

**Carrie Schommer
Narrator**

**Deborah Locke
Interviewer**

**Upper Sioux Community, Minnesota
April 27, 2011**

**AL = Aimee LaBree
Minnesota Historical Society**

**DL = Deborah Locke
Minnesota Historical Society**

CS = Carrie Schommer

AL: This is Aimee LaBree on April 27th, 2011. Interviewee: Carrie Schommer. We're in Granite Falls, Minnesota. Interviewer: Deborah Locke.

DL: Could you spell your name for us?

CS: C-A-R-O-L-Y-N-N.

DL: And how is Schommer spelled?

CS: S-C-H-O-M-M-E-R.

DL: Do you have a nickname?

CS: In Dakota?

DL: All of them.

CS: The nickname is "Carrie".

DL: Who gave it to you, and how long have you been called Carrie?

CS: My mother. I don't share this very much: my other name that I asked them not to use after I turned into a young lady was "Baby Sioux". They used to call me that when I was little. I don't think it was "Baby S-U-E"; I think it was "Baby S-I-O-U-X", because the

family always teased me because I was a real Dakota baby. And what I mean by 'real,' was just that some babies, they have black hair down to here [gestures], and I was all Dakota. I don't know why they didn't call me "Baby Dakota," but they called me "Baby Sioux" the way the French people called us. That was a nickname I carried until I was in my teens, and then my mother gave me the name Carrie. The names were given to me by one grandparent and my mother.

DL: Is there a Dakota name too?

CS: Wahpetonwan. Of the Seven Council Fires; Wahpetonwan, the Leaf-Dwellers. When I was born, like I said, I was a real Dakota baby. My grandfather, his wasichu [non-Indian] name was John Roberts, but his Dakota name was Inyangmani Hoksida, Running Walker Boy. He was the son of Chief Running Walker, Inyankamani. My grandfather was the son of a chief.

My grandmother, my mom's mom and her father, my Unkana, or grandpa; grandpa's father's name was Mazomani. He was a chief of the Wahpetonwan. Chief Mazomani. So my grandmother's name was Mazaokeawe, and she was the one I was named after, too. My middle name is Isabel; in wasichu, she took the name Isabel; Isabel Roberts. See that was a wasichu name. But [sounds like] Wahpetonwan was the name that my grandfather gave me when I was born, because, like I said, I was a real Dakota baby, and that's all he said in Dakota, he said that's what I was, was a Wahpetonwan hokshiopa.

DL: [Those are] beautiful words.

CS: Yes. He gave me that name at birth. When you're given a name at birth by an elder or your mother or someone – a Dakota name – then you don't have to go through ceremonies to have that name. Because my Unkana, grandpa, gave that to me and that's the name I've always carried, Wahbetwe; Leaf Dweller Woman. Because that's what we are, out of the Seven Council Fires, we are the Leaf Dweller people. Everyone has a Dakota name. My family has Dakota names; they're given them before they're even ten years old; some of them at birth. However, if there's an elder around, and however they see you, the first name they give you is the one you'll carry. But we do have name-giving ceremonies that will carry us through life and into whenever our lives end, and we need to carry that name into...

DL: The next life.

CS: Yes. One girl asked me – she's probably not even 30 yet – and she said, "I don't have a Dakota name." She said, "If something should happen to me, am I going to go to heaven?" And I said, "Of course you will" [laughter]. You're a Dakota hokshiopa. You've got that name until you get another one. And even if they don't give you one, that will still work for you, so don't worry."

Questions that the younger generation will ask are valid questions; they want to know about their culture. What's interesting about that is for a period of time it seemed to me like the culture was not really used. In my family, my grandfather and grandmother lived to be way into their 90's, and my auntie, my mother's sister; she lived to be a pretty good age. My mother died after she lost her sister. In fact, my mother left us two weeks after she lost her sister; they were that close. After that, there really wasn't anyone on my mother's side. And my father's side, he had a different family and they were all gone. None of them on his side lived long enough to carry the culture.

But with my grandfather and grandmother's side, we do have two chiefs, Chief Mazomani, Iron Walker, and Chief Inyankamani, Running Walker. So my mother's father, his name is Inyankamani Hoksila, which means Running Walker Boy; he took his father's name, Running Walker Boy, and then my grandmother, her father was Chief Mazomanie, and they gave her the name, Mazookiawe, One Who Has the Strength of Iron... In my family, we have a really nice lineage. Both my grandparents on my mother's side, unkana Running Walker and his wife, Mazookiawe, they're buried here, but then the other chief, Inyankamani; he's buried up in Canada. So there's that tie between when some of our people fled to Canada and they stayed up there. Inyangmani fled too, because he was a chief, and those are the people in charge. I know how to say it in Dakota, which has more meaning than someone in charge. He led his people and he fled with them up there because he needed to get away from what was coming from the whites. But my grandfather and my grandmother, they came back from Canada.

The place they lived all those years when I was growing up; it's just down the road. You drove up 67, and when you come down that hill the river is there and maybe about a half mile past that, there's a space where my grandparents lived. The water is just now receding; that's where they lived for many years. My grandfather eventually became a pastor, or a lay reader – is the way they say it in wasichu – in the Presbyterian Church. He used to take care of a church that used to stand way below the bluffs, way back. I wish I could take you there and show you those places. Right below the bluffs there was the Presbyterian Church and my grandfather used to take care of that. And they called it Hekuta, Right below the Bluffs. "He" is the bluffs [or mountain]; "Kuta" is below; beneath. And that's where the church was until a farmer bought that land. Then the church was moved closer to the highway and it stood there for a while, and my grandfather took care of that church. He used to conduct Sunday services until the floods came and they had to take that church. Now that church stands up here, across the road. My grandfather was very traditional and my grandmother didn't speak any English at all. My grandfather did. His preaching was all in Dakota anyway; it was only Dakota people that went to our church and it was all done in Dakota.

DL: When and where were you born?

CS: I was born here. As you come down the hill you go to the left and there's a house here and a house there and you go along the river, almost to the end, that's where I was born. We were all born at home except for my little sister; she was born in the hospital.

I don't know if it's under water because I haven't gone back there. We never had floods in those days.

DL: What was the date of your birth?

CS: March 12, 1930. And I was born down there, at home.

DL: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

CS: There were 11 of us. There was Mary and I and Verna, Ramona. I think there were only four sisters. One died six months after she was born; way before us, from whooping cough. The rest were all boys.

DL: You've already mentioned your grandparents for us, but could you give us your names again on both sides? Your mother's parents, and then your father's parents?

CS: My father's parents, their last name were Henry. They died long before I was born. I have to think now, what my grandmother's name was. She was full-blood Santee Dakota. Julia. Her wasichu name was Julia. And my grandfather's name was Ray. Those are all English names.

DL: Did you grow up in this community?

CS: Yes.

DL: Do you have family members in other reservations or communities?

CS: On both my father's and mother's side I have relatives living in Flandreau, and there may be relatives down in Nebraska, but they would be second and third cousins. Most of my relatives are from here. On my mother's side they're all here. I don't even think I have any relatives over in South Dakota where my mother lived when she was just a child.

DL: Where did you go to school?

CS: I started kindergarten here in Granite Falls. When we started kindergarten there were five of us. In our culture on the mother's side, if you're sisters, you take your mother's sister as a mother and then the father's brothers as uncles, so a family is never without a mother or a father. This lady I'm going to be talking about, Joan, her maiden name was Two Star, and she was one of them that went to school with me, also my little brother and another brother. There were about five of us that started school in Granite Falls with not a word of English. I can understand people that come in from different countries, but when you're little like that, you learn a whole lot quicker than when you come in as a teenager or an adult; it's harder. It was strange. If you had to go to the bathroom – at home we could pick up and go to the toilet outside and if we wanted to drink water, we would drink out of the pail. It was different. I tell my students

now that the school that I'm teaching in is the same age as I am. I said, "Five years after this building was built I started school here, and took the first steps going up the stairs coming into the building. Aside from the steps getting onto the bus, they were the highest steps I ever took – most difficult steps I ever took in my whole life because I knew that that was going to change our world." So kids look at me and say, "You were born when this school was built!?" "Five years later," I said, "I was going to school here." I learned a lot. We must have had good teachers, because we didn't know how to speak English, but by the time I was in seventh grade, I could get in front of the class. I forgot about being afraid and bashful to make book reports. I got good grades; we all did. We learned. I think the reason why we learned the English language so quickly was because if we didn't, how could we tell the teachers if we were thirsty, or if we had to go to the bathroom?

