybe this is why it happened and we didn't know any better, I guess.

That reminds me of something else. At McIntosh Lake there, there is a place there we call the mine. My grandfather used to tell us there is some kind of gold or silver or something over there. He used to tell us this as we were growing up, you know. We weren't able to go over there. But finally there came a day that my sister and I, after we left school here, we went over there to this place my grandfather used to talk about and we took chunks of rock off that. It was

a creek. A creek runs through there. There is a big gap on this hill there where a stream runs through but it is all dried up now. We took chunks of rock there; we brought it home but it never amounted to anything because we never showed it to anyone. And of course, they would find it if there was something there. But anyway, we got a chance to go and see this. It is a beautiful place. You can go in there, it is like a cave-like thing. It is a great big place, a big hole in the rock. It is a cave and we went in there and we looked all around and we took matches with us and it is kind of scary in there too. I wonder if anyone ever went to see this place. Maybe there is something there.

The settlement of La Ronge wasn't very big as far as I can remember. There was a house over at Sanderson Point, they call it. There were two families there. Two houses, that is Alfred Sanderson Sr. and his family lived over there and they had a big garden and there was John Flett living over there and they also had a garden and lots of dogs. And on this side of the river where the settlement of La Ronge is, there was another house over there that belonged to Mrs. Bella Findlayson's dad. I don't remember his name. That was the next house I remember. And there was a little log cabin alongside the Montreal River made of logs. A little one, it was falling down at the time when I saw it. I was told it was the Catholic church, the first Catholic Church they had there. And there were quite a few houses there long ago I guess, belonging to the Marasty family. They were Catholics and they have a little graveyard there. And the next house I remember is at Morrin's Hill and this little house belonged to, I think, Mathew Charles. He died just lately. He was a very old man when he died. And there was another little house there, a little log cabin, belonging to John Morrin. He was the band councillor; he told me he had been a band councillor for 40 years. He lived there. And then coming closer towards town, there was another house. It was made of lumber. This house belonged to Joseph

Ross. He was my godfather. And the next place I remember is at the end of Nunn Street along the shoreline there, there was a great big house right beside the shore. That was a storehouse for the French store they had here. And then there was another house there at the point. That is where John Bird lived when he was working for that French store, the Review Brothers. He used to go around with a dog team during the winter selling groceries to the trappers up north. And this Alfred Sanderson too, that lived across the narrows here, he used to work for the Bay and he used to go out too by dog team during the winter selling groceries too. I remember once in while they would get to our place at McIntosh Lake and we would buy from them. And then the French store up here, just where I lived, they had their garden on Nunn street here. They had a big house right beside where I lived. Some people have pictures of these houses. And then the next house was the Review Brother's store. And then from there, there was the Hudson's Bay, the store, and then the living house. That is where the Bay is now, that is where the Bay used to be. And then the living house. And then from there, at the point, they

used to call it Buster Brown Point, that is where our fisherman Buster Brown lived. And then from there, going into town now in La Ronge town, where the hospital is now, that is where our school was. When I went to school, it was one, two, it was a two-story building with a basement where they had the furnaces and where they kept all the potatoes and stuff in bins in the basement.

And beside the school was the principal's house and they used to keep chickens there. At one time they had pigs and we saw live pigs for the first time and chickens. And I think they had goats for a while but they were too much of nuisance and they did away with them or something. I don't quite remember. And then there is the barn where they kept the horses and the cows. The staff had milk. We had, we were given dry milk for our porridge. And going on from there, there were other houses. There was a warehouse, they called it, where they kept the flour and the oatmeal and stuff for the school, tea, sugar, dry milk, and stuff. And where they kept the clothing and stuff for the school. And there was going along La Ronge Avenue now towards D & S buildings, there was a house there belonging to a Bob English. He had a garden too there. And then going along from there there was, along the shoreline there, there was a house there belonging to Roderick McKay. His sons are still living, John McKay and Gilbert McKay, and daughters Ida, Nellie, and Carrie. They are still living. Carrie and Nellie I think are living in Prince Albert and Ida lives in B.C. And from there there was, we call it Bird Point, there were two houses there. One belonging to Angus Enanoo and the other one belonged to Andy Hastings, John Hastings's dad. These are the houses I remember. The first houses I ever remember being in La Ronge and that was quite a long time ago.

And then after a while, they had a saw mill here belonging to the Indian band. My dad cut logs and lots of men cut logs and they started building houses. The first house I remember my dad building in La Ronge was at Bell's Point. But in those days, when you were doing something, you know, working, lots of people would come and help you and they built our house in no time. And we lived at Bell's Point. There were people living there already. They had a David Charles lived over there in a little log cabin and then Macabre Enanoo, he built a house there with lumber that they got from the saw mill. And then there was our house at Bell's Point. And then old John Bell and Mary Bell, I am sure you have heard of her, they lived there too. And they had gardens too. And then all around here they started building homes at that time. The lumber from that saw mill they had.