The one thing that was strange to us was that we had to take naps in the afternoons on these braided rugs. We never had to do that when we were out and about at home. Then of course, the food was different. I got very, very sick on egg salad sandwiches. There were a lot of foods that they fixed that our stomachs just couldn't tolerate. It was probably the richness of it. We ate like everybody else did, but [at home] we didn't have all that they served at the school.

DL: You started kindergarten in Granite Falls. Did you go through sixth grade there?

CS: Yes. It was kindergarten all the way up to senior high. The school has always been like that.

DL: So you went through all 12 grades?

CS: No. From there, I went to the Flandreau Indian School when I was in the ninth and tenth grades. My father was the one that watched where we went and what we did because he could speak *wasichu* – English. He would kind of guide us through everything. He really didn't want me to go to the Flandreau Indian School, but because there weren't so many Dakota here, I wanted to see more people of our own culture, and I knew that other tribes came to school there. I wanted to learn more about them so he finally let me go. He told me, "You can try it. If you don't like it, don't try to run away or anything." Because we had to stay there, "I'll come and get you, or you can finish the school out and then come back to this school again."

Well, when I got to Flandreau it was a government school and there were a lot of different tribes, so I did meet different tribes. But the only thing was, what they taught there had nothing to do with *our* tribes, the history or the language – none of that was shared there. The only time we had any kind of a cultural thing was when we'd have a drum group and a small powwow, as they call it now. We call it in Dakota, "wacipi." "Wacipi" means to dance. That was about it. Otherwise I didn't learn any more about other tribes by going to the Flandreau Indian School. It was a government school – they wanted to keep that out, our cultures. It was something I had to find out for myself, and thank God my dad allowed me to go. After that I didn't really get back into wanting to go

there. My niece, Joanne, the woman I mentioned, lost her mother. There was another government school in Pipestone, Minnesota for kids in kindergarten on up, and it was like an orphanage. That's where they sent her and she stayed there until she was about 12 or 13 years old, until one of her aunties came and got her and took her out of that school.

DL: Were you treated well at Flandreau?

CS: Oh yes. It was just like any other school. We didn't have, as far as I can remember, any Native teachers; it was all white teachers. But I made a lot of good friends there. Some of them are still living. I see them every now and then. When I left Granite Falls I went to work in the Cities; I lived in the Cities for like 40 years; that's where I raised my family. But I never let them [her children] forget who they were. I raised them in our own cultural way. We went to all the same functions. Being in the Cities like that, you would think that we didn't have all those cultural things like we had out here, but because it was a big city there were a lot of other tribes there that celebrated their culture. It was good for my kids to be able to go to these different functions, their wacipis and their athletic gatherings and competitions where it would be all Native children. They made a lot of Native friends in that way.

DL: You went through the tenth grade then, at Flandreau.

CS: No, I went through 12 years of school, but I didn't do it over in Flandreau. I did it here in Granite Falls.

DL: So you came back.

CS: Yes, I came back because I didn't care for it [the government school]. I figured, "What I'm learning over there? They have it here, and I'd be close to home." What I wanted to do was meet people and have all those cultural events; that's what I thought they would be having over there; that we'd learn more about each others' tribes. But it was through communication between each other that I learned a little bit of what I wanted to learn about other tribes. The government school didn't teach anything on our cultures; I guess they wanted us to forget it. This was in the '40s.

DL: What is your earliest memory as a child?

CS: My earliest memory is about my dad. He had two sisters, but they lived in South Dakota. You came through that area where we used to live, and I can still picture that area where my two aunties were dropped off at the road, because they would come by train from Flandreau. And there was a white man that always used to give the community people a ride back from town whenever they went shopping for groceries or whatever. Well, he brought them down and he dropped them off at the road, at the highway and what I remember and what I can visualize in my mind yet, is my two aunties coming [to visit]. And that was my first memory. So I must have been at least two or three years old then, because we lived up on that hill there for a few years. That

much I remember in our life there. We really never moved around too much; I mean, different places, homes, in what was a village then; it was not a reservation. We were a village. But where I was born, I call it the River Bottoms, it has a Dakota name, they call it Hekute, that section, and that comes, like I said, along the river and then it goes down 67, and this area where I'm talking about where my grandfather and the church and everything used to stand, that was Hekute, was below the bluffs and Gahkmeeta, that's the area where I was born, Gahkmeeta. It's like that road goes like that. It comes up 67 and then it goes. So the reason why they call it Gahkmeeta is that it takes that curve to go towards that village where we lived. So they called us the Gahkmeeta Oyate people because that's where we lived, along the bend in the road, or the crook in the road. I don't know how to really translate Gahkmeeta.

DL: And your earliest memory is from there?

CS: Yes, right in that area.

DL: What do you remember?

CS: Well, there were so many things, like just where we could go. We did a lot of fishing, we did a lot of going off into the woods and wandering around, gathering either flowers, berries in the summertime; we used to go swimming in the river. And in the wintertime was when our auntie would come over and tell us stories. We Native people, as far as I know, most Natives, but us for sure, do not tell stories in the summertime. All our stories are told in the winter, because they say if you tell stories when there isn't any snow on the ground and it's not winter, you're going to have a lot of little creatures coming into your home. And they mean anything from snakes, to bugs – and it does happen.

When I was at the U [of M], one of my students wanted a story. He loved a story I used to tell and he said, "Do you think, Wahpetonwan, you could just tell me that story, because I want a copy of it, I want to write it down. Do you think it would be safe to tell?" And I said, "Well, I don't see why not. I'm not telling you the story because it's a story-telling event or anything, there wouldn't be anybody else around and you're just going to use it to make a copy of it. I think it would be all right." So I told him the story at the U. Through the weekend and that Sunday morning I got up and went down to the kitchen and my kitchen counter was full of those little red ants. It was just like a sheet of them on my kitchen counter. It wasn't just the one area; it was the whole kitchen. And they were crawling down onto the floor. Then he called me, my student, and he said, "Wahpetonwan, I've got something to tell you." "My kitchen is full of little red ants." I said, "So is mine. Who's idea was it that needed to have that story told?" "You said it was all right," he said. I said, "They'll go away. We just gotta quit telling the story until snow comes." And they did. The ants did go away.

So you don't do that. We don't tell any stories during the summer – spring, summer, or until there's snow on the ground. And I should have known better, but then I thought,

well, I'm just telling this so he could write it down and put it into his studies. But it doesn't work that way.

My auntie that I was telling you about, my mother's sister, when she would come to visit in the wintertime – she was blind, but she could find her way over to where we lived, even in the wintertime if there wasn't too much snow. She'd come and stay for days and weeks, for however long she wanted. When it was story-telling time she would come, and in the evenings that's what she did, she would tell a story. And there's the Iktomi stories that we have—the Iktomi is a spider.

Anyway, he [the spider] was a nice guy, even though he was an insect. His name was Iktomi. The way we visualized Iktomi was as a man, and that was his name. They told stories about the things that he did. And the first part of that story is where he dealt with the ducks. He saw a bunch of ducks in a little pond. And of course the ducks knew Iktomi. (Now, we might get something crawling around in here; we don't have any snow on the ground.) Anyway, he knew that they wanted him to tell stories, and he carried this big fat pack on his back. "Iktomi," the little duck said to him, "Iktomi, Iktomi, what do you have in that pack on your back?" And he'd say, "Oh, these are all my stories. I carry them everywhere I go." "Oh, Iktomi, tell us some stories, will you? Tell us some stories." And Iktomi's mind was really going and he was getting hungry. "Well, I would do that, only if you would build a hut," he said.

And so the little ducks said they could do that, and away they went and started building out of reeds and hay and everything, and they finally got it done and they came to where he was sitting, waiting for them to get done. They said, "We're done now, we're done now. Will you come and sing for us and tell us some stories?" They said they wanted to dance to his singing. "Oh, all right, I guess, a toshda yachikinyan, if you really want." So he went in there. "Oh, you sang a beautiful song," the ducks said, and they were all dancing and having a good time. Iktomi did that for a while and then finally he said, "There's a special song I want to sing for you but you have to dance with your eyes closed." And the little ducks, of course, were just all excited and they said they would do that. "Now remember," he said, "You have to dance with your eyes shut really tight. You can't open them. If you open them even once, to peek, your eyes will turn red," he said. *Ini ishtag ena shasha eya ektado.* So he started singing and the little ducks closed their eyes and they started dancing and oh, they were having such a good time. But then this one little duck, he got curious enough: why is he singing so long, and why do we have to keep dancing with our eyes closed? So halfway through that long song he was singing, this little duck opened its eyes and he could see what Iktomi was doing. He was taking the largest and fattest ducks. He would grab them, wring their necks, and throw them in his bag. Before they could even squawk once, he had them, broke their neck and put them in his bag. This little duck saw that, so he screamed out in Dakota, "Run, run, run, Iktomi is killing us all!" And so they all opened their eyes and could see what he was doing. So they all started running out, and as they ran out, because he sat by the door, they ran all over Iktomi. But the little duck that saved them, in the end, his eyes did turn red. Iktomi turned his eyes red. And that little duck is the wood duck, so they call that the "Wood Duck Story."

So everything, each story that Iktomi has, there is a lesson to it; there's something to be learned from it. And that was one of the first ones; everybody remembers that one. *Iktomi and the Wood Ducks* is the title of it. In Minneapolis Public Schools, when we started publishing some of our stories like that, they had a lot of stories that both the Ojibwe and Dakota people shared. It was through a project, but I don't know what they did with all that material. It's got to be sitting somewhere; maybe at the school board over in Minneapolis.

But the stories are – and I guess it's the same way with Ojibwe people too; what do they call theirs – is it Nanaboozhoo? So the stories are similar.

DL: What's the first news story you remember from your childhood?

CS: Oh, let me think. I would have to say it was World War Two, because I had two brothers that went into the service right away after that. That was in 1941, so I was 11 years old. I would say that was the biggest event that involved the whole land and the families. I remember that one really well because we had to see my brothers off. Otherwise, before that, I can't really say. We didn't go anywhere. So what was going on in the outside world never really reached us. If we did hear it, it wasn't anything that we were concerned with.

DL: Did your family have a radio?

CS: We didn't have a radio until I was about eight years old. I remember we had a Victrola; you wind it up, put your records on it. We used to have one of those. When we got the radio we didn't have electricity, but my dad used car batteries. On New Year's Eve, because it was winter, my dad would make sure he had two batteries. He would put the stronger battery on and we would listen to what was going on in New York City and the New Year's Eve parties they were having. And we'd lay there and listen to all the revelry that was going on. That was about the only time we ever listened to the radio. My dad did all the listening. The children, like I say, nowadays with all the things that they have, these hand things – that occupy their mind so much that they can sit for hours doing that. They don't get outside and play and enjoy Mother Nature or anything anymore. We never stayed in the house, even in the wintertime if there was a lot of snow out there, there were things to do: build a snowman, go sledding. We did a lot of outdoor things. The radio was something new and we never sat there, and I guess my dad probably wouldn't let us do that anyway, because it would take too much battery. We could wind up the Victrola, but I don't know if we cared for the music that was coming out of there, either. Our world was outside; it was an outside thing.

So many things that I remember, I share with my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I share with them how we used to go out into the woods. There were five or six of us; we were all relatives and if we were going to go outside – go anywhere, there were these syrup pails. They used to buy syrup by the pails. So we used to use them for lunch pails. When we were going to go out we'd put bread and rather than butter, which was hard to come by, we'd have lard. We'd make lard and bread

sandwiches and whatever else Mom would say we could take along. And water. Then we'd go out into the woods, or into the hills, or along the river to go swimming. And we used to do climbing. But they never worried about us. They didn't call us every five or ten minutes, wondering where we were, because eventually we were home. We had our lunch, so we would be gone through lunch, but mid-afternoon we were always home so we were at home for supper. That's when we weren't going to school. That was our life.

And now I tell the children about the land here: "If you follow Firefly Creek all the way up, there's a place up there that is so beautiful." We'd get up to that creek and by the time we got there it would be time to have lunch. And the grass would be so green; just beautiful green. We'd sit there and have our lunch and then sometimes we would just lie down – if you've ever done that; lie down on your back and look at the sky and see if there's clouds. You make out different figures and shapes, and you just kind of daydream. We all used to do that. If we fell asleep, we waited for everyone to wake up, which wasn't too long anyway.

And I asked some of the community kids that live down here, "Did you ever do that? Have you ever been up that creek? You live so close to it, have you ever been up that way? There's a beautiful spot up there that you would never find anywhere else... Maybe it's not there anymore, because that's many years ago, but there are so many things to see out there." They don't know this area at all. All they know is getting on the bus, going to school, coming home and then a lot of them do their studies, otherwise their world is totally within. Some of the things that they have now, I don't even understand. Like my language – the kid that won that Language Bowl, one of the prizes was an iPod. Well, they were very happy to get it and I was happy for them, but I was wondering to myself, what is an iPod – what do you do with it? See, that's how much I know about what the children have now. And I don't know if I could get into anything like that. I do really well with a computer now because a lot of my work is done on a computer. But before that, when I started at the U, there were those little copying machines that made all that noise making copies of our books and our lesson plans. I worked there for 25 years, so I knew the changes that were going on there. But that's the closest I can say I'm getting to this modern world. One little girl said, "Unci"—"unci", which means grandmother in Dakota. "Unci, I'll show this to you someday." It was a little thing; little discs about like that [gestures]. I said, "What is that?" She said, "Oh, that's all when we were on vacation, all the things that we did." I looked at that and I thought: how are you going to show me anything that went on? It was mind-boggling to me, so I just told her, "All right, whenever you want to do that, let me know."

And then when I did see it, it is amazing how modern technology is. Now I know why my mother could never understand TV. Of course it was black and white, and I would watch Bob Barker. I would tell her, "This is coming from California." Because she wanted to know, "Where is this coming from? Is this like a movie?" I told her, no it wasn't. I said, "It's a program down in California, and we're watching it up here." She could never understand TV. My dad did, of course; he loved wrestling, so he'd sit there for hours, watching wrestling. I think she died without understanding TV. Then my

niece, their granddaughter had one of the first color televisions that ever came out, and that was even worse when mother got over there and watched all of that in color. That's a lot for someone that age to all of a sudden see the change that was coming into the world. And now for me, even, some of these things that are out there, I just think, oh, I'll just have the things that I do and do the things the way I do, and if anybody wants to do it any different way, they can.

DL: Which relatives had the most influence on you?

CS: I would have to say it was my mother and father. And I had an auntie, Auntie Annie. That was my mom's sister. They were the closest ones. My mom and dad would stay with us after I got married and was living in the city. They would come up and stay with me in the wintertime because things would be hard. They still lived down there where I was born. I'd take them back to the Cities with me, and sometimes Auntie Annie would come along and she'd stay with us. Then I had my children. That was it for me; my life was complete. Then when I lost my mom and dad – especially my mother – what do you do when the one person that you could go to, and she always had the answers for you and made you feel good, is gone? When those things went away, then I actually started taking over where they left off, making sure that my children and grandchildren were going to be brought up and know the things that were shared with me. So my children know an awful lot about our oral history. But now with my great-grandchildren, I know that I have to go further than that, so that they'll have that in their family history. That's one thing, that's my goal, to do that for my family.

DL: Did you learn of Dakota spirituality as a child, or as an adult?

CS: As a child.

DL: And did you learn the traditional ways as well?

CS: We learned the traditional ways when I was growing up. It was strong, but it was within family and relatives; what we called tiospaye, extended family. It was kept within our extended family units, and it was shared in that way. I really believe that the white culture would not have understood it, and probably looked at it as – what do they call our religion and our beliefs – that it was not good. That's the way they thought about it, that it was...

DL: Pagan. That's a word...