I remember that time, I don't remember exactly the year but I remember the time when the road got through to La Ronge. That is just not very long ago. The first people that built a tourist camp here were Van Meal and Allan Quandt. They were the ones that first built a tourist camp. And from there, other people started having camps and I remember people saying

to us, but this was election year of course, they said, "If the road gets through here, the stuff in the store will be cheaper." But, of course, this didn't happen. I remember the time long ago when thread, you know, #10 thread used to be 6 and milk used to be about 6 . Now today it would be, a tin of milk is 59 . I wonder where that went to, the thing they told us that if the road gets here, things would be cheaper. I haven't seen it yet.

When I was in school, I remember we had measles. The whole school was in bed. Only about five children didn't have measles. We were all sick. So our teachers were nurses and doctors and they all looked after us. And lots of people died that year. I think about seven children died in our school. It was quite a time for us. And our nurse at that time was a Miss Reed from Prince Albert. They sent her over to Stanley Mission and we were left with our teachers to look after us. We were all sick. Lots of people died here in La Ronge too. That is the year I left school and when I left school, I went up north. I was sick. My father had to carry me out of that school. I couldn't even walk. I was only about 98 pounds and he had to carry me I was so weak. Well anyway, we left for the trap line that fall. We used to leave here in August. We used to travel by canoe and paddle and we travelled about four or five days and finally we got to the north end of McIntosh

Lake. That is where my dad trapped. His father trapped there too and he died over there, my dad's dad. So, he took over the trap line and my dad has passed away and my brothers are trapping there now. That is how people, you know, hand over their trap lines. The family takes over. That is the way it is done. Like farms I guess, the son takes over after the dad is gone.

Well, anyway, we finally got there and my dad, when it was trapping season, my dad gave me a pair of snow shoes and a .22 and some shells and twelve traps. He told me I had to earn my own living. When I get any fur, I was supposed to buy myself clothing and food, whatever I liked.

So I started trapping that fall and I went in the bush to trap for squirrel and I saw two big holes there, where an animal lived. So I set a trap there, in fact, two traps in one hole and the next morning I got up real early. I was anxious to go and see my traps to see what I would get. And I picked up a few squirrels along the way and I was in a hurry to get to these dens. So I finally got there but quite a ways from there, I could smell something, eh, stinks. So I thought, "Oh, what have I got now." So I kind of hurried over there and here was a skunk in my trap. Goodness sakes, how am I going to get it out of there? So I looked at it from side to side and going around it and around it and looking at it and he was making a lot of fuss. So finally he sat still so I shot it and I was so proud of myself. I picked it up and put my trap on a long stick and carried it like that not close to me. So I finally got home and I said, "Mom, Mom, come out and see what I got!" She said to me, "Oh, goodness sakes, Janet, don't you come in

the house. You stay out there. We don't want you with that stinking thing here." So I stood over there with my skunk and I was so proud and she said, "Take it in the bush, way out in the bush over there and hang it up. I don't want it close by here. You stink. I better come and get some clothes for you and change over there." So she had my things in a bundle and she threw them over to me and I had to go in the bush and change over there and leave my stinking clothes over there and go home. She wouldn't let me in the house, eh. She didn't like the stink of the skunk and that was the first animal I got, a big one. But I sold it and I got quite a bit for it. I think I got \$1.50 or something for the skunk.

Oh yes, that reminds me, the Hudson's Bay manager used to fly around with groceries selling to the trappers. Bill Mitchell was the name of the Bay manager at that time and he came to our place by plane to sell groceries. And I had caught a red fox at that time too and I was real proud of myself to get a fox. That was my first year of trapping after I left school. We trapped, too, before we went to school. There used to be lots of muskrat around there at that time and we used to get quite a few. Well, anyway, these are the things I remember. There is quite a few more things.

My dad used to tell us when he went to school, their principal's name was McKay. But in those days you know, they never told you their first names. You had to call her Mrs. Mercer, Mrs. McKay and stuff like this. So we don't really remember the names of the people that used to be there because it was always Mr. or Mrs., to be respectful I guess. Well, anyway his principal was a Mr. McKay and they were taught carpentry. My dad used to do a lot of carpentry in La Ronge like making a fences for graves in La Ronge. He did a lot of this and I used to help him and he taught me how to do carpentry work and I would do a lot of things for myself, carpentry work and stuff. And I used to help him paint these and he taught me a lot of things in carpentry and trapping and things like this. And when he left school, he got a square and a handsaw. He still had that handsaw when he died. And I kept it here at my house and I lost it. It was just a small one. And he also used to help other people building houses.

In those days, you know, people went around helping each other. They didn't get paid in money or anything but I guess they had a good time visiting friends and eating with them and things like this. Everybody seemed to be friends in those days. Nowadays, we don't even know our next door neighbors. We never go in their houses or anything like this. It is a lot different than it was in those days. And old people, they never got old age pension in those days and they all worked until they dropped, you know. Feeding themselves and cutting wood and stuff like this. They all worked in those days but I am glad to see the old people having an easier life now than they did in those days. I remember my grandfather; he was real old and he used to trap and he used to hunt. I think he killed a moose when he was 76 years old or something, but you know, in those days, they looked after themselves. They didn't get any

help from no one. The only people that got help in those days were orphans and widows. They used to get flour, a little flour, tea, salt pork and things like this from the school. I remember when it was Welfare Day they called it, these people would come around and they would get these from the principal at the school. They would take out a little.

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