CS: Yes, that was one of the words. There was another one too. And so we didn't share that out there, but we did within our own families. You don't have to do that. The people don't believe, but you know that that is who you are, and that is your culture; you believe in it and it can be powerful. If you believe strong enough in any culture, things are going to happen in a good way for you, and I think that's the way the Creator intended it to be. Through the years, it's lost its path of reaching everyone. Other cultures have their different ways and beliefs; if you want to call it their religion. I've

never really understood; somebody needs to really explain to me what religion is. So I don't like to use that word because I don't understand it. But I always say 'my culture' and that sacredness of what we do, because I've seen and I've heard that to be true. I don't know if you want to call it a vision, but things do happen out there where you can believe, positively. I believe that regardless of where you are or who you are, if you have that within you, you're always going to be safe within that – between you and what is out there.

DL: What did you learn about Dakota history while you were growing up?

CS: The Dakota history that I learned was oral history shared with all the elders, the grandparents, and the aunts and uncles. The history that they shared was so different from what I read in the history books when I went to school in sixth and seventh grade, for instance. But I liked history. I used to read. I used to get good grades in history. And I knew those stories weren't true, not the way oral histories were – what I knew was the truth. I found it interesting because that wasn't the way I heard it; why are they printing that? I knew it was not the truth as far as our people went. Maybe the other side of history by American writers is. But that was interesting too, because I learned about history the way the wasichu (non-Indians) saw it.

DL: What was the way the Dakotas saw it?

CS: Oral history.

DL: And how did it differ? What was the storyline that was different?

CS: The difference in that the way they told the history was like if you were to sit down and listen to, not so much a lecture, but more like sharing and learning about your own people; how they survived. There was a lot of truth to it that you saw and knew, from what these elders were telling you.

They lived it; they lived that history that they were telling. What they were telling us was something for us to know and to remember about what happened to our people. And the history was about the way things happened to us and how we were treated; what the other culture did to our people through a lot of different hardships. The elders saw it happen, so that was the way they told it. They saw so many things. And when you heard it like that, you understood it; you almost lived it. I love to read – I can read different things and I really get into it. I have grandchildren that love to read and I like that because you're absorbing things more by reading than if somebody were reading it to you. With oral history, you almost live what that person is telling you. Like I said, my auntie used to be the story-teller. When you listened to her, you were actually living everything that she was telling you. You were going through all of that. And you would even get excited when it came to certain parts, because she was the one that was telling us, and it was the truth. And so that made it that much more exciting because we knew it to be the truth and that it was part of us. And then grandfather would tell us about what happened with the march that was done to us over in Mankato and all

around that area, and this area even, where we are now. My great-grandfather, the one chief, Mazomanie, he is buried up here at the state park. In all the stories that we'd ever heard about our grandparents or great-grandparents, he was a chief. He wanted to save his people. That told us about the event that led up to him being shot by the soldiers and our people taking him back, trying to keep him alive, and finally Mazomanie tells them, "I'm not going to be. You're not going to bring me back. I won't be coming back. Let me go, and leave me here." Not just leave him and go; he meant that when he left this world, he wished to be buried in that area. But then as soon as that happens, you leave and try to get away from the soldiers. And that was in this area. And so it wasn't long after he passed on from that bullet wound that they buried him and they left. And only the family members knew exactly where he was buried. My mother did not tell me that until my boy was probably about seven years old, so that would have been in 1958.

She said, "I want to show you where a grandparent of yours is buried." But at that time the state park had not been extended out that far, so we went along a cornfield. And my dad was in a wheelchair by that time because he lost his limbs. We went up and she took us and showed me the place where the grandfather was buried. And she said, "I wanted you to know where he was buried because after we're gone, no one will ever really know where he was buried." But she said, "When you know of this place, don't share it, because that was during the time when all this conflict started." It was over them not paying the annuities that were coming to our people, and our people wondered where the gold that was supposed to have been delivered here was. She said that her elders told her that "If you share where he is buried, they're going to think that you're going to find gold where he was buried; that they buried that with him, that we would have done that. They would think we had gotten the gold, but that we buried it."

DL: And they would dig him up.

CS: Yes. So I never shared it with anyone because he wanted peace. His family – his tiospaye as they call it – he was tired of them running away from the soldiers, so trying to keep his family and his people alive, he finally gathered them. He told them he was going to try to make peace with the soldiers where they were at the state park. And as they approached that fort where all the soldiers were – you know, some of those white soldiers, there were some pretty young people, young boys that went in as soldiers; fourteen year-olds that they recruited – one of them, when they saw the Dakota people coming, he got trigger happy. They were waiting for our people to come up and meet with them, but this young boy, he got scared, and he was the one that took the first shot, and he shot my grandpa. My grandpa was carrying a white flag for peace, but this young man did not see it that way; he was just scared. And of course, he probably didn't have much training so he just shot. When he went down, all the people stopped and they just turned around and left. They hid with my grandpa long enough to try to get him well, but he told them, "No, just let me go, bury me, but you go now and try to save yourself." I guess some of them did make it into Canada, but some of them couldn't keep up, and so they were returned back to the camp where a lot of our Dakota were. He was buried there and it was passed down through generations. My mother

knew where it was, and I let it go at that. My family was pretty young. My boy was probably only about seven or eight years old then, and he knew where a great-great grandfather of his was buried up there, but he never shared it with anyone either, so it never went past our family. None of the other families knew. My mother shared that with me. The others did not know, or did not share it with their families. Somehow I shared it with someone up at the Science Museum, and they jumped on it. They said, "Could you show us, Carrie?" And I said, "No, I don't want to do that."

My mother never said, "You tell people this is where your grandfather is, and this is why he died." Minnesota Indian Affairs wanted to know, too. I said, "No, I can't do that. I wish I didn't even share this with you." And then I thought about it and I prayed a lot about it: am I supposed to do this? For the sake of what? Because it didn't go past my family. And then I did share it. I said I would. Because I thought well, if my children forget, I want the rest of the family to always remember, the ones that could remember it, and always be aware that they do have a grandfather and that he died for a purpose – to save his people. I thought that was reason enough.

So they came down. I didn't show them the right spot. I went past it. Because there was another knoll exactly like where they said my grandfather was buried; I took them past the one where he was, and showed them the other one. I guess they felt good that they knew they'd finally found where the grandfather, Mazomanie was buried. But some anthropology students of Janet Specter were all standing around talking, and all of a sudden I heard one of her students say, "Oh, isn't this exciting! I just can't wait until we start digging." That was like a slap in the face. I stopped and I listened and I thought: did I really hear that? And I looked over that way where that group of students was standing, and they got quiet so I knew that one of them had said that.

So I found Professor Specter and I told her. I said, "I need to talk to you. I don't think I should have shared anything with any of you here today." I was upset. She said, "Oh, my goodness, Carrie, why? This is a memorable day." I said, "I thought it was. One of your students said that she couldn't wait to start digging. Janet, I didn't want to believe I heard that, but I did, and now I'm so sorry that I showed you the place." Oh, she was so upset! She went right over to her students, "I will never bring you up here! We are not coming back this way! We could have, just to make a memorial visit, but when you talk like that, you don't have any right to come here." Well, that didn't make me feel any better because I thought: you can tell them that, but who's to say they won't come back – one or two of them might come back and think about doing that. That bothered me forever and ever, and so I went back up there and I looked around and I thought, now, where was it we were standing when I heard all of this? It wasn't even the place where my grandfather was buried. We were standing in a totally different place. I don't think that I was supposed to show them the exact place, because had they started digging, they never would have found anything anyway. I didn't show them the exact place where my grandfather is buried.

I know where it is now and I showed it to my grandchildren and my children, but that's it; it doesn't go any further than that. I told Janet that. She was a good friend of mine and

I told her not to worry about it because, I said, "I shared the wrong place with all of you anyway." And I didn't care if they were upset with me because I was happy. Otherwise it could have happened – somebody would have started digging. Because at that time, the stories out there were saying there was a lot of gold buried. And some people might think it was buried with the grandfather. But the Dakota people didn't have any gold to bury with him. So I just said I will never share any part of the things that I was told in our oral history. I will not do that again, except with my own family. So I don't do that anymore; I don't share a whole lot of things. My mother shared that with me, with my family, and I actually did not have a right to share it with anyone else without consulting my mom. But she was already gone then. I did pray a lot about it and I thought my decision was right. And it was probably right, because I showed them the wrong place anyway. But had I showed them the right place, I don't know if anybody would have started digging up there. And they would have found my grandfather. But they wouldn't have found anything else. Why would he be buried with the gold that we couldn't get from the soldiers as payment? So in that way I don't trust anything within that area of sharing. I would not share anything like that again with anyone except my family, and in my family I know they would not. They say we should go up and visit and leave some spirit food for him up there; every now and then we do that. But otherwise we don't go up there because when you start doing that, people are going to wonder why we do that all the time.

DL: Do you believe that in a hundred years your descendants will know where he's buried?

CS: I would hope so. Because my children know; my children know where he is buried and will know. And I think it's all right. I think that it should be known where he is buried, but not by everyone, especially people seeking to find something that is not there anyway. And that's enough; that's my grandfather. Why would anybody want to dig for anything at his grave? They always say that there's gold up there because they said the shipment came in and it was just not shared with the Dakota people and that's where the conflict began. And I said, "Well, if they didn't share it, then wherever it's at, that's where it should stay, because they didn't want to share it anyway. So wherever it's at; let it stay there, but leave my grandfather out of it. He was only trying to make peace for his people." A lot of them went up into Canada and some of the descendants are still living up there. They know the story, that grandfather was shot and killed.

DL: What was your grandfather's English name? Would you recognize it?

CS: No he didn't. And neither did the other chief, Inyangmani. But it was their children, like Grandma, who did. Her name was Isabel and my grandpa, her husband, had the name John. Their last name was Roberts; John and Isabel Roberts. That's the name that they took. But otherwise they carried their own Dakota names.

DL: You've already answered part of this question, but I'll ask it anyway. Can you tell us anything about the aftermath of the war and the scattering of the Dakota people? We've heard that your great-great grandfather – maybe it was your great-great

grandfather – went to Canada to save his life, and probably took his family with him. And then this other one, unfortunately, was shot. Do you know of any other relatives – and what happened to them? Did any of them go on the march, or resettle in South Dakota; anything like that?

CS: Well, it's Chief Inyangmani that is buried up in Canada. Now, his family, most of them stayed up there, but by now if I do have relatives up there, whether they're from Inyangmani, I don't know. And of course, they don't know that either. But I do know that Inyangmani took his family up there and he was buried up there. He never came back.

DL: He walked up there then.

CS: Yes, they did everything that they could to save themselves, because if you stayed here like the other Grandpa, the other chief; he met his death by trying to make peace and staying here, so that wasn't a very good idea, I guess. But that's what he wanted; he wanted peace for his people.

DL: What was his name again, the one who died with the bullet wound?

CS: Mazomanie. They were both Wahpetonwan, Wahpetonwan chiefs; you know, from the Seven Council Fires?

DL: The Leaves.

CS: Leaf Dwellers. See, there's the Leaf Dwellers and then there's the sub dwellers. We are Wahpetonwan Leaf Dwellers, but then the other sub ones that come in there are the Chankaghaotinas; that's what we are -- the Log Dwellers, because we built log houses. We lived in log houses as Wahpetonwan people.

DL: The stereotype is of Dakota people in teepees. But you lived in more than teepees that were this shape; you lived in homes too.

CS: Yes. And that was right down as you go – there was a camp down there, a village around by Carver; Carver, Minnesota – around in there, there used to be, along the river, Chankaghaotinas, that's where we lived.

DL: Were they the shape of the Ojibwe homes, which were wigwams?

CS: No, they weren't.

DL: Have you been to Mankato to the execution site?

CS: Yes, many times. When I first started working at the U; that would have been in the '60s, that first year, we all went down there. Indian Studies, people from the Native communities, both St. Paul and Minneapolis.

CS: You know, we made that march, and they always do that march in December; that run, they call it; from Fort Snelling to Mankato they do that. Then the beginning of their powwows was when we first went down to downtown Mankato where that one sculpture, that artist – what do they call them? He sculpted the bust of a Dakota person. It was downtown where the hanging took place – that's where it was, and I'm just wondering is that still there? I never hear of anybody going down there to see if that's still there or not. Because I remember we went down there when they dedicated that. And Owens from Prairie Island, he was there, and he did the blessing.

DL: Amos Owens.

CS: Yes. But I don't hear anything of that area anymore. When we go to the pow-wow over there, they never mention that. They never mention anything about that. And I often wonder why. How could they move, like a statue or a sculpture? That was a pretty big sculpture. But I can't remember that young man's name that did that anymore. Probably if I look into my old things from like the '60s I might have that, and I should look into that. My second, third, or fourth year at the U we were at the – oh, what was that first building we were in? It was on the West Bank anyway – it was right by the bridge. The Science Building – the something about Science Building – that's where the Indian Studies was. I sometimes think I'm not supposed to tell this story, but one of the history teachers, when I was in American Indian history, her name was Peterson, and we were right next to her in Indian Studies and she brought over just a plain notebook paper, handwritten – oh, beautiful handwriting – oh it was beautiful. You could barely make it out, but it was in Dakota. And she said, "Here," she said, "One of my students found this when they were looking for some history articles at the History Center in St. Paul, and they thought you might find this interesting, Carrie, because it's all in Dakota." So she gave it to me and it was just on plain lined notebook paper. So I took it home and I started reading it, and it was hard to make out, but it took me until 2:30 in the morning, because as I went along, it was so interesting, I didn't want to put it down. And I made it out through all the fading, you know, writing and everything, how it was from the beginning for the Native people and how they lived their lives and how they depended on animals, birds, and the four-legged [animals] and how they lived.

They lived without using any weapons; that's how early that story was. Until the first ship came in with these people; they were afraid of them because they were wearing capes – I suppose you see someone with long hair, disheveled hair, and then beards, and that was the beginning anyway. That story, I was reading it, and then when I got toward the end there was an expression that my Grandfather Inyangmani used to say. He would use it either in surprise, or you know, in another way where he couldn't believe what he was hearing. It was an expression that Unkana had, he would say, "he he he," you know, and that was written in those writings. And I thought, oh, that sure sounds like Unkana. And as I was reading further on, because I was towards the end, the reason why that expression was in there, was he was expressing, "Maybe I should not even be telling this story," is what he said in Dakota, "but this story was told to me by Spotted Horse, Shumtanka Hadege." And then it says, "This story is told by..."

So somebody must have been taking it down as Unkana told the story. And he signed his name, my grandpa did; it was signed John Roberts, Inyangmani Hokshida. And if that wasn't something to see, after reading all of that, trying to make it out until 2:30 in the morning and to find out it was my grandfather that had written that story. And I'm trying to find that article now, but I don't know where I have it. But it was handwritten and the title of that is *Wohkekswuye*, like wohkekswuye means to remember, you know, the past; remember the way things were. He tells that story right from the beginning of Dakota people until the wasichu (non-Indian) came, because the story ends when we've been pushed back inland, because they were living by a huge body of water. The wasichus kept coming; once that first ship came in, they took care of them, some of them, they rebuilt their ship and they went back to wherever they came from, and after a while more people came. And they were giving the wasichu pieces of land to live on as they were coming in, but the Dakota were being pushed back inland. And soon where the animals were – when our people were hungry, that they would just come and give themselves -- they would take that animal and they would use it for their food. The animals understood the people. And when the Dakota were to be fed, when they were hungry, the animals would just come and give themselves up to the people.

The story is so, so interesting. But the ending I didn't like, because that was when the grandfather realized, "What a mistake we made in taking in the people from that first ship that ever came in. Now look at where we are. We are so far away from our body of water where we can't get any fish or anything, and even the animals are afraid to come out anymore, that we have to go out and hunt for our food." And then the next thing he says, "And now we are coming to war with the white people and many of our own people will be killed." So that was probably the beginning of when people started to scatter into different areas, like maybe even into Canada already then too. But they all started separating, going in different directions just to throw off the wasichu, the soldiers; and there were soldiers by that time that were coming in. It's a fascinating story. But I'd like to find that piece of paper that it was written on. But I can remember; it's up here. And then sometimes I think maybe I shouldn't be sharing this with anyone.

If I'm not supposed to share it I don't want to make that mistake again by almost showing where my grandfather was buried and people digging it up, I already made that mistake and I don't think I want to do that again. But it's a fascinating story and I've only shared it with a few people, and the people I have shared it with have said, do you think you could find that piece of paper that it's written on? If I don't find it, it's because I'm not supposed to find it, I guess. I do believe that we are who we are. We came this far. Some of the things that were given to us maybe should not be shared and stay within our own people. And I'm really beginning to believe in all that.

Then yet again I think if some of our young people could really see where they came from, how their people lived in the beginning, maybe they'll look at life in a different way and not go the direction that they do go. If it's going to help the younger generation I would gladly, you know... Because a lot of our young people are going in a direction where life is not really life, it's just in their minds they get crazed with all the stuff that

they take within themselves, and they think that's the world they want to be in. And that's not the world; that isn't the way it's supposed to be for them.

DL: I'll list a few places, and please tell me if you've ever been there, and what your thoughts are today about those places. Fort Ridgely.

CS: Fort Ridgely – I'm thinking of Ripley, Camp Ripley. Camp Ripley is up north. Fort Ridgely – is that close around here, past Montevideo, Chippewa County?

DL: I think so.

CS: Yes, I've been there, but not for a lot of years. In fact, I think there were a couple of powwows we had up there years ago, and some people from Sisseton came down and had a powwow there, too. It has some history, I know.

DL: Birch Coulee. Any thoughts?

CS: When we went to visit there with elders, they had a lot of stories about that place, and so did my mother and my auntie, but I have to say, the stories that they shared on that were more like – I don't like to call our stories fairytales because that isn't what they are. They are, what other word is there for it?

DL: Legends?

CS: I don't even know if "legends" is a good word. Well, it's something in that area, but that's what they shared with us of those places, but nothing about any events that happened there, I don't recall them sharing with us.

DL: How about the Lower Sioux Agency.

CS: Oh, that one, I think everybody knows what happened there.

DL: Have you seen it?

CS: Yes. I've been there as a child and as we were growing up too, like through the community, we used to go and visit those places. And I think they have a lot of history there. And you know that Ramsey Park, they're going to change the name of that to a Dakota name instead. I think that's going to happen. But see, the elders were asked to submit some names. That is their area, the elders know the history of that place; what it was to them.

It's beautiful there, that Ramsey Park. That is beautiful. We've had picnics there from the community here, but I've heard now that they're going to change the name from that Ramsey Park to a Dakota title, rather than Ramsey Park. And so that's kind of a step in the right direction, back into a good direction, I would have to say, for the people,

because the elders have known all this time what that place meant to them, and why it should not be named after someone that isn't Dakota.

DL: Have you ever been to the Sibley House?

CS: I've been there, but I've never been inside it.

DL: Any thoughts on that?

CS: No, I guess not. The thoughts that could have been shared have been shared in a way that is not ours; is not mine. I don't look at it as something that I would want to dwell on.

DL: Fort Snelling.

CS: Fort Snelling – the fort itself has a lot to do with us. There are a lot of things that have happened there. For me at the age that I'm at, and the many times that I've been there for different occasions – I don't like the word "occasion," but to be there for commemorations of some of the things that happened there, I'd like to think that Fort Snelling is a part of us, a part of the Dakota people more than what it is. I know that a lot of things were there, but we can share things in that area. We share things in that area because we know a lot of our people lost their lives or suffered there, and when you go there you feel all of the things that have happened there. You feel that and I know it makes me feel sad to think that how could anything like that happen to another race of people, when they are people; they are put on this earth by the creator, and why were they treated the way they were – like we were nothing. Human life; they didn't look at those people there like human beings; they let them suffer and just die. And was that supposed to be their way of saying, "This is history, we're doing this, and if these people are going to be in our way, you know, why do we want to spend any time on them?" I always feel that way. I get mixed feelings when I'm there, but I do know that the spirit of our people is all around there. And that's what makes it a lot easier to go there and to do some of the ceremonies that we do do, and that the run is made from there in December. They run from Fort Snelling in commemoration of those that have gone before. And that takes that edge off. But you stop and think; I still do – I stop and think sometimes, "Why?"

There was an incident two days ago with my granddaughter. Racial things that were said, only because this white person; I don't know how old he was, and I don't even know his name, and I was born and raised here, but I don't know everybody. But what he said to my granddaughter and my family, that just makes me – it made me angry. And why are we still hearing these things? Why is it we were born and raised here, I was born and raised here and there were times when I was growing up, that's what I am – I am an Indian. You know if some of the kids say Indian, it's a, "Oh, you Indian!" Well, that's what I am, so why are you saying that? But I do also have a name, but I never argued with them on that point. They were telling me the truth and I'm Indian. They never said any more than that. And when I started high school I had a friend –

very nice, we were very close. She was so kind to me from the beginning. And I had a little bit of something going on with one girl, and I think it was our gym class and we were out on the football field. And this girl, she said something to me and I don't even remember what it was, but I did answer her back and of course this friend of mine, she heard us. She came over, "What's the matter, Carolyn? What's going on here?" And she looked at this other girl and, "What is it, Lois, what are you doing? What are you saying to her?" And Lois – I can't remember what it was. I said, "I didn't like what you said. Words were going back and forth here. I didn't like what you said." And my friend, Artie, she was getting all flustered – she was just like a rooster. And she looked at Lois, the one that was saying things to me, and she said, "Well, all I've got to say is Carolyn here is a better Indian than you." And I looked at her and I thought, "What are you saying," I said, "She's not even Indian." And that broke everything up right there, you know, we all started laughing because Artie was so flustered and she was just the third party coming in and she didn't settle anything. But it was funny then, because she said, "She's a better Indian than you," and I probably was a better Indian. But Lois, even her, she started laughing and then we forgot the whole thing. But if you can handle things like that...But this incident, I'm not going to let it go because it involves my granddaughter and her baby and her family.

DL: What did he say?

CS: Oh, he said some things that were very derogatory and I couldn't believe it was coming out of an adult person's mouth in this day and age.

DL: Where were they?

CS: In town here. So I don't know what the man's name is or anything, but I said I'm going to put an article in the paper; do they not realize that we are no longer the – people of color are no longer the minority; the white people are. And you can see that in the numbers. Same thing here; it's not so much the Dakota, it's the other culture, you know, like the Hispanics and Blacks. Maybe it's because of the casino jobs, but we have a lot of Hispanics here and they're the same color as we are. But why is this old guy, if he is an old guy, or somebody very ignorant of other cultures, why would he just pinpoint my granddaughter's family and say the things that he did? But the answer – they gave him some pretty good answers. But I'm not going to let it go at that; I will not allow anyone to put anything like that to my family because they're struggling. They're a new family and they're struggling to make a life. And then somebody has to put them down like that. I don't think they were put down; they were more angry, because he was so ignorant.

CL: Have you ever been to the Wood Lake Battle Field?

CS: I've been there and I guess I'd like to look at it in a different way than the people that have that organization, The Wood Lake something-or-other. I know they have their meetings here in Granite Falls. Once the man, oh, what was his name now – only because he heard me speak at the American Legion downtown – one of the girls from

this community; she doesn't live here, but she lives in Willmar, she came up to me and said, "Auntie Carrie, do you think you could speak at this," whatever was going on down at the Legion for the club that she belonged to. And I was ready to go to a traditional happening over in Morton; that's where I was going. And so I told her, "I can do that for you. Whatever it is you want me to speak on, it's going to be short because I'm on my way to a traditional happening over in Morton," I said, "But I'll do it for you. Just let me know what your group is about and what your meeting is about and I can go from there."

So I went down there and I told them that I was asked to speak, and so I asked them to excuse me if I kind of wandered away from whatever they were meeting for. But apparently I did well; this man that heard me invited me – he wanted me to speak at his organization's happening, and that had to do with that Wood Lake place. But I can't remember that man's name. I've heard from him so many times, and I've met him, I've had lunch with him, but I...

What I said at my little friend's gathering was totally different from what he wanted me to speak on, you know, as far as the Wood Lake place went. So he's asked me one, two, three, four times. The first time I did it it was at the KCC [Kilowatt Community Center] in town here. And then I told him I didn't want to do that anymore because I was not that familiar with the history of the Wood Lake Battle Field. I said, "I'm hearing two different things all the time about it, so I would not want to speak on it." Well, he said, "You did very well today." But I said, "I wasn't talking about the Wood Lake Battle Field. What I talked about today was altogether different." "I know," he said, "But I think you know what to say." And I thought: no, I can't do that until I find out more about – the way I felt about it they wouldn't want to hear, anyway. So that man's been after me to speak at his meetings, and they're usually at KCC, or right around in Granite Falls, here. And he approached me here, not too long ago again, to speak at his gathering, but I always just tell him I can't make it. Because I can't agree with some of the things he'd like me to speak on, I can't do that. But he still asks me. So that's all I know about the Wood Lake place. I know where it's at, and the history of it.

DL: What about New Ulm; have you ever been there?

CS: Oh, yes. That is really a....

DL: How long ago was it when you were there?

CS: Oh, New Ulm? We go through there quite a bit when we're going to either Mankato or any on – yes, to Mankato, we do go through those towns. I think I've only been to New Ulm and stopped in town there because I grew up knowing what they did to us, what they did to our people way back when.

All of that just comes to you when I get anywhere near those places because it's a part of what the history how our people were treated. And it was bad. And I don't want to go – I don't. I know it happened and I don't like it, and it makes me feel sad and I'm hurt that when I look at... And they have nothing to do with what happened in the past

history, I know that, but I look at the people passing by and I think: could you have really hated us so much that you would have done some of the things that you did do?

DL: Like what?

CS: Oh, I don't even like to talk about what they did. And there was another town. And these were all told by my grandparents. When they did that march, when they marched them to Fort Snelling – you can compare that to what happened to the Jews in Germany – it's almost the same thing. And it's not a very good thing, it's sad. For me, when I think about that, what I feel in the pit of my stomach and in my heart, I don't even like to think about it. But it's there. I know it happened. And when you can feel something like that, just going through those areas, is that still there? Is that still there, that we feel it? And I've driven through there by myself when I was working in Shakopee; when the floods came, I had to take another route to come back to Granite. I'd drive through there and I really feel – I would feel like I need to get through here really quick, you know, I want to get out of here, of this area.

DL: So you still feel something negative from way back, as a Dakota person.

CS: Exactly. I do. I really do because the way my grandfather and them used to speak, we're supposed to have respect for life, whether it be red, white, or black. When you're brought up that way, you listen. You listened to those things because they were the truth, what happened. It's not like anybody reading it out of a book – it happened. And so it stays with you. But the teaching is, that you – yourself do you treat other people like that. You don't do that. We were not put on earth for that. We were all created equal. The Creator did do that. He didn't say, "Well, you're going to be this kind of a person and you're going to be that. You're going to do these things to each other." That isn't the way the creation story is at all; not the way we were brought up. If I can remember and still try to live in my thoughts and in my heart, what my grandparents and mom and dad shared with all of us, you can't take that out. You can't just say, oh, I'm going to forget about this; that was so long ago, why am I still remembering it; don't think about it anymore, it will go away. It doesn't. It doesn't go away. It's there. And when you feel that way, like I say, this person saying and really just disrespecting my granddaughter's family like he did, all of that just comes back to me and it's making me angry and I don't like that. And I want him to know that all he's doing is raising anger, and why does he want to do that? How old is he? And even if he is young; do you want your life to be so bitter that you're going to treat another human being, talk to them the way you did? And I would ask him, how dare you? Give me one good reason why you think you could talk that way to young people. I don't want my granddaughter or little grandchild to feel anything toward whoever that person is. I don't know who that person is. I will know who it is. I will find out who he is.

DL: Did anything good come from that war?

RS: I guess I don't know. So many things happened that just make me want to say no, nothing. I guess the way my grandparents, John Roberts, the way they talked about it;

hearing it as a child, I can't really say. I do know that what they felt, I felt. And I still feel that way. Otherwise these things wouldn't be popping up on me when I hear anything. I'm very protective of my family, I'm very protective of them because I brought them into this world, they came into this world for me – not for anybody else, but for me to raise to be good people, because they are gifts from the Wakan Tanka [God]. You treat them that way to grow up to be good people. That responsibility belongs to me, and no one is going to tell them anything different because of who they are, the color of their skin, or anything like that. I will not allow that; not while I'm alive. And in this day and age, why is a person of his race, his color; why does he think he can still say things like that, when he's surrounded by people of color now. How dare he? But I'm not saying he should be afraid. No; I'm saying he should have more sense. He should be more sensitive of people.

DL: Have you ever been to Camp Cold Water?

CS: I was there just once.

DL: What do you remember about it?

CS: I went because there was a ceremony to be held there, it was a gathering of people that I was comfortable with – I was looking at what was going to be going on there, the ceremonies and the cultural things and the spirituality. We were there for that. There were some discussions, but the discussion was mostly political things. But I went there because it is a spiritual place. But I don't like getting involved in politics; anything political I try to stay away from, because I'm not a political person.

DL: I already asked a form of this question, but I'll ask it again: What is your opinion of the war?

CS: Oh, I don't know, everything that I've heard from different generations, and the generations I speak of are like my grandparents and great-grandparents and on down; those are the things that I heard. And the things that I heard after is basically the same, but it changes with each generation.

And I guess if you haven't lived where I've been, when I was born, heard these things – it was bad, it was sad, and it was so senseless. But because it was just a battle for land, for space and there was enough space out there for everyone, and yet, that's what it came to. And the way my grandparents and my mother and dad, when they would talk about those things in that age, I wondered why anything like that can happen; we can all share, we can all be comfortable. And that's the way it was, like the story I was telling you, when they first saw the first white man come to the shores, how we felt toward that person; we knew they had been suffering, they were out there somewhere; we brought them in and even shared what we had, space and all of that. And then all of a sudden when there's so many of them that come in, all of a sudden that space – none of it was going to belong to us anymore, even though we shared it in the beginning. And that's just the way it was.

DL: What do you think about the treaties?

CS: All I have to say about that, the treaties, they were all made to be broken; we were not included in any of that at all, not at all. Because in the end, it was not going to be so; they would be broken and they tried to break the people. I always say things that happened, even way back then, even before I was even born; some of the things that happened then, if we were supposed to be, if they wanted us to be annihilated, if they thought they could do that, it would have happened. Yes, some of our tribal people, you know, maybe there are one or two that are still living out of some tribes we never even heard of; they were annihilated. Maybe they went into other tribes and just became a part of that; we don't know that. But I always look at, if we were not supposed to still be here, I wouldn't be sitting here, I would be gone, people would be gone if that was the way it was supposed to be. One thing that the people should – everyone, and I mean every race, is ask, in the first place, "How did anyone of ever get on this continent, on this world of ours? How did we get placed here? Who placed us here? What were our commitments that we were supposed to be making because this world was given to us to live on? And how are we doing that?" We're not doing anything good. Every time you turn the radio on, someone's fighting amongst themselves. Well, I don't think that's going to last very long. We're being shown some of the things that can happen to our earth; we're being shown that; our earthquakes, all the things that have been happening. Our earth is just nothing now; it is just so full of everything that should not be. That isn't the way it was supposed to be. We just did not take care of the world, or ourselves, or the people on it the way we were supposed to, and so it's destroying itself.

DL: Do you think it's a good idea to commemorate the events of the mid 1860's? The 150th anniversary is coming up; is that a good thing to commemorate?

CS: Well, I guess it all depends on how much you know about that. A lot of people don't know anything about those times; they don't. And well, that could be history itself. If you didn't know about it, you're going to know it now. But you know, we have, like I said, my grandfather passing, you know, getting shot and killed up here, right here – it's right here. But I never, we never think of that time when it happened, that we are going up there just remind people that it did happen. We would not do that. We could go up there and do what we do, but we wouldn't make it, like have everybody come in and say, well this is what happened here at such and such a date. Why would we want to do that; why? So, why they do those things – it's good that people be reminded of all of these things. It's good to do that so people know, but you're going to find a lot of generations that are not going to even know what happened.

DL: What's a good way to commemorate that event?

CS: You mean the events you're talking about?

DL: The war and its aftermath, before, during, and after.

CS: Well, I guess I would think that if you're going to do that, like you said, before, during and after; I would like to think that people would think of what was before, rather than what happened – because it wasn't good. And then the after was not any better. It was good in the beginning; before all of that. I would like to think of something at that time, before anything ever happened, rather than – why would I want to do that? Why would I want to commemorate something that? – No. That's my thinking. You have to think of what it was before. I know I do – what it was – look at it that way and it makes everything so much better, rather than thinking of what happened after these times. I lost two boys of mine, each six months apart, and that was the hardest thing I ever... But I looked at my family, their brothers and sisters, what they were going through, that I didn't want them to see what I was going through, because that would even make it harder for them. And I guess that's what I'm looking at. Look at what was before. And I tell them that: look at what it was when we were all a family. And if they're gone; you know where they are – they're always amongst us. We do have a memorial for our people. A year after they're gone we have a feast, we have a giveaway, and that's when we put everything to rest, except in our hearts. We still carry that we carry their memories in our hearts and within us. They're not really gone. But if you're going to bring up what happened- if it's bad; don't bring it back. It's not going to make anybody happy; they're going to say: oh my God, things really happened that way. Then what are they going to think; if it happened then, what can happen now. And a lot of things are happening now that – I don't know if it's history repeating itself.

DL: We're going to turn back toward your life again and try to wrap up some loose ends. For example, you talked about teaching at the University of Minnesota. Were you a language professor or instructor there?

CS: Dakota language teacher; I was not a professor.

DL: And we talked a little bit about the fact that you did finish high school. Did you go on to college at all?

CS: I went to Hamline in Saint Paul for probably about a year or so, and then I started having my family. And I tried to raise a family and get an education at the same time; [you have to figure out] where your priorities are at, what is it that you really want. [I had] a family now, and that's where mine went. But then when I started teaching at the U [University of Minnesota], my family was already old enough that they could – I had a babysitter and their father took care of them, and it was a day job. I was there five days a week, teaching, but it was different when my children were already old enough to take care of themselves. Not take care of themselves--but they weren't babies anymore.

DL: They weren't as dependent on you as before. How did you get the language instructor job?

CS: They started Indian Studies at the U, and of course they had the history and they were offering all of that, but then they decided they would like to have the Ojibwe language and Dakota, being that's the two native languages in this state, the main ones.

So they started that department, the Dakota Language and Ojibwe Language Department.

DL: And you heard about it and applied?

CS: No, I knew it was happening, but my youngest, he was born in '66, so he was about seven years old and I never thought anything about it. I thought it was a good thing and I did go to one of their feasts when they offered the feasts, and I went over there and I met a few people. And then they asked if they could come and asked me if I would be interested in teaching the language. And there were two other ladies there that were older than I: she was Marie Decorah, she was a Santee, the Seven Council Fires. And then the other lady was from Sisseton, South Dakota; that was her home. And of course, I'm from Minnesota, and so the three of us – but the two other ladies were older than I. And then in the Ojibwe Department there were two ladies, and then for a while there was another lady, but she got sick. And then there was a man that came on, and then he didn't stay. But anyway, there were always three in both language departments.

DL: How long did you teach Dakota at the U?

CS: Oh, about 20 to 25 years.

DL: Oh my!

CS: Oh yes. It was so – for me, I didn't realize how interesting my language was until the linguist came in and that was so interesting how he broke down the language; it was quite interesting. I was really engrossed into it. I just loved it because I was finding out something about my language that I spoke all my life, and then all of a sudden I'm finding this linguist kind of tearing it apart. And then having to write a language book: we had the beginning, the second, the third, the fourth, and the fifth was what we finished, five language books we finished; both in Ojibwe and Dakota.

DL: Did you go to college then, while you were at the U?

CS: We did. We had to go to one for six weeks; I think it was, to get the accreditation to be where we were at.

DL: And what about your family now; last we left off, you were a young woman who graduated from high school, and then the next thing I hear is you're a mother with quite a few children.

CS: I didn't have my children until I was 28. Well, for one thing, during that time I didn't really – I wasn't married, so I don't think I would have wanted children when I wasn't married. But it happens, I know that it happens. I have to say myself, that I knew I didn't want children, that responsibility, because there were some things that I wanted to do, and that I would be not a very good parent if I was going to be leaving my child with

someone to go after what it was that I wanted. And that was the main thing; I just wasn't ready to have children, I could have had more than what I did have. But that's everybody's choice. You can have a family any time. Girls are having families when they're 13, 14 years of age nowadays. So what are they going to do with the rest of, how many years until their child turns 18, and how old are they going to be then, and are they going to try to start their life over if they don't have any more children? I don't think that's the way you start a family.

DL: How many children did you have?

CS: I had six; three girls and three boys.

DL: And you met your husband; what's his name?

CS: Edward. And he's still alive; he's not in the past. We're both still alive, let's put it that way. Yes and the thing is that we lost two children, but it happens, and you don't question.

DL: Your children, are they living around here?

CS: Yes.

DL: And how many grandchildren?

CS: I have 15 grandchildren, and I'm going to have, I think ten great-grandchildren.

DL: 25?

CS: For someone that had their children late in life, my children are making up for it, and my granddaughters.

DL: You're a fertile Dakota woman.

CS: Yes. I am very happy to be. And guess what; I only have one ovary.

DL: Oh, you do; well it was working overtime.

CS: I guess so.

DL: What do you do in your free time?

CS: Well, right now, not too much with this thing here. But before, I liked being with my grandchildren, and I do like to go and visit my friends. I have a lot of friends up North. And of course, I still have friends in the city too. I don't much like driving into the city anymore because it's so complicated. But I have driven back, in the past six months, to the University of Minnesota for meetings; I've done that. And that gets to be a little hair-

raising, so I try to get out of town before 2:30 in the afternoon, and try to get into town before 5:00 in the morning, so I'm not hitting the traffic. But I don't do that too often anymore, now, actually, because I know the University of Minnesota isn't what it used to be. Our Indian Studies, I don't think – it's not going to be there too much longer, is my feelings. And it's sad.

DL: What contributions have the Dakota people made to Minnesota and to the country?

CS: That's a huge, huge question because when you look at the Dakota people, we're not a large number; we're not in large numbers. Like here now, with the children having children, there's about maybe 200 – it's less than 300 here. And with the ones my age, what we've done, I think we've done a lot with our culture and our history the way it should be told. I think we've done a lot in that area. And then I think we've done a lot with sharing our culture; people finally understand that the culture we do have is more than just drums and feathers. It was always more than that, but people looked at it like that. And I think we've come a long ways on that one because we do have a lot of other cultures that enjoy our way of life.

DL: If you had a magic wand, what would you wish for Dakota people today?

CS: Oh, there are many things that I would wish for them, but the thing that I would wish the most for them is to be... You know, Dakota means – the translation for that to us is: friendly, friendly people. And you know that, even from the beginning what I told you about how we shared everything we had with the first other culture we saw. I would like to see all of that come into one big happening where people would be able to accept each other and share with each other, their culture with ours. And now, for me, I would like to see bringing back the language for the children to share as they're growing up. And you can't take just the language alone; you need to take the culture and the language, you can't separate them, they're both the same; one in the same, the culture and the language are one.

No matter how small it seems, the little things that you're doing, you can make that happen, as we're trying to do here in our schools with our language. And as it is, our language students taking a Language Bowl, everything home, bringing it all home to make themselves champions, as they say. That's a step in the right direction. I would like to see more of that. But it's more than the language; the culture needs to be shared. The culture is what it is, and the spirituality, the spirituality is the most – to be a part of all of that is like bringing everything back again the way we were created in the first place to be. It can never be like it was in the beginning, but it could bring a lot of people back into who they are and really work at making what we were put here on earth for, to be able to work together and be in good harmony. Like I say, you know, it's hard to do that when your heart and mind is going out, trying to do that, and then this happening with my granddaughter. That just takes me back again – where are we going? Are we going anywhere when we're going to be dealing with people like that still? Whether he was directing all his ranting at people of color; I don't know that, and I don't even know if he knows that. I don't even know if he knew what in the world he

was saying, because in our culture, every day is a special day. We don't take one day and save it to share or spirituality and talk with the Creator. It's every day that we do that. Even in the other culture, they don't even take their seventh day and keep it like they said they were going to; they do a Saturday thing, so on Sunday morning they can sleep in. Those things are changing too. It's not the seventh day to keep it holy thing for me, no. And where is that coming from? For me in the morning, where I live, I can see on a clear morning, I see the sunrise. And even if I don't see, if there's clouds – when the sun starts to come up it gets light out and I still know that that is where the sun is coming up from, and I do what I do for that day to come. Then in the evening I look in the other direction and I see the sunset. All those things, if people would stop and take a look at, they would know that there is nothing that can change that.

DL: Thank you for your time.

U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project
